Sociological Explanations of Social Stratification

Weberian

Overview

- Each society has a limited number of resources + lots of people ∴ not everyone has access to the same resources – this leads to conflict over distribution of resources
- A society where resources are shared equally is unrealistic
- Marx’s theory that social change is only driven by the economy + conflict between groups is not valid as each society has its own historical events that lead to conflict over resources
- Life chances – likelihood of obtaining things society sees as desirable + of avoiding things that are undesirable
- Society can be classed by class, status or power but, status + power can influence your class position

Social Class

- Classes in capitalist societies develop ∴ individuals compete against each other for money
- Major class division is between those who own the means of production and those who don’t
- Sees important differences in the market situations (persons position in the job market and when they have the qualities that employers want) amongst those who don’t own the means of production. Employers pay more for the qualities they value
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New Right

Saunders

- Class stratification is beneficial for society ∴ of inequality of reward:
  - Motivates people to work hard
  - Promotes economic growth by encouraging people to start businesses and develop new technologies and products.
- The UK is a meritocracy – people in higher classes are cleverer and have higher motivation to succeed
- Society is divided mainly in terms of consumption, it is based on a consumption cleavage
- The main division is between those who meet their needs with their own money and those reliant on assistance from the state (including public transport + healthcare)