Ethnicity and Classical Theory

Weber, Marx and Durkheim
Paradigms Theoretical Frameworks or

• The relationship between theory and methods in sociology is as follows:
  
  a. **Concepts** are the building blocks of sociology
  
  b. From concepts Sociologist develop **propositions** about how the social world works
Theoretical Orientations

• c. **Formalized** propositions are hypotheses…ie. (ie. Ethnicity, stratification and institutional completeness….

• An **ethnic group** that is lower in social stratification will be (more institutionally complete)
Paradigms

• D. **Hypotheses** that stand the test of time are raised to the level of theory...ie Marx’s theory of dialectical materialism

• E. **Groups of interrelated theories** are called theoretical paradigms or theoretical orientations.
How Research Filters Perception

Values, Theories, Existing Research, Methods

REALITY
The Research Cycle

1. Figure out what matters to you
2. Formulate a testable theory (a tentative explanation of a phenomenon)
3. Review existing literature
4. Select method(s)
5. Collect data
6. Treat subjects ethically
7. Analyze data
8. Report results
Biology as Ideology

Functionalism and Conflict Theory
Biological determinism

- **Biological determinism**, also called genetic determinism, is the hypothesis that biological factors such as an organism's **individual genes** (as opposed to social or environmental factors) completely determine how a system behaves or changes over time.
Appeals to Nature

- The **naturalistic explanation** for why the world is the way it is goes as follows: we differ in our innate capacities.
- **Biological determinists** believe that society derives from innate characteristics transferred from generation to generation.
Functionalism—an ‘is’ perspective

- **Functionalism** accepts genetic differences between genders, races, and classes as natural & inevitable.
- Ie. Sociobiology & Psychoanalytic Theory
- Structural Functionalism
- THAT’S the Way it Is!!!
- All of the above make appeals to nature
The Biology is Destiny Argument

• The biological determinist argument makes four points as follows:

• 1. The differences between us is derived from our genes

• 2. These differences in ability are converted into differences in status
Four points cont..

3. Society, then is naturally hierarchical—social inequality is inevitable

4. Social equality- a society of equal reward and status is biologically impossible. See Davis and Moore on “Stratification” (1945)
Society is a beehive

• Kinsley Davis and Wilbert Moore
• Functional Theory of Stratification "Some Principles of Stratification" (1945)

• Equality is impossible—individuals are naturally stratified.
Social Darwinism

• The idea that **blood will tell** was not invented by biologist per se, but by nineteenth century **Social Darwinists**…and popular literature such as **Oliver Twist** …The artful dodger is a “snubbed nosed, flat browed, common faced boy…etc…”
Early psychology (Baldwin)

- **Sociobiology** -
- An early branch of Psychology made wild claims about human **physical characteristics and behaviours**:
  - Shifty eyes = criminal
  - red hair = violence
  - black men with darker skin are more animalistic
Early Psychology

• Not only were differences restricted to innate individual differences

• Nations and Racial groups were subjected to the same treatment:

• Ie. Carl Brigham -IQ Tests “the decline of the American intelligence will be more rapid…owing to the presence here of the Negro”
19th century thought

• 19th c. Psychologist Louis Agassiz-argued that the skulls of Negro babies close earlier, so their brains were entrapped

• Osburne, President of the American Museum of Natural history argued that the northern races invaded the southern so as to “contribute strong and moral elements to a more or less decadent civilization….
Conflict/Materialist Approach

- Biology is at the foundation of gender construction.
- However it is culture that has promoted inequality.
- This was the position of Fredrick Engels in his famous essay “Origins of Family, Private Property and the State” (Tucker, 1971)
Conflict Theory (from is to ought)

- **Patriarchy**, he argued emerged out of the development private property....
- Man’s **ownership of land and other resources** led to a belief that female sexuality had to be **controlled**.
- For Engels **patriarchy is not inevitable**, this is the thinking of those who fail to look at history....and material construction of society
Historical Materialism and hierarchy

• Marx’s historical materialism sought to demonstrate how systems are dialectically linked...and capitalism is not inevitable.

• Capitalism is only one historical mode of production.
MARX AND ENGELS

TO THESE CONFLICT THEORISTS:

• Differences in wealth, status and power between classes, ethnic groups and genders ARE not natural.

• They are socially constructed by owners of the means of production
Ethnicity and Classical Theory

Weber, Marx and Durkheim
Auguste Comte (1798–1857)

• Auguste Comte (coined the term *sociology* after he discovered that his preferred term, *social physics*, had already been used by a Belgian statistician.

• Never a particularly humble man, Comte sought to construct the complete theoretical-methodological framework within which the supreme form.
Positivistic science

• His philosophy is known as *positivism*, was to reach its apex in the most complete scientific discipline, *his social physics*.

