The Perspectives of Sociology

Conflict, Functional, and Symbolic Sociological Perspectives
Sociological Thinking

• Sociological Imagination
  • “...the vivid awareness of the relationship between private experience and the wider society.”
    C. Wright Mills
  • Ability to make connections between yourself and the wider world

• Sociological Perspective
  • Looking at society systematically in a scientific way to identify patterns and connections
Levels of Sociological Examination

• Macrosociology
  • Looks at Society as a whole on a large scale
  • Examines long term effects

• Microsociology
  • Looks at Society on an individual or small scale
  • Examines day-to-day interactions

• Globalization
  • Examines global impacts and connections
Theoretical Perspectives

• Sociologists develop theories of how societies work in order to test them.

• Groups of similar theories can be divided into three main perspectives of looking at society:
  • Functional
  • Conflict
  • Symbolic
The Conflict Perspective

• Developed by Karl Marx
• Macro-sociological Perspective
• Society is understood to be made up of conflicting interest groups who vie for power and privilege
  • This dynamic results in continuous social change, which is the normal state of affairs
• Conflict theory focuses heavily on inequality and differential distribution of power and wealth
  • Applied to Feminist Perspective
The Functionalist Perspective

• Developed by Emile Durkheim
• Macro-Sociological Perspective
  • Makes assumption that society is a large collection of interdependent parts
  • Society is stable and works through a system of consensus and cooperation
    • Dysfunction is anything that does not work as part of the society
• Each part of society works together for the benefit of the whole much like a living organism
Symbolic/Interactionist Perspective

- Developed by Max Weber
- Micro-Sociological Perspective
  - Interactionists Focuses on the interactions of individuals within a society
  - Symbolic is anything that has a larger meaning than just itself
    - Ex. Sports car as a symbol for youth