Sociological Perspectives

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Functionalist Perspective

- Society as living organism; function for survival/stability
- Emphasizes that parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability
- Changes in one part of the system normally brings about changes elsewhere in the system.
  - Talcott Parsons (1902 – 1972) key contributor
  - Viewed society as vast network of connected parts, each of which helps to maintain the system as a whole(Compared with living organism)
  - Emile Durkheim

Functionalist Perspective

- **Manifest Functions**: institutions are open, stated, conscious functions that involve intended, recognized, consequences of an aspect of society
- Easily visible (University Degree)
- **Latent Functions**: unconscious or unintended functions that may reflect hidden purposes of an institution.
- **Dysfunctions**: element or process of a society that may actually disrupt the social system or disrupt its stability (homicide)

CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE

- Influenced by Karl Marx's work.
- Conflict perspective assumes that social behavior is best understood in terms of conflict or tension among competing groups.
- Sociologists use the conflict model not only on economic conflicts but also on conflicts that have no clear economic basis, conflicts over *values, ethics, and behavior*.
- Conflict theorists are interested in the kind of changes that conflict can bring about
- Karl Marx viewed struggle between social classes as an inevitable because of the exploitation of workers under capitalism.
- Conflict theory encourage sociologists to view society through the eyes of those people who rarely influence decision-making.

The Feminist Perspective

- inequality in gender (came from conflict perspective)
- talk on women's subordination under social structure
- Gender role
- Ida Wells Barnett, prominent thinker: vote for women
- inequality in all aspect (family, society, job, sports)

SYMBOLIC-INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVES



- ***Social interact everyday to explain society as a whole***

George Herbert Mead American Sociologist (1863-1931) is regarded as the founder of the interactionist perspective

➢ Symbolic interactionists view ***symbols***- things that we attach meaning- as the basis of social life.

A ***symbol*** is something representing something else:

➢ symbols range from words and language to nonverbal gestures and signs.

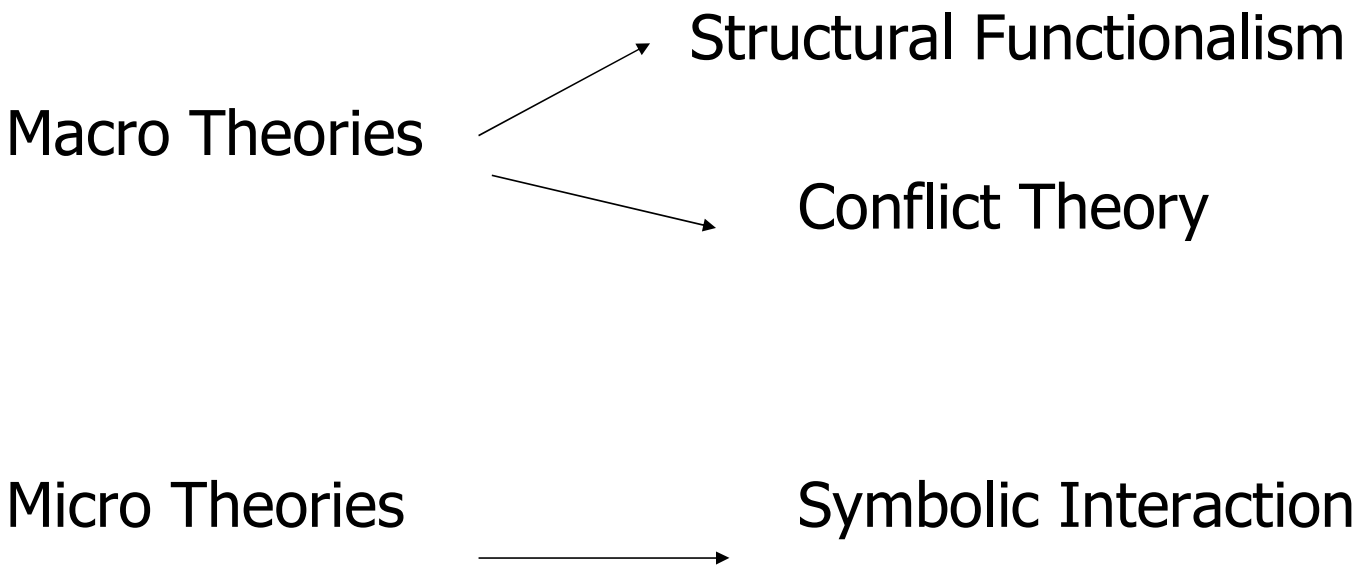
- According to symbolic interaction, people attach meanings to each other's words and actions
- Dramaturgical approach:

Erving Goffman: people are seen as the theatrical performers

Just actors project certain images

Present particular features of our personalities & hide other feature

- This understanding of the of the conditions in which we find ourselves, known as the **definition of the situation**


Structural Functionalism
Macro Theories
Conflict Theory
Micro Theories
Symbolic Interaction

Sociological Major Perspectives

	Functionalist	Conflict	Interactionist
View of society	Stable, well integrated	Characterized by tension and struggle between groups	Active in influencing and affecting everyday social interaction
Level of analysis emphasized	Macro	Macro	Micro, as a way of understanding the larger macro phenomena
Key concepts	Manifest functions Latent functions Dysfunctions	Inequality Capitalism Stratification	Symbols Nonverbal communication Face-to-face interaction
View of the individual	People are socialized to perform societal functions	People are shaped by power, coercion, and authority	People manipulate symbols and create their social worlds through interaction
View of the social order	Maintained through cooperation and consensus	Maintained through force and coercion	Maintained by shared understanding of everyday behavior
View of social change	Predictable, reinforcing	Change takes place all the time and may have positive consequences	Reflected in people's social positions and their communications with others
Example	Public punishments reinforce the social order	Laws reinforce the positions of those in power	People respect laws or disobey them based on their own past experience
Proponents	Émile Durkheim Talcott Parsons Robert Merton	Karl Marx W. E. B. Du Bois Ida Wells-Barnett	George Herbert Mead Charles Horton Cooley Erving Goffman