

Sociological Theory

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The human population is made up of many individuals with different personality traits and beliefs. How the population has interacted with each other has played a large role in how society is affected today. The study of the human population and the institutions within society is extremely important to society because it explains why individuals and groups within society interact and go about their everyday lives. Individuals who pursue this topic as a career are known as sociologists.. Sociology is the study of the people and how they interact within society. It also studies how society impacts and is directly impacted by individuals and the many groups within society. This essay is going to focus on three well known sociologists and discuss their theories that contribute to society as well as discuss theory and the scientific methodologies of sociology.

Auguste Comte is a very well known individual for being the founder of sociology. Comte was born January 19, 1798 in France where he then grew up in the peak of the French Revolution (Clauzade, 2020). In 1826, Comte began to speak of his philosophical ideas which are now known as the “system of positive philosophy.” These private lectures were the beginning of his career as a sociologist. The theory he is most known for is the idea of Positivism (Clauzade, 2020). This theory rejects any ideas that are not proven through evidence; furthermore, Comte is explaining that any knowledge on any subject must be based on scientific reasoning and or experiences (Clauzade, 2020). An example of this theory being argued in today's society is the religious belief system. This is due to the fact that most religious beliefs are not scientifically proven. Overall, Comte advocated for the belief that everything must be proven by scientific data or experience in order to be considered factual.

Karl Marx is a sociologist who was best known for his key theories revolving around the expansion of capitalism. Marx was born in 1818 and grew up in Trier, Germany in a large

household made up of nine siblings. He then went on and married his high school sweetheart Jenny von Westphalen; who was also a philosopher, political economist, as well a co-activist with Marx. Jenny gave birth to seven children; However, only three of the children were able to make it to adulthood due illness and starvation (McLellan, 1973). Although Marx was most known for his revolutionary sociological theories, it should be noted that he was also socialist advocate, historian and journalist. Karl Marx's Marxism theory analyzed the division of labor in society as well as the potential inherited struggle that capitalism will cause among the majority of the working class (Weiner, 1989). He theorized the concern and threat that capitalism brought to the human population and pointed out the separation between the working class and the bourgeoisie. Overall, Karl Marx's marxism theory pointed out the inequalities and imbalance of wealth in the economy due to capitalism (Weiner, 1989). He then died at the age of sixty four from bronchitis.

Herbert Spencer was a sociologist as well as a Victorian biologist philosopher. Spencer heavily believed that change was positive to society and society should constantly be looking to make a difference. Although he became very successful in his older ages, he was very ill during his childhood. He was one of nine, but due to illness he was the only to make it to adulthood. Spencer was the first to bring awareness to "Evolution" amount the human race. This is where he then got the phrase often used in biology "survival of the fittest." Through his evolutionary perspective, Herbert Spencer developed the theory of Social Darwinism (Hofstadter, 1959). This was based on the scientist Charles Darwin's theory of Darwinism. Social Darwinism explains the same laws as the Darwinism theory and applies them to human society. It discusses how when one is brought into a certain culture, group, or class, they are naturally set up for evolutionary success or failure based on characteristics they were born into (Hofstadter, 1959). An example of

this in today's world is racism. When one is born into a specific race there are already anticipated privileges and discriminations based solely on the color of their skin. Overall, Social Dawisims theorized that power and survival is preselected based on where, who or what an individual came from.

Each of these early figures in sociology are credited with creating theories. A theory is an abstract idea based in logic that aims to explain some phenomenon (Kenneth Allan, & Sarah Daynes, 2017). Theories are made up of a concept or concepts. Furthermore, in order for a theory to be a theory as opposed to an idea, it must have three qualities. These qualities are insight, explanatory power, and definition. However, it is also important to note that theories are not absolute. This means that even though most theories could be tested or observed, they cannot always be applied to every individual, experience, and or scenario. A sociological theory is a theory that specifically attempts to explain and or understand human behavior and society (Kenneth Allan, & Sarah Daynes, 2017).. Sociological theories give insight into the many levels and functionings of society. For example, Karl Marx founded the conflict theory in order to examine and explain the disparities he saw between social classes. In short, the conflict theory states that society and its individuals are in conflict due to a power struggle and limited resources. While Marx specifically focused on economics, his theories, much like other sociological theories, can help explain other areas within society. One could argue that racism and discrimination can be explained using the conflict theory. For example, society has marginalized groups of people because those in positions of power due to race, gender, class, etc. want to stay in power, which then leads to the creation of systems within society that strive to prevent the marginalized groups from reaching the same status.

Due to theory and its inability to be precise and exact, it could be argued that sociology is not a “true” or “real” science. However, sociology uses the same scientific method of all other sciences and disciplines (Kenneth Allan, & Sarah Daynes, 2017). Many sociological theories are able to be tested and results are able to be reproduced. It is because of the subjectivity of sociological theory that makes it so unique from other scientific theories. Scientific theories within the natural sciences are usually objective and not likely to change. For example, theories within the natural sciences consist of theories such as the cell being the smallest thing within a living creature. However, sociological theory does not have this ability because the theories attempt to explain systems, individuals, and behaviors that are constantly evolving and changing (Kenneth Allan, & Sarah Daynes, 2017). Furthermore, sociological theories can be far more broad and applied to many different situations and scenarios. For example, the conflict theory, as previously discussed, could help explain disparities within society, but it can also be applied to smaller groups and systems such as workplaces, families, and even individuals.

Sociology, although sometimes discredited and faced with skepticism, is a highly important subject and area of study. This field of study allows one to examine behaviors, interactions, and the functioning of the many systems and levels within society. Moreover, its theories provide one with insight and possible explanation as to how societies impact and influence the everyday decisions of people. Importantly, sociological theories are based on evidence and are able to be tested and results are repeated. Sociology has the ability to provide reasoning and explanation and also is able to help one understand and entirely view society.

References

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