

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q6(b)

Explain Max Weber's theory of social stratification. How does Weber's idea of class differ from that of Marx?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx

Sociological Thinkers: Karl Marx - Historical materialism, mode of production, alienation, class struggle; Emile Durkheim - Division of labour, social fact, suicide, religion and society; Max Weber - Social action, ideal types, authority, bureaucracy, protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism; Talcott Parsons - Social system, pattern variables; Robert K. Merton - Latent and manifest functions, conformity and deviance, reference groups; Mead - Self and identity.

Core demand of the question

- Explain **Max Weber's** theory of social stratification. How does **Weber's** idea of class differ from that of **Marx**?
- Keep the explanation within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Weber stratifies through class, status, and **party** as distinct orders.

Class for **Weber** is market situation and life chances, not automatic community.

Marx defines class by ownership and surplus extraction in a mode of production.

The difference is market chance versus exploitative relation, and many motors versus one historical motor.

Caste in India is status with class effects and **party** organisation. Both maps are required.

Introduction

- **Max Weber** treated social stratification as three distinct but interacting orders: class, status, and **party**. **Karl Marx** treated class as the primary relation to surplus in a mode of production. **Weber's** class is a market situation. **Marx's** class is a relation of exploitation. That is the core difference.

Body

Weber's three orders

- Class is a set of people in the same **class situation**, meaning typical chances in the market for goods, services, and income.
- Property class, commercial class, and social class are his finer distinctions. A class need not be a community that acts.
- Status is a claim to social honour, often shown in style of life, marriage closure, and ritual rank. Caste is a status order in this sense.
- **Party** is an association for the acquisition of power, in a state or in any organised group.
- The three can align, as when property, honour, and office sit together, or they can cut across, as when a wealthy group lacks honour.

How class works in Weber

- **Class situation is determined by market position:** owner or not, skill, and credit.
- Class action is possible but not automatic. A common situation does not by itself produce a class for itself.
- This is closer to a map of life chances than to a theory of historical stages.

How Marx's class differs

- For **Marx**, class is defined by relation to the means of production and by the extraction of **surplus value**, not by income bands in a market.
- The bourgeoisie and the proletariat are polar classes of capitalism, with middle strata that the dynamic tends to press.
- Class is inherently antagonistic. Consciousness and **party** arise from that antagonism, even if ideology delays it.
- Historical materialism makes class the motor of epochal change. **Weber** refuses a single motor.

Consequences of the difference

- **Weber** can place caste, race, and education as status without reducing them to a mask of class, though class still organises many life chances.
- **Marx** can show why market equality of contract hides unpaid surplus in the working day, which Braverman later specified in the labour process.
- **Indian stratification needs both:** property and informal labour as class, jati and honour as status, and caste associations as **party**.

Limits

- **Weber** multiplies dimensions and can lose the unity of exploitation.
- **Marx** can under-specify **status honour** that organises votes and marriage against economic interest.
- A working account uses **Marx** for surplus and **Weber** for the cross-cutting of honour and organisation.

Flow diagram

Weber -> Class market chances
 Weber -> Status honour
 Weber -> Party power
 Marx -> Class as surplus relation
 Class as surplus relation -> Historical conflict
 Class market chances -> Life chances
 Status honour -> Life chances

Conclusion

Weber's stratification is class as market chance, status as honour, and **party** as power organisation. **Marx's** class is a relation of surplus in production and the motor of historical conflict. **Weber's** class therefore differs as a life-chance category that need not act. **Marx's** class differs as an antagonistic production relation that tends toward conflict. Indian caste and class are unreadable from one side alone.

Facts & figures

Class situation

Weber's term for typical market chances that define a class.

Status honour

A claim to prestige expressed in style of life and closure, including caste.

Party

Weber's organised drive for power, not limited to parliamentary parties.

Surplus value

Marx's name for the unpaid labour appropriated in capitalist production.

Class in itself and for itself

Marxist distinction between a common position and an organised, conscious class.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2023/explain-max-webers-theory-of-social-stratification-how-does-webers-idea-of-class-differ-from-that-of-marx/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com