

# Functionalist, Conflict and Symbolic interactionist perspective

## Introduction

Social perspective is one's view or opinion about society. It analyzes how human behaviour is shaped by society. Social perspective includes functionalist, conflict and symbolic interaction. All the three perspectives look society through their lens. Functional perspective view society as parts which work together while conflict perspective focuses on conflict between different parts of society. Similarly, symbolic interactionist perspective focuses on how interaction and symbols shapes society.

## Compare and Contrast

### Similarities between all three social perspective

#### 1) Social Change

All perspective consider

how society change over time.

## 2) Different Perspective

Each perspective offers a unique way of studying and seeing observing society.

## 3) More understanding of society

When integrated together, all social perspective provide a complete understanding of society.

## Differences between the sociological Perspective

### 1. Functionalist perspective

#### i) Society structure

Functionalist perspective argue that society is made up organized parts which work together in harmony to create balance and equilibrium in society.

### Example

Society is made up of family, religion, school, government which perform their respective function.

### ii) Focus of functional perspective

Functional perspective focuses on stability and equilibrium in society.

#### Example.

For example, the function of the family is to reproduce, nurture and socialize its members.

### iii) Proponents of functional perspective

Major proponents of functional perspective are Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Robert Merton and Talcott parsons.

### iv) Types: Effects of social elements on society

Functional use the term

functional and dysfunctional to describes the effect of social elements on society.

a) Functional element of society

An element is functional if it benefits the society and bring stability in society.

b) Dysfunctional element of society

If social element disrupt social stability.

### Example

According to Emile Durkheim, "Crime is dysfunction as it causes physical violence, loss of property and causes fear. However, at some time crime is functional as it create awarness in society and increases social cohesion"

Example of Functional Perspective in real world.

i) In working women in workforce contributed to formation of policies against sexual harassment

and job discrimination

ii) Increasing global warming and climate change resulted in forming COP meetings and signing of Paris agreement.

iii) Providing education to all and eradicating poverty are included in the list of Sustainable development goals of society.

## Conflict perspective

i) Society structure

Society is composed of different class structures which compete for power and resources.

ii) Focus of conflict perspective

It focuses on the conflict between the classes for resources and power. It analyze society by looking at which

groups have power and benefit from a particular arrangement.

Example.

For example, MNCs urge the governments to make such policies which benefit them.

iii) Classes according to conflict perspective

According to conflict perspective, there are two classes, namely Bourgeoisie and proletariat.

Bourgeoisie owns the means of production while proletariat owns only the ability to work.

iv) Proponents of Conflict perspective

- |              |                  |
|--------------|------------------|
| a) Karl Marx | b) Max Weber     |
| c) E.W Mills | d) Lewis A Coser |

Examples:

- i) According to Karl Marx, As societies evolve from agricultural to industrial society, the concern

for meeting survival needs were replaced by meeting profit targets.

ii) War:

The conflict between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir valley is example of how competition can lead to war.

iii) Similarly, Russia-Ukraine war and Hamas-Israel war are examples of competition for resources.

## Symbolic interactionist Perspective

i) Interaction of individual

According to this perspective, how people interact with each other and how society shape their behaviour

ii) Meanings of Symbols

People attach meaning

to symbols and act according to their subjective interpretation.

The verbal communication has words as symbol

The words have certain meaning for sender and which has the same meaning for receiver.

iii) Assumption of symbol interactionist perspective

- a) Meanings are important.
- b) Meanings grow out of relations
- c) Meanings are negotiated between people.

iv) Proponents

Proponents of symbolic interactionism

- a) C.H. Cooley
- b) G.H. Mead
- c) Ervin Goffman
- d) Herbert Blumer.

v) Level of analysis

In contrast to functional and conflict perspective, which



are macro-level perspective, symbolic interactionist perspective deals with micro-level analysis.

It does not consider the influence of social forces on individual interactions

Examples: of Symbolic Interactionist

i) For example, in Muslim societies we say "Assalam-u-Alaikum" for greeting while in Hindu societies, they say "Namaste".

ii) Marriages in Pakistan includes norms and customs like Mehndi, Barat etc.

iii) In muslim society, respecting elders and leaving place for them.



Q No. 6

Q 6(b) Answer

## Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is a belief in which a person overrides the culture of others and gives priority to his own culture.

Ethnocentrism is believing in the inferiority of other cultures compared to superiority of one's own culture.

