

The social conflict theory sociology essay



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Sociologists believe that there is four different ways of social conflict. Most sociologists will use the theoretical or perspective approach to help research. There are a multitude of approaches that are used by sociologist but, the mainly stick to three types of theories. The first would be the structural - functional theory, then the social conflict theory, and finally the symbolic interaction theory. Within these three approaches are several more ways to gain research (Conflict Theories, 2011).

The social conflict theory tries to show that society creates conflict due to the inequalities that are present in everyday life. Most sociologists will use the macro level orientation theory simply because it takes society as a whole and shows how it shapes our lives. It uses terms like inequality, power, authority, competition, and exploitation (Conflict Theories, 2011).

Some of the examples that would be used in the social conflict theory are authority. Authority takes into account the family, patriarchy, race and ethnicity hierarchies of authority. In inequality there is family, health, and property. Inequality looks at how people are treated and how are perceived by others. Then there is competition which; can be anything from education, religion, to who will move over when you pass someone on the street. Competition is ingrained in all of us from the time we are born until the time we die (Conflict Theories, 2011).

The power and exploitation can go hand in hand. The people that are in power or come to power got that way by exploiting citizens along the way. Power, if not kept in check, will

make the honest of men corrupt. Once the corruption sets in they will use that power to exploit people along the way to gain more power (Conflict Theories, 2011).

Karl Marx believed there two groups of people in society, the wealthy and the poor. He studied what would happen if one group decided to up rise against the other. He looks to see what would happen and what roles the people involved would take. Once the sides are chosen and the revolt has begun, Marx will study the inner workings of the dominate class to see how they retain their status after the conflict has ended (Conflict Theories, 2011).

Social conflict can be either used for good or bad. Take any uprising against the local government. In Somalia the people have been fighting their government for equality and fairness. The government themselves are fighting its own people to keep the control or power. All across time there is human uprising against those in power. The earlier battles were fought for land, the later battles are fought for greed, power, and wealth.

Some examples of bad social conflict are the recent increase in school shootings, bombings, and over all violence that is plaguing the country today. Unfortunately the innocent by stander is usually the one getting hurt or killed. This is not just limited to the United States; it is all across the globe. Those that are in power want more power and wealth to control those who are less fortunate.

So, the social conflict theory is about those in power wanting to stay in power and those not in powers wanting to gain power. Throughout time there have been many battles waged in the desire to gain power. It all began

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with Karl Marx and has evolved over time to incorporate many other theories about crime and what causes it.

There is also the realistic theory; this theory is about one's group gain, due to another group's loss. This can be brought on by limited resources, this can lead to conflict. This can lead to more friction within each group when they compete for resources. This theory is a social psychological theory thought to explain prejudice (Conflict Theories, 2011).

An example for this would be immigration. With all the bombings, terrorist attacks, and violence from one ethnic group or religious group. With the recent Boston bombings, this will lead to a negative reaction to all immigrants of Muslim decent. It doesn't matter if they are of Middle Eastern decent, people will see just the color of their skin and automatically lump them into one category, terrorist.

This theory can be traced back through history. It can be seen with the British and Native Americans, Whites and blacks, Japanese and American, and recently middle eastern and Americans. Most of these conflicts have happened over one ethnicity doesn't like what the other one believes, whether it is religion, politics, or moral standings.

Muzafer Sherif did the famous study called "Robbers Cave" in 1954. He basically took two groups of teenage boys, put them in a camp, and had them compete against each other. He had 22 boys in the study, all middle class white boys. These boys all came from similar backgrounds and upbringing. He randomly assigned them to a group (McLeod, 2008).

In the first week of the experiment, the two groups bonded with each other. The boys chose group names and stenciled them on their clothing and a flag. They bonded over hiking, swimming, and hanging out. This created an attachment that bonded the boys together (McLeod, 2008).

In the second week he challenged the boys to competitions against the other group. He used activities like, baseball, tug-of-war and other games. The winning group would receive a trophy at the end of the competition. He also included individual prizes to create competition against the other group and within the groups (McLeod, 2008).

The boys became physically, verbally, and mentally abusive towards each other. They burned each other's flags, tore up sleeping areas, and had to be physically restrained by the researchers. This study showed that it doesn't matter where you come from, you can turn to prejudice (McLeod, 2008).

Then there is the Game Theory which states "investigates the strategic behavior of decision makers who are aware that their decisions affect one another" (Skelkel, 2013). The gaming theory believed that people interacted with each other similar to a game. This was done by strategic moves, winners and losers, rewards and punishments, or profits and cost. It was the first model used to describe how the human population interacts (Game Theory An Overview, 2013).

So, with this theory you will have players, strategies, and consequences just like in a game. There are many types of games like zero-sum game, non-zero sum game, simultaneous move games, sequential move games, one-shot

games, and repeated games. These games are used to study the gaming theory (Game Theory An Overview, 2013).

A popular gaming theory is the prisoner's dilemma. The prisoner's dilemma shows" why two individuals might not agree, even if it appears that it is best to agree" (Game Theory An Overview, 2013). They use two people who have committed a crime and pit one against the other. The sentencing is done by how the criminals talk, or not talk. If one partner talks, they get sentenced and the other set free. If they both remain quiet they get a short sentence, if they both talk they both get a moderate sentence. They never reveal what the prisoners chose to do (Game Theory An Overview, 2013).