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| A | In conclusion, class has greatly changed from the traditionally rigid tri level structure but social class inequality still exists and is relevant to the UK, for example there is a 20 year difference in life expectancy between the richest and poorest regions in the UK. Marxist arguments reflect the growing gap between the richest and poorest but do not take account of the growing middle class we have seen.  Grade 20/20 (but probably a bit long for 30mins of writing) |
| B | Marxism (and functionalism) is also criticised by Weberians who state that the class system is no longer homogeneous and instead has fragmented as the lines between classes blur, rather than being distinct between the ruling and working class. Kerr et al state that this is occurring due to the working class becoming more middle class through a process of embourgeoisement. As individualism has increased, collective class identities have been lost, meaning workers who held traditionally working class jobs identify as middle class. In addition |
| C | **Assess Marxist explanations for social class inequalities [20]**  There are four main arguments surrounding social class inequalities, which different sociological theories fit under. Marxists believe that classes are polarising as the gap between the rich and the poor widens. They believe this is occurring due to the bourgeoisie exploiting and oppressing the proletariat. However, this theory is opposed by others. Weberians and some neo-marxists believe that class is instead fragmenting as the lives between the classes |
| D | culture. An example of the middle class going on strike can be see in the recent junior doctors strikes. Furthermore Westergaard and Resler state that the bourgeoisie still exist in the contemporary UK due to the existence of capital and that they consist of the top 5-10% of the population. This is supported by the fact that the top 2500 of households hold the same amount of wealth as the bottom 8 million and that in 2003, 72% of wealth was held by the top |
| E | our market, party and status, rather than just our economic position determines our class position. Contemporary evidence to support the theory of fragmentation can be seen in the BBC’s class survey that split people into seven types of class based on an individual’s income, recreational activities and social links. However, this view of class can be criticised. Abercrombie and Urry state that due to the many variables class can be difficult to operationalize, making it less significant. Marxists would state that the theory ignores the power of the Bourgeoisie. |
| F | the level of available credit has enabled people who would have traditionally been regarded as working class to access the lifestyle of their richer counterparts in the middle class. Finally, Goldthorpe states that the middle class is split into the self-employed, employed and employers, further supporting this theory. This theory is also supported by neo-Marxists such as Bourdieu who argues that class is now determined by how much cultural, social and economic capital we hold. This argument is very similar to the Weberian idea that |
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| G | Parsons supports this, stating that society is meritocratic and social inequality ensures society can function. Davis and Moore build on Parsons’ argument, stating that schools ‘sort and sift’ pupils into the best position for them, ensuring society has people filling roles at all levels. |
| H | However, Marxism and the polarisation theory can be criticised. Functionalists and New Right thinkers argue that there is no longer a united ruling class and that people are not controlled by the Bourgeoisie- they can make their own decisions. Furthermore, Durkheim states that divisions are necessary to ensure a functioning society. He argues that due to industrialisation, work has become more specialised, which requires a complex division of labour to ensure society doesn’t descend into anomie. He also states this is accepted because society is meritocratic with those who are most able being in the jobs most suited to them. |
| I | 25%. Scott corroborates Westergaard and Resler, stating that social closure has also helped the ruling class maintain control. Examples of social closure can be seen in politicians ‘old boys’ networks. |
| J | blur. Functionalists believe that whilst society is divided by social stratification, the traditionally rigid tri level class system no longer exists because society is meritocratic. Lastly, postmodernists believe that class is no longer relevant to the contemporary UK as other forms of identity contribute to inequality.  Marxism states that due to the bourgeoisie exploiting and oppressing the proletariat the classes are polarising. The gap between the rich and poor is widening as the middle class and society is stretched out into different camps. Braverman states that this is primarily occurring through the process of proletarianisation, middle class workers are becoming more working class due to the deskilling of nature leaving workers feeling more alienated and dissatisfied at work. This leads them to rebel or strike, something that was traditionally part of working class |
| K | A further way of criticising Marxism can be seen in the postmodern theory that class is dead or now irrelevant. Postmodernists, such as Pakulski and Waters, state that due to increased individualism people now prioritise other forms of identity, such as gender, over class and that inequality is now based on cultural differences rather than economic ones. This can be corroborated by Beck who states that inequality is far more diverse and shaped by the |
| L | However, functionalism is heavily criticised by Bowles and Gintis (Marxists) who state that meritocracy is a myth designed to fit in with the ideology of the Bourgeoisie and legitimate the proletariat’s oppression. This is supported by Althusser, who states that schools contribute to this myth through ideological state control. |
| M | different aspects of risk present in contemporary society. Bradley also states that we can now pick and mix or buy our identity, leading to a decline in the importance of class identities. The idea that other forms of inequality intersect with class inequality can be seen in the 18% gender pay gap. However, postmodernism ignores the fact that many people live in the reality of poverty and cannot afford to choose or change their lifestyle. Marxists would also argue the postmodern view legitimises power of the ruling class. |