



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

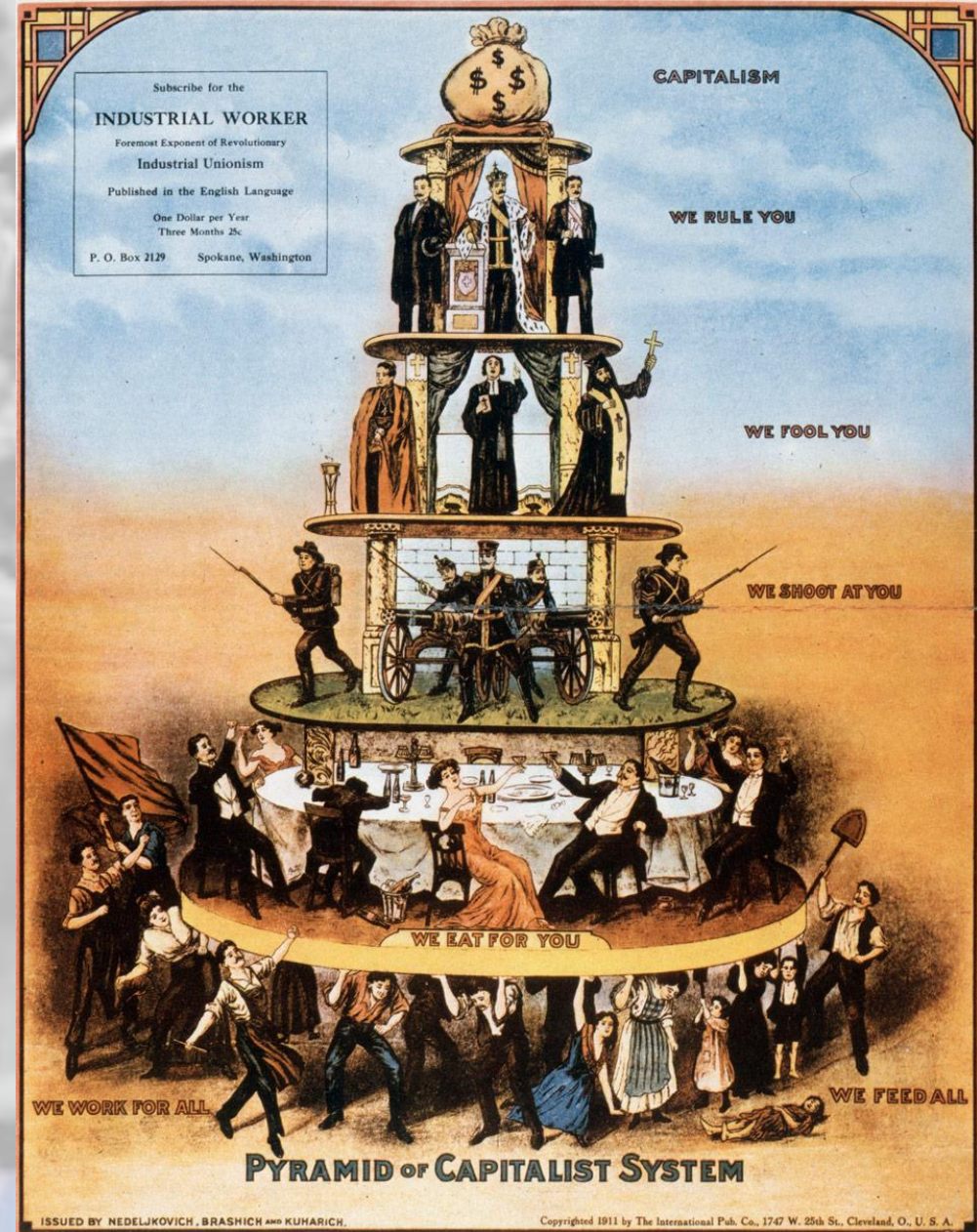


Theoretical Perspectives

- 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