### 1) Effects of Ethnocentrism

i) Ethnocentrism leads to extreme nationalism. For example, aggressive leaders like Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini believed in extreme nationalism.

ii) It leads to conflict and war. For example the war between Russia and Ukraine.

iii) It causes the nations to lead towards imperialism

For example, the 18th century imperialism of European powers.

Similarly, the manifest destiny doctrine of USA for purifying non-whites.

iv) In Indian movies, it can be seen that they try to show them more educated and superior to their Pakistani people.

v) It is the cause of terrorism because terrorist activities are result of ethnocentrism in society.

2) Theoretical view of ethnocentrism

Darwin noticed that primitive people confine their faith to tribe.

Similarly, August Comte suggested social solidarity in early societies was due to ethnocentrism.

Moreover, Ibn-e-Khaldoon Asabiyya

also stresses on social cohesiveness which has the meaning of ethnocentrism

## Q6(b) Xenocentrism

Xenocentrism is a belief when people or society prefer the culture of other society over their own culture.

### Explanation

Xenocentrism is considered a type of deviant behaviour because it is against the norms of society.

### Social perspective about Xenocentrism

According to Symbolic interactionist perspective, interaction of people shape their behaviour.

Now, in modern world, due to advancement in communication peoples' interactions have increased.

As a result, those societies which lag behind consider the

culture of developed societies as modern and superior to their own.

### Examples

Xenocentrism phenomenon is mostly found in South Asia where countries like Pakistan and India have a considerable influence of western culture.

### Effects of Xenocentrism

- i) Due to Xenocentrism, brain drain from Pakistan has increased
- ii) American's belief in that European produce superior automobile vehicles.
- iii) The concept that Japan produces the best electronics in the world.
- iv) Similarly, the belief in some people the western styled dress is more elegant and superior.
- v) Moreover, the belief in superiority of English education system are examples of Xenocentrism.

## Q6 (c)

### 1. Socialization

"Socialization is the process of transmission of culture, the process in which a person learns about the rules and practices of society.

~ Peter

According to Horton and Hunt.

"The process by which one internalizes the norms of the group to which one belongs".

### 2. Sources of Socialization

#### i) Family

Family is a source of reproduction, nurture and growth of members.

#### ii) Educational institutions

Education can teach skills and culture to youth

#### iii) Religion

Provide moral guidance and outlet for worship

iv) Age mates, friends, peer  
Similarly a person learn  
social values, customs and norms  
from his age mates, friends and  
peers.

More over other sources of  
socialization include literature,  
neighbours, mass media, community  
and society itself.

### 3. Functions of Socialization

- i) A person learns culture
- ii) It makes a person socialized
- iii) It transfer skills and play roles
- iv) It transform personality
- v) It reduces social distance
- vi) It makes society stable
- vii) Due to socialization, a society  
can have bright future
- viii) It teaches values, norms, customs  
through organized institutions i-e schools
- ix) It teaches in informal way i-e  
parents.

#### 4. Stages of socialization (Sigmund Freud)

According to Sigmund Freud human behaviour is the result of interaction of three components of brain i.e. id, ego and Super ego.

Similarly, he argued that, "a person's personality develops during the childhood and is shaped by through the five psychosexual stages which he called psychosexual theory of development."

These stages are;

- a) Oral stage (0 -  $\frac{1}{2}$  years)
- b) Anal stage ( $\frac{1}{2}$  - 3 years)
- c) Genital stage (3 - 6 years)
- d) Latency stage (6 - 11 years)
- e) Adolescence stage (11 - 19 years)

#### 5. Theory of socialization

Theory of Self Looking Glass:

According to C.H. Cooley people shape their identity according to perspective of



(5)

class, status, power

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other, which leads them to reinforce their perspective upon themselves.

Similarly, he argued that

"I am ~~not~~ not what I think I am, I am not what you think I am, I am what I think you think I am."

Thus, Socialization of a person is the result of interaction of people with other people.

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Q2 Answer

Q2 Role of Karl Marx and Max Weber in Explaining Social Stratification

Social stratification

Social stratification is the division of large number of people in layer according to their relative power, property and prestige

1.

## Karl Marx about Social Stratification

According to ~~functionalist~~ <sup>Conflict</sup> perspective of Karl Marx, society is composed of groups which are competing for power and resources.

