I. Contemporary Theory

A. Three paradigms

1. Structural functionalism (Parsons)

1. society

i. sui generis

ii. static, stable, ordered

iii. sudden change threatens social order

1. institutions (social structures)

i. function together to maintain social order

ii. institutions structured so that they can perform function

iii. everything has positive function: maintaining social order

iv. system of stratification (inequality), deviance, education

1. individual

i. function of society

ii. needs to adapt

1. social roles

i. exist to integrate and harmonize individuals into society

ii. assuming social roles means assuming behavioral expectations (norms)

iii. norms are non-political and neutral constraints for mainting social order

e. Davis Moore Hypothesis: inequality as positive function for social order

2. conflict theory (Mills, Marcuse, Habermas)

1. society

i. conflict among groups with competing interests

ii. system of asymmetrical power relationships

iii. social order is the organization of domination and subordination (inequality)

iv. Marx competing groups were classes.

v. Conflict theory: class, race, gender

1. institutions

i. function to maintain inequality

ii. structured in such a way that the interests of those in power is reinforceed

iii. education, political system, system of stratification

c. individual

i. actor but constrained by institutionalized power

ii. life chances determined by social location

iii. social roles and norms are means of maintaining status quo (inequality)

iv. must understand interests (class, race, gender)

v. social movements are only means of challenging institutionalized power relationships

3. Symbolic Interaction (Mead, Goffman, Garfinkel)

1. society

i. dynamic process of social actors interpreting and acting

ii. continuously create and recreate at the micro level

b. institutions

i. institutions are social constructions (not given structures)

ii. created and recreated

iii. education

c. individuals

1. create society through social interaction

ii. act through learning to use symbols

iii. taking the role of the other

particular other

generalized other

iv. self

no core self

self comes into being through interaction

I (spontaneous) and the Me (Social self)

v. dramaturgy: “presentation of self”

vi. ethnomethodology “rules for interaction”

v. social role and personality theory: Zimbardo

vi. theory of authoritarian personality

( Arendt, Adorno)