• Because he is taken to be the defining *"father" of sociology*, we need to examine carefully just what his sociology entails.
What is a theory?

- **What is a theory?** An explanation for a general class of phenomena.
- In contrast to a theory, an approach, paradigm or perspective rarely spells out issues it merely suggests how the phenomenon can be looked at.
Classical Theories

- **E. Durkheim** - (American Sociology T. Parsons)
- **Karl Marx** - (Frankfurt School A. Gramsci)
- **Max Weber** - (Chicago School-G.H. Mead)

- **Founding Fathers** help to generate the **paradigm** of sociological thought and enquiry
- **Paradigms** - Structural functional, Conflict and Symbolic interactionist perspectives, respectively.
Sociology’s basic paradigms

1. STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM
   (Conservative, adaptive, equilibrium)

2. CONFLICT
   (Oppression, conflict, division)

3. SYMBOLIC INTERACTION
   (meaningful, negotiated interpreted)
basic paradigms

• 4. **Feminism** – Branches – liberal, Socialist/Marxist, Anti-Racist, Post-modernist

• 5. **Post Modernism**- M. Foucault

  • (chaos, pluralistic, fragmented, no grand narratives)
Paradigm

- **Paradigm** - set of explicit and implicit assumptions that gives an idea meaning and direction.

- **Grouped together** under one paradigm are many theories that operate with the same worldview.

- Other names for paradigm include perspective and conceptual framework.
Characteristics of Paradigms

- **Paradigm are broader** than theories; they contain a number of theories.
- According to D. Cheal (1987) theoretical approaches have five important uses:
  - 1. **Provide concepts** to analyze data and communicate ideas.
Characteristics

2. They focus are thinking-direct our attention to certain phenomena rather than others.

3. They provide ways of answering questions by orienting assumptions.

4. They interpret what we observe.

5. They involve value judgements rooted in conservative or radical ideologies.
Theory and Ethnic Pluralism

• Except for Max Weber the classical theorists were little concerned with ethnic minorities.
• Durkheim was concerned with social solidarity.
• Marx was concerned with social class…
• Weber was concerned with status groups such as ethnic…
Weber on Ethnicity

• **Ethnicity** was a concern for Weber,
• Question: Was he debating with the ghost of Marx?
• Marx believed *proletariat* (an economic status group) would unite and create socialism. Weber, on the other hand, believed that **the issue was more complex**.
“Ethnic Groups”

- Weber’s outline shows that at the heart of ethnicity are other related variables such as race, culture, tribe, nationality and religion ....
- Weber believed that one cannot develop an analysis of ethnicity isolated from these other factors.
Ethnicity and Five Factors:

• 1. Race and Biology
• 2. Culture and Consciousness of the Kind
• 3. Tribe
• 4. Tribe solidified by religion
• 5. Nationality and Universalism
Race and Biological Inheritance

- Weber contends that biological physical characteristics and difference can be the focus of consciousness of kind.
• He maintains that different groups, bred in isolation can induce and affinity or dis-affinity that attracts or repels individuals to one another.

• (It is only human for individuals to emphasize and exaggerate differences.)
Bio-geographical divisions

• Weber maintains that bio-geographical divisions which he identifies as Negroid (Black), Mongoloid (Yellow) and Caucasoid (White)...

• Serve as a basis for a `generalized consciousness’ of race
Bio-geographical Divisions

• ....the world is divided into three major geographical breeding ground of human population:)

•
• Africa, Asia, Europe….these local reflect ideological, political, economic, and cultural biases.  (World Views)
2. **Culture and consciousness of kind**

*Biology and geography* then give rise to a consciousness of kind reinforced by religion and superficial, features of historical accident.
Cultural differences in clothing style, grooming habits, food and eating habits entrench notions of a "social circle"

The ‘social circle’ maintains a “consciousness of kind” …WE THE PEOPLE…
• Any **cultural trait**-including beards, hats, hairdos etc-are **differentiating symbols** of the in-group vs. the out-group.

• Symbols are the core of “meaningful action and activity”
3. **Tribe: Emergence of A People**

- For Weber, it is interesting that many tribal groups refer to themselves as the People.
- **Native Canadians** “the People”
- The twelve tribes of Israel ‘the People’
• The notion of the people is political.

• Tribes are formed out of families banded together for political action…

• US vs. Them, superior and inferiors are embedded with symbols of the people.
Lore and the Tribe

• Over time, stories of what the tribe does becomes lore passed on from generation to generation…

• Lore and mythology - combine in theology

• Religion helps to sustain belief systems.
4. Religion

Not only does ethnic group contain a sense of race and tribe, a consciousness of kind, nationalism, it also must contain a spiritual foundation.

