

The industrial and french revolutions sociology essay



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' Explain how the Industrial and French Revolutions led to the establishment of Sociology as a Social Science'. Auguste Comte (1798 - 1857) played a significant part in the formation of Sociology as he believed society could be studied much like the natural sciences. He broke the subject of sociology down into two parts; social statics, which are the forces holding society together and social dynamics, which are those driving social change. (The Biography Channel. (2012). Auguste Comte.)

He started studying society because he became interested in the changes caused by the French revolution and the Industrial revolution. Comte then decided he wanted to make sense of these changes because he felt that the social sciences of that time could not " adequately explain the chaos and upheaval he saw around him" (Unknown. (2012). The Birth of Sociology.)

Both the French and Industrial revolution had a major impact on the establishment of Sociology as a Social Science. The French revolution in 1789 was said to be more ideological. Many in society began to question those in authority. (Unknown. (2011). Knowing). This caused a dramatic change to the class system as aristocrats lost their wealth and power while those at the bottom of the class scale moved into powerful positions.

(Unknown. (2012). The Birth of Sociology.) Many early sociologists attempted to explain why these new roles, powers and structures existed and why new laws such a divorce were put into effect. This had a major impact on relationships within the family as well as Education being made the states responsibility. Sociologists also looked to explain these new roles and values as well as Religion's role in society.

The Industrial revolution soon followed on in the 1800's. It played an important part in the establishment of Sociology as it transformed the way of living entirely. There was a major decline in agricultural work as society became industrialised. (Unknown. (2011). Knowing.) Vast amounts of people moved to cities to work long hours in factories at low pay. This new way of life gave individuals a fake picture of reality and opportunity. However, this view changed quickly with the ride of crime, overcrowding, poverty and disease. Early Sociologists wanted to understand how society still continued despite its struggle. New groups appeared that had power and control over the economy which led to them becoming the dominant group in society. Questions were raised about the relationship between the different groups in society and why new technology made jobs obsolete or de-skilled.

' What are the key features of sociological thinking (Bauman) and developing a Sociological Imagination (Mills)?'

Zygmunt Bauman's Sociological Thinking identified four ways in which Sociology can be distinguished from common sense which helped sociologists differentiate between the way individuals explain their life experiences and the way sociology explains life experiences.

To begin with, Bauman argues that " sociology makes an effort to subordinate itself to the rigorous rules of responsible speech". This suggests that all sociologists must use scientific methods and empirical evidence to decide if a claim is true or false, whereas common sense is not scientific, but is based on culture and time specific opinions. Richardson, M and Roberts, A. (2011).

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Secondly, Bauman says that 'size of the field' is another difference between sociology and common sense. He says that "sociology draws on a larger field of knowledge than common sense". People try to explain their world through their own life experiences such as their own actions, motivations and their interactions with everyone around them. Sociology aims to look at wider social forces when examining society and uses various different sociological theories in the process of understanding society. (ibid)

The third difference Bauman acknowledged is the way in which sociology makes sense of human reality by analysing the different ways in which humans are all interdependent. This helps us understand our motives and the effects these motives have on the world around us.

The last difference Bauman identified is that sociology takes nothing for granted and challenges the idea that things happen 'naturally'.

C. Wright Mills invented the term 'Sociological Imagination' from the idea that we can study the structure of society at the same time as individuals' lives. Haralambos, M and Holborn, M. (2008). He argued that there are three important questions that we need to ask in order to understand society. The first being where does society stand in human history? How did we get to where we are today and what were societies before us like? The second question Mills identified was what is the structure of society as a whole? How the structures interrelate and what their impact is on society. Lastly, in order to understand society, we need to examine what groups of people live in society and how they interact with each other and the institutions. Mills, C. (1959).

These three questions aided the understanding of society and a sociological imagination. However, when we look at different issues, we also have to ask another two questions. Are they 'personal troubles of Milieu' or are they 'public issues of social structure?' Mills defined personal troubles as issues experienced by an individual and by those immediately around them, whereas public issues affect society as a whole.

' Explain and contrast the key features of macro and micro models of society'

Although both Macro and Micro models both study human behaviour in society, they do have a number of differences.

