

Describe and explain the Conflict Theory.

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Who is Karl Marx?

- ▶ Marx (1818 - 1883) was an activist, economist and journalist.
- ▶ He was considered as '*a hugely influential revolutionary thinker and philosopher*' (BBC, 2014).
- ▶ He was known as the Father of Communism
- ▶ '*Dictatorship of the proletariat*' (Crossman, 2018 a).

Social Stratification

► What is Social Stratification?

- ✓ It refers to access to **autonomy, resources, status** within social groups **and power**.
- ✓ It implies social inequality, i.e. if groups have more resources than other groups, the distribution is evidently unequal.
- ✓ Societies are stratified on different dimensions, i.e. within the US, majority of stratification systems are recognised based on gender, race and social class (McLeod and Nonnemnaker, 1999).

Social Class

- ▶ Through social stratification, it is important to understand social class:

‘Social class refers to divisions in society based on economic and social status. People in the same social class typically share a similar level of wealth, educational achievement, type of job and income’
(Unknown, 2016).

(Unknown, 2016).

Social Class

- ▶ Weber's had similar views to Marx
- ▶ He saw class as one dimension of the social structure and social status was another
- ▶ Status and class is connected through the material base of society and ideological
- ▶ Weber reveals a wider view of social differences (Prof. Shortell, No date).

(Prof. Shortell, No date).

What is the Conflict Theory?

- ▶ Conflict within sociology states that:
society or an organization functions so that each individual participant and its groups struggle to maximize their benefits (New World Encyclopaedia, 2013),
- ✓ It explains the conflict between ideologies such as socialism versus capitalism, and social classes (New World Encyclopaedia, 2013).

(New World Encyclopaedia, 2013).

Class Conflict - Conflict Theory (1)

- ▶ Conflict theory came from Marx's work (Crossman, 2018 b).
- ▶ He stated that while the proletariat socio-economic conditions worsened, they would develop *class consciousness*.
- ▶ He argues that the conflict cycle would repeat itself if changes to satisfy the conflict maintained in a capitalist system (Crossman, 2018 b).

(Crossman, 2018 b).

Class Conflict - Conflict Theory (2)

- ▶ The class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie is essential to a capitalist, industrial society
- ▶ He viewed society's structure related to the major classes
- ▶ It was a conflict view of the nineteenth century's society while understanding classes were not elements maintaining the system (Rummel, No date).

(Rummel, No date).

Class Conflict - Conflict Theory (3)

- ▶ Marx stated '*a class is defined by the ownership of property*' (Rummel, No date).
- ▶ The three great class considered within society are:
 - ❖ The bourgeoisie;
 - ❖ The land owners;
 - ❖ The proletariat.

(Rummel, No date).

Class Conflict - Conflict Theory (4)

- ▶ The six elements of class conflict are:
 - ❖ Individuals with shared life situations i.e. interests
 - ❖ Authority relationships based on property ownership
 - ❖ Political organisation and power
 - ❖ Imminent within modern society
 - ❖ Naturally antagonistic by virtue of interests
 - ❖ Structural change is a consequence (Rummel, No date).

(Rummel, No date).

Social Inequality

- ▶ John Alessio provides theoretical perspectives in his book *Social Problems and Inequality: Social Responsibility through Progressive Sociology*.
- ▶ Multiple theories should work together when understanding social problems
- ▶ Focuses on the micro-level and macrolevel theories.
- ▶ Macrolevel theories refer to conflict theory and structural functionalism
- ▶ Micro-level theories refer to symbolic interactionism (Abell and others, 2012).

Micro-level of Conflict Theory

- ▶ The micro-level understands the conflict by accounting for individual and group heterogeneity.
- ▶ Conflicts are shaped by behaviour
- ▶ Conflicts have several main affects (Verwimp, Justino, and Brück, 2009).

(Verwimp, Justino, and Brück, 2009).

Micro-level of Conflict Theory

- ▶ Microsociologists study social interaction through:
 - ❖ Looking at how co-workers, families, friends and smaller groups interact;
 - ❖ Why they interact in a specific way;
 - ❖ How they interpret interactions (LIBARIES, No date).

(LIBARIES, No date).

Macro-level of Conflict Theory

- ▶ Macrosociologists focus on the wider picture, i.e:
 - ❖ The social institutions;
 - ❖ Social structure;
 - ❖ Social economic and political change.
- ▶ They study the larger-scale social forces (LIBARIES, No date).

(LIBARIES, No date).

Conclusion

► Karl Marx:

- *Political Economy regards the proletarian ... like a horse, he must receive enough to enable him to work. It does not consider him, during the time when he is not working, as a human being (Milligan, 1932).*

(Milligan, 1932).

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