

Karl marx, max weber
and talcott parsons
contributions in
sociology compare
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The nineteenth century witnessed the existence of some of the most revolutionary minds in sociology. During this era, Karl Marx and Max Weber stand out as the most instrumental conflict sociological theorists. These two sociologists attempt to elucidate social change and its impact on society.

Another great sociological theorist, who took a structural functionalist approach, is Talcott Parsons. Though differing in many aspects, their understanding of society has some similarities. This paper takes a look at the contributions of these three sociologists to society and sociological discourse.

Weber's work seems to be in response to Marx's views of society. He maintains that Marx's approach is narrow and limiting, and depends too much on economic variables in explaining societal change. Responding to this apparent lack of depth, Weber chooses to model his sociological explanation of change around macro-sociological occurrences[1]. He feels that there are more than just economic perspectives to understanding human societies and change.

Marx's assessment of change is not founded on the conflict of opinions. Instead, he focuses on class conflict that emanates from unequal distribution of the means of production. In his view, history is made up of different periods marking different systems in modes of production such as primal communism, slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. In his postulation, the ideal state of affairs exists in a socialist classless community.

Weber disputes Marx's economically centered approach citing oversimplification. He asserts that, besides economic explanations, there are <https://assignbuster.com/karl-marx-max-weber-and-talcott-parsons-contributions-in-sociology-compare-and-contrast-essay/>

other causes of progression and change. In addition, Weber establishes a connection between the capitalist system and protestant principles concerning labor.

As an example, he uses the beliefs of Calvinism where, to get into heaven, one has to do the utmost good for the highest number of people. In such a community, work is not just for personal development, but for religious fulfillment. Unlike Weber, Marx is more interested in the social structures than the implication of these structures in society. In his view, class structure exists in all societies and is the source of power.

A major point of divergence is their concept of class. In Marx's ideology, the constant conflict between classes is caused by the disparities in the class system. In contrast, the class system can be abolished in the same way that feudalism is abolished. Though they present different viewpoints concerning the causes of change in society, they both agree on the nature of the society.

Talcott Parsons is another great sociologist whose contributions to sociology cannot go unnoticed. His main area of focus is social order where he believes that social order and continuity are products of values in that society, and not structures. In his conception, established and understanding families are fundamental for effective socialization.

He sees the division of labor as a product of sexual discrimination where man is allocated the most important role of the breadwinner[2]. Women play the role of managing the household and caring for children. He supports an

absolute division of labor to ensure societal progress. This view is a platform for conflict between the followers of Parsons and most feminist theorists.

Parsons also makes major contributions to the field of medicine. He postulates that proper functioning of the society demands mental and physical health of the members[3]. Diseases undermine progress in society since they hinder optimal performance of roles.

Another landmark contribution of Parsons is his support for the rights of the elderly. He believes that, for progress in a society, the society must delegate roles to its elder members in accordance to their advanced age[4]. He asserts that the elderly have accumulated wisdom over the ages and can make useful contributions to society.

Karl Marx, Max Weber and Talcott Parsons are undoubtedly some of the greatest theoretical minds sociology has ever had. Though their contributions to sociology are numerous, their works on social change and order mark major turning points in the history of sociology.

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