Macro models of society are usually referred to as Structural theories. Structural theories generally examine society holistically meaning that they look at society as a whole and how its structures inter-relate with one another. Although they acknowledge that individuals can make an impact on the world around them through social actions, they believe that the institutions have a bigger impact on individuals in society. Structural theories tend to use an analogy to explain the relationship between the institutions, but because there are numerous perspectives that emphasise different aspects of society, there is no one dominant analogy. Functionalism is an example of a structural consensus theory that emphasises harmony and stability within society. On the other hand structural conflict theories include Marxism, Neo-Marxism and Feminism. These emphasise struggle and conflict between different groups in society. Macro theories also study society

objectively looking for patterns and trends in human behaviour. (Bryant, L. (2012). Sociological Theories)

Micro models of sociology are often referred to as Social Action theories. They believe that society is a direct result of human actions and interactions. In order to understand society, we should examine the meaning behind the actions of smaller groups instead of looking at how individuals are influenced and shaped by society. Max Weber's theory suggests that social actions should be the main focus when studying social action theories in society. His definition of a 'social action' is an action carried out by an individual must be thought out and carried out in a social setting to which an individual can also attach meaning to. It is stated that micro sociology is generally subjective as it attempts to explain Social Action theories using a method that produces qualitative data that provides in depth information, unlike Structural theories that uses quantitative data for patterns and trends. (Bryant, L. (2012). Social Action Theory)

' Social Concepts and Theories'

Within sociology, there are different concepts used. The most important ones are socialisation, social order and social stratification. The definition of these three differs from theory to theory but share the same basic meaning.

The term socialisation is something everyone can relate to. It is a process where the children in society are taught by the adults. Society's norms and values are transferred to the younger generation through the socialisation process. These norms and values dictate our behaviour within society and what is expected of us. This process can come in the form of primary

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socialisation; which is through direct family or care givers and secondary socialisation; which is everything else we interact with such as the mass media or education. (Unknown. (2001). What is the socialization process?)

The second concept is social order. This is linked in with the socialisation process as social order is maintained through society agreeing with the norms and values passed on through the socialisation process. This is the only way for society to continue.

The last concept is social stratification. This is based on some form of structured inequality or unequal distribution in society. it forms a division between groups of people e. g. where a society is divided into two class groups; the upper class and the lower class. (Cliffs Notes. (2012). What Divides Us: Stratification)

Different key theories in Sociology link these aspects into society in different ways.

The Functionalist theory is otherwise known as a consensus theory meaning there is a general agreement throughout society. It adopts the idea that various parts of society interrelate which helps form a complete system. Socialisation within the Functionalist theory is said to be extremely important since order, stability, harmony and cooperation is derived from agreed shared norms and values. Functionalism also emphasises the idea of meritocracy as it believes that if individuals work hard they will be rewarded afterwards. It believes that social order will only occur if society agrees to what they call a value consensus. This is basic shared beliefs that have to be agreed upon and are also worth striving for. Functionalism says that social
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stratification in society is based around the idea of meritocracy and that individuals are trained skills to fulfil different roles which help direct society. It acknowledges that there is some conflict between groups over different interests but believes it is not as important as groups that share common interests. Haralambos, M and Holborn, M. (2008) A.

Conflict theories on the other hand have a different perspective on these concepts. Marxism sees socialisation as a process of passing over a dominant ideology that Capitalism is good and equal when really it's not. This creates conflict between the two groups in society. Social order within a Capitalist system is maintained by a false consciousness produced by the Bourgeoisie. This fake picture of reality teaches the Proletariat that society is equal and that they should comply with the ruling class's norms and values. Marxism has an alternate perspective on social stratification; they see it as "a mechanism whereby some exploit others, rather than a means of furthering collective goals". Marx views society as being a two-class model with two major class groups being the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat. However, these two groups are in constant conflict over the ownership and control of the means of production which the ruling class uses to exploit and oppress the subject class. Haralambos, M and Holborn, M. (2008) B.

Another theory that has a completely different take on these concepts is Symbolic Interactionism. Since Symbolic Interactionism is a social action theory, it studies the individual and smaller scale interactions in society rather than as a complete system. The main focus of this theory is the ability to explain the meaning behind an individual's actions. Symbolic

Interactionism believes that we are socialised through shared meanings and <https://assignbuster.com/the-industrial-and-french-revolutions-sociology-essay/>

symbols, which dictate our behaviour and our interaction with others.

Through this, an individual will develop a self-concept. It is through social interaction with others that we develop a picture of ourselves in relation to other individual's reactions. Social order is maintained by the majority holding the same shared meanings and symbols and also by looking at the world in a similar way. Weber would say that empathising with others helps us understand the meanings and interpretations of individuals. As for social stratification, individuals who do not share the same meanings with the rest of society are labelled, which is judged by others. Individuals may behave and interact differently with those who are labelled leading to them adapting to this label thus changing their self-concept. Haralambos, M and Holborn, M. (2008) C.