

## **Sociological perspective**

### **Introduction:**

Perspective simply means the way how we look at the things. Every person has got his own angle to see or view things. Broadly, every man sees the world differently. This difference in the point of view is called "Perspective".

### **Meaning of Perspective:**

Perspective has a Latin root meaning "Look through" or "Perceive", and all the meaning of perspective has something to do with looking.

### **Sociological Perspective:**

- Studying the general in particular way is known as sociological perspective.
- Seeing the strange in familiar way is call sociological perspective.

### **Major Sociological Perspective:**

1. The Functionalist Perspective
2. The Conflict Perspective
3. The Symbolic Interaction Perspective

## **The Structural Functional Approach**

### **Functionalist Perspective:**

The functionalist perspective sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability.

### **Other Name:**

Functionalist perspective is also known as "Structural Functionalism" or "Functional analysis"

### **Introduced By:**

This theory was introduced by British sociologist Herbert Spencer. He is also known as second founding father of Sociology.

### **According to Herbert Spencer:**

- Society is made up of different parts .When all parts works together , society runs smoothly.
- Herbert Spencer Argued that just as various organs of body works together to keep body functioning, the various parts of society ( Social institutions ) work together to keep society functioning.
- Example:
  - This theory is the best example for understanding functionalist perspective. Herbert Spencer compared a living organism with society as living organism

is composed of different organs like heart, lungs, liver, kidney and all these parts are working together to keep a living organism alive and even if one organ stop functioning properly, either the organism will die or will suffer weakness.

- In the same way society is composed of different parts like institutions such as family, economic institution . political institution , religious institution , law, media, military etc. Even if one institution stops functioning properly, whole society can be effected,

#### According to Emile Durkheim:

- French Sociologist Emile Durkheim also said Society is composed of different parts and each part has a function
- He applied Spencer's theory to explain how society change and survive over time.
- Durkheim believed that society is a complex system of interrelated and interdependent parts that work together to maintain stability and that society is held together by shared values , languages and symbols.
- He applied Spencer's theory to explain how society change and survive over time?
  - He tried to explain Social cohesion and stability through the concept of solidarity.
  - In more "Primitive" societies it was mechanical solidarity.
  - Durkheim argued that modern complex societies are held together by organic solidarity ( think interdependent organs).
- Example:
  - Ad division of labour between husband and wife is essential for family stability and social order

#### Summary of Functionalist perspective:

- To understands society, functionalists prefer to look at both structure ( How parts of society are fit together to make the whole ) and function ( What each parts does? How it can contribute to society?)

#### Limitation:

- Unable to count for human change
- Why a function of some elements of society might change or how such change occur.

## **The symbolic Interaction Perspective**

### **Symbolic interactionist perspective:**

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theory that focuses on the relationships among individuals within a society.

### **Other Name:**

The symbolic interactionist perspective also known as "Symbolic Interactionism".

### **Origin:**

George H.Mead founded symbolic interactionism.

### **According to this Approach:**

- It is a micro-level study that focuses on the use of symbols and signs.
- Directs sociologists to consider and detail of everyday life what these symbols mean, and how people interact each other.
- Symbolic interaction traces its origin to Max Weber's assertion:
  - Individuals act according to their interpretation of the meaning of their words.
- Symbolic interactionism has a view that society is composed of symbols that people use to establish meaning, develop views about the world and communicate with each other.
- The basic point of symbolic interactionism is that human actions and interaction are understandable only through use of meaning communication and symbols.
- Communication-----the exchange of meaning through language and symbols-----is believed to be the way in which people make sense of their social words
- The Symbolic interactionist perspective of sociology views society as a product of everyday social interactions of individuals.
- Symbolic interactionists also study how people use symbols to create meanings

### **Examples:**

- Thumb up symbol is more like appreciation or good luck wishes in Western side and other cultures, but in other places like Russia it seemed as Insult.
- Putting your thumb down to say " NO "

### **Criticism:**

- Critics claim that symbolic interactionists neglect the macro level of social interpretation the "Big picture" In other words, symbolic interactionists may miss the larger issues of society by focusing too closely on the "Trees" ( For example, the size of diamond in the wedding ring ) rather than the "forest" ( For example, the quality of the marriage )
- It ignores certain common social facts like power, structure, and their constraining influence of human actions and interactions.

## **The Conflict Perspective**

### **Conflict perspective:**

The conflict perspective refers to the inequalities that exists in all the societies globally.

### **Origin:**

Conflict theory derives from ideas of Karl Marx.

### **According to this Approach:**

- According to the Conflict perspective, every society is troubled/irritated by inequality based on social differences among dominant group and all of the other group in society.
- Social conflict theory focuses on competition between groups within society over limited resources.
- According to this perspective, Society is made up of individuals competing for limited resources
- Distribution of power and wealth remains unequal.
- According to the conflict theory, the rich and powerful maintain a social order and stability by exploiting/using the poor and weaker segment of society.
- Today the social conflict believe that the social conflict exists due to inequality between various groups of society including racial, religious , gender, political and economic etc.
- The conflict and struggle between different groups result in ever changing nature of society.

### **Difference from Functionalist perspective:**

- The functionalist and symbolic perspective represents a positive aspect of society which indicate social stability. However, the conflict perspective argues the negative and conflict nature of society.
- Example:  
Inequality and injustice etc.
- Unlike functionalist theory, conflict theory is better in at explaining social change, and weaker at explain social stability.

### **Examples:**

- Feminism ( Struggle for equal right of woman ) is example of how a focus on power and inequality can bring about change in the situation of female in society and a positive move towards gender equality.
- People fight for food and water and even kill each other whenever there is a shortage ,survival is what they seek.

**Criticism:**

- Conflict theory has been criticized for its focus on change and neglect of social stability
- Some critics acknowledge that societies are in a constant state of change but point out that much of the change is minor and incremental not revolutionary.
- It shows negative view of society

**Conclusion**

To conclude that sociologists today apply/occupy three primary theoretical perspectives : The symbolic interaction perspective , The Functionalists Perspective and The Conflict Perspective. These perspectives offer sociologists theoretical examples for explaining how society influence people and vice versa.

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