

Conflict Theory

Introduction

- Sociology and Conflict Theory
- Social Power
- Other Theories of Conflict

Sociology and Conflict Theory

- Conflict tradition:
 - Society consists of conflict
 - When conflict is not present, social domination exists
- The Marx-Weber continuum of social conflict

Marx

- Theory of social classes
- Property rights create stratification
- Each class has own culture and outlook
- Political struggle defined by conflict between classes

Weber

- Capitalism derived from Puritan anxiety over salvation
- Social stratification based on class, status, and party
- Weber expands social conflict to include lenders vs. borrowers and sellers vs. consumers
- Social class defined by control over markets
- Dominant class maintained lucrative monopoly over a market

Exchange Theory

- People provide rewards to others to induce personal rewards
- Based on behaviorism and rationalism
- Conflict arises from unbalanced exchange relationships
- Resolution of imbalance depends on relative power of the parties

Symbolic Interactionism

- People create meaning by choosing those things that are subjectively important
- Meaning is sought through the use of symbols
- Conflict arises from multiple constructions of meaning and reality
- Conflict is inherent in society

Social Power

- Non-social powers: indentive, assertive, physical, force
- Social power: inducing change in another
- Social power consists of direction, base, and determination
 - Direction = purpose
 - Base = capacity
 - Determination = motivation

Conflict from Power

- As each person exercises power, power clashes occur
- The process of power balancing is called conflict
- Power balancing does not have to be equal or symmetrical
- Conflict ends when neither side has the direction, base, or determination to improve the situation

Sources of Power Capacity

- Information power
- Reward power
- Coercive power
- Expert power
- Referent power
- Legitimacy power

Other Theories of Conflict

- **Burton's Human Needs Theory**
 - People strive to fulfill deep-seated needs
 - Restrained by need to protect important relationships
 - Thwarting needs causes conflict
- **Integrative Theories**
 - Structural analysis looks at relationships
 - Psychocultural analysis looks at meaning

Summary

- Legal theory applies rules of law to particular disputes
- Legal theory guides to decision
- Conflict theory examines social interaction
- Conflict theory explains how conflict arose and what might be done about it now



The End