

Conflict Theory

Sociology

The family of approaches that read order as the outcome of unequal power.

A family of approaches treating scarce resources, competing groups and coercion as the normal condition of social life, with order as a temporary settlement.

CORE QUESTION

Cui bono?

ORDER FROM

power, not consent

- Order can rest on power as easily as on consensus.
- Ask who benefits, and who bears the cost.
- Marx: conflict over the means of production.
- Dahrendorf: conflict over authority in organisations.
- Feminist and race-critical strands widen the axis.
- Change comes from struggle, not from adjustment.

LOOK FOR IT

A functionalist reads exam grading as sorting talent; a conflict theorist as legitimating hierarchy.

Educational reference. The strong version can be unfalsifiable: any outcome is read as serving the powerful. Specify the mechanism.