

INTRODUCTION TO THEORY

Theoretical Paradigms

1. Functionalism (Structural-Functionalism)

- a. Focuses on how social forces maintain stability
- b. Looks at structures of society: culture, family, religion, etc..
- c. Concepts: manifest and latent functions, dysfunctions
- d. Ex: education
- e. Macro
- f. Founders and followers: Conservative, white, men, religious (Durkheim, Merton)

2. Conflict

- a. focuses on competition for resources, winners and losers (inequality)
- b. social forces have “functions” for some people and “dysfunctions” for others (race, gender, class, sexuality)
- c. Concepts: power, subordination
- d. Ex. Education– tracking, taxes
- e. Macro
- f. Founders and followers: Marx, social critics, minorities

3. Symbolic Interactionism

- a. Focuses on how everyday interaction between people creates/sustains/changes social forces
- b. How do people experience life/interactions, what influences those experiences and interactions
- c. Concepts: identity, meanings (shared), expectations (roles), values, personality, interaction
- d. Ex. Education — interaction btw. Teacher/student, stage for teacher and student, standardized testing
- e. Micro
- f. Founders and followers: social psychologists (Weber, Mead, Goffman)

Usually you blend these three paradigms together

Ex. Feminist theories/scholarship

What theories would ask the following kinds of questions? (from page 15, *Society: The Basics*, Macionis)

1. How is society integrated?
2. What are the major parts of society?
3. How is society divided?
4. What inequalities exist?
5. How do people experience ____?
6. How do people create, sustain, change social patterns/expectations in everyday interaction?