Group interest without “spiritual wings are lame…..
Religion and Meaning

• Religion helps to generate meaning, reinforcement and justification for group interest.

• Religion helps to generate ideology of the life process expressed in action.

• Weber would contend that religious values orientations are the core of ethnic group identity.
5. **Nationality**

- Not only is **the tribe** important for hunters and gatherers, or pre-industrial societies, also significant in urban human relations.

- **The tribe** is a foundation of nationhood.
National Identity and Status

• People require at least a vague notion of what is distinctive **unique and common**” “I am Canadian”

• Feelings of identity subsumed under national are not uniform but they are there nonetheless…..
National Identity

• We strive for a feeling of the People or the Volk..

• For example, there may be many languages in a nation but languages seem to take on their own prestige ranking.
Social Closure and Status Group

- Max Weber's concept of social closure states that a dominant group safeguards its position and privileges by monopolizing resources and opportunities for its own group while denying access to outsiders.
• MARX ON ETHNICITY

• CLASS CONFLICT SHOULD SUPERCEED ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION<<<
Marx: Historical Materialism

- **A.K.A Dialectical materialism** - see Hegel

- **Marx was a revolutionary**, concerned with social change, society is ordered according to economic conditions.

- **Modes of Production** - tribal, ancient communal, capitalistic, socialistic.
Materialism:
Marx on Capitalism

• a. **Industrialization** enhanced by steam power
• B. Industrialization gave rise to more and more **urbanization** and **alienated labour**.
• C. **Capitalism** washed away earlier forms of association making **man prisoner of material interests**
Marx on Capitalism

• D. Factories were enslaving individuals, reducing labour skills to \textit{alienated labour}.

• E. The only important “consciousness of kind” was “\textit{consciousness of the proletariat}” as workers against bourgeois owners.
Marx on ethnicity

• a. **Industrialization** undermines community and social relations

• b. **Ethnicity** is an important way of fighting alienation, it enhances group life a **precondition** for a revolutionary proletariat.
Marx on Ethnicity

- Ethnicity provides a sense of belonging, people who care, it promotes meaningful communities.
- d. Ethnic identification should not stand in the way of pure class consciousness;
- E. Pure class consciousness is only made possible in capitalist society.
`Common’ not “ethnic” exploitation

• Ethnicity is one means of producing a revolutionary proletariat capable of overthrowing the bourgeoisie.
• Marx believes that the ruling class uses nationalism and ethnicity as a means to prevent workers from different nations from uniting and recognizing their common exploitation.
Marx on ethnicity

- **Ethnicity** is a rallying point for class consciousness.
- **Ethnicity**, however, is used by the bourgeoisie to exploit workers. (epiphenomenon)
- **Ethnic identification** will no longer be important in socialist/communist society.
Durkheim: Cohesion

- Durkheim concern with industrialization was with its impact on social cohesion or integration and with the changing forms of the sacred.

- Durkheim, the most conservative thinker of the three, believe that the crisis of the new modern age was the disintegration of stability and authority.
Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft

- Durkheim borrows from the work of Tonnies Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft and develops the concepts mechanical and organic solidarity.
Mechanical Solidarity

• Traditional or folk societies are characterized by mechanical solidarity,
• members of these societies do not think about their social structures,
• they follow rules mechanically through traditions and customs.
Organic Solidarity
Modern societies

• Modern societies are more loosely bound-norms and values are more rationally adhered to **through free association**.

• Modern societies are compartmentalized, by institutions and held together through collective consciousness despite **individuality**,
Durkheims take on Ethnicity

• A. Attachment to meaningful groups is crucial to an integrated society
• B. Like family and religion and socialization (integrating forms of solidarity) ethnicity can act as an intermediate association,
• C. They are buffers between traditional folk norms and values and rational, bureaucratic institutions
Anomie and egoism

- D. Ethnicity serves to guard against anomie and egoism.
- Anomie = normlessness, meaninglessness and alienation combined.
- Anomie and egoism lead to suicide and other deviant forms of behaviour
Acids of modernity

• Durkheim saw ethnic identity as important in that in combines gemeinschaft and gessellschaft, *mechanical* and *organic* solidarity

• Durkheim believes that older forms of association “*protect* the individual from the acids of modernity”.
Summary

• Each of the classical theorists derive their discussions of ethnicity from their general perspectives on society
• **Durkheim**-ethnicity and solidarity against suicide
• **Marx**-ethnicity is a primitive form-not needed when class consciousness emerges
Summary cont..

- **Weber** - ethnicity derives from biology and geography, family and religion, the tribe.
- For Weber
- Ethnicity = consciousness of the kind
- Consciousness is linked to symbols and interaction within and between groups.