The group which owns more resources exploit the group with no resources.

As a result of this, classes are formed in society.

These two classes are bourgeoisie and proletariat.

### a) Bourgeoisie

The class which owns the means of production.

### b) Proletariat

The class which owns no resources and has only the ability to work.

### c) Conflict between Bourgeoisie and Proletariat

Karl Marx argue that Bourgeoisie always exploit the

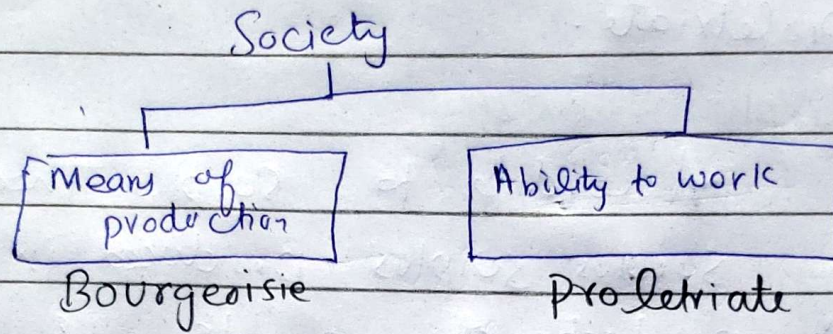
proletariate.

(i) Surplus theory:

According to surplus theory of surplus, surplus produced in the production of goods is shifted to owner instead of the worker. As a result, the owner becomes richer and richer while workers become poor and remained exploited.

Example

For example, if a good require 3 hour labor to transform from a raw material. The cost of raw material is \$5 dollar after a machine work of \$10/hr for 3 hours it can be transformed to \$100 good. But surplus which is about \$65 dollar is provided to owners. But worker gets only \$10/hr which is the exploitation of workers or proletariate class.



(ii) Class, Status and Power: Addressing

As a result of classes in Society, according to Karl Marx, Bourgeoisie class is powerful and it urges the government to make policies which favor them.

According to Karl Marx, social Stratification results from lack of opportunity and discrimination against poor, women and people. If they are provided with the opportunity, they can prove themselves.

So, Karl Marx stress on a classless society.

# ★ Max Weber about Social Stratification

## 1. Three-component theory of stratification

Max Weber gave a more broader concept than Marx.

He argued that social class as well as social status is a result of 3 inter relevant components i.e. property, prestige and power.

According to his theory, three component theory of stratification "society is divided into groups based on their economic class, social status and political power."

This theory is also called Weberian stratification.

### i) Economic order

A person's economic position based on their wealth, income and assets.

It also depends on their individual achievements.

## ii) Social status

A person's social prestige or honor.

It can be shown through symbols of status.

The luxury items used by the elite class.

## iii) Political power

A person's ability to achieve their goals despite opposition.

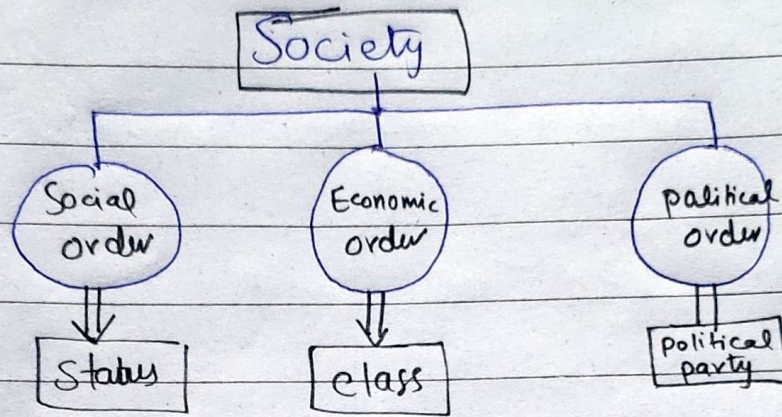
It can be shown through their political parties.

## iv) Interaction of three components

Weber argued that social stratification or division of people into layers is a result of the interaction of these three components.

## Example

For example, a person's social order can be determined through their social status and economic order through their class and political order through their party.



Status tells about social order

Class tells about economic order

Party tells about political order.

Thus Max Weber theory gives a broad concept of social stratification. In contrast to Karl Marx, which focused on economic order as the base of stratification, Max Weber focused on economic, social and Political order as a base for social stratification.

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