Sociological Paradigms on Ethnicity

Structural Functionalism, Conflict Theory and Symbolic Interactionism
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.)
Social Physics and Positivism

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

• Comte's positivistic science of social physics is commonly recognized to be the first *systematized sociological theory*. 
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 Theorist/Theories

- E. Durkheim—(American Sociology T. Parsons)

- Karl Marx—(Frankfurt School A. Gramsci, G, Lucas, L, Altusser, )

• The Founding Fathers helped to generate the paradigms of sociological thought and inquiry
Sociology’s 5 paradigms

1. STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM
   (Conservative, adaptive, equilibrium)

2. CONFLICT
   (Oppression, conflict, division)

3. SYMBOLIC INTERACTION
   (meaningful, negotiated interpreted)
Two newer paradigms

1. Feminism – Branches – liberal, Socialist/Marxist, Anti-Racist, Post-modernist

2. Post Modernism - M. Foucault
   - (chaos, pluralistic, fragmented, no grand narratives)
Paradigms

- **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 world view.

• **Other names** for paradigms include: theoretical perspective and conceptual framework.
Characteristics of Paradigms

• Paradigms are broader than theories; they contain a number of theories.

• According to D. Cheal (1987) paradigms or approaches have five important uses:
5 uses of paradigms

1. Provide concepts to analyse data and communicate ideas.
• 2. They **focus our 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.
Major theories

• Are categorized into paradigms

• These paradigms or theoretical approaches are particularly important to sociology

• Sociology a discipline that deals with Social Life - ideas and symbols not objects.
Paradigms Differ

1. On their view of human nature

2. On their view of social change

3. On view of how to study and observe human society
• Three Main Sociological Paradigms:
1. Structural Functionalism

1. Assumes that society is a stable, cooperative system.

2. Society is like an organism, (parts within the whole)

3. Societies are more or less structurally differentiated.
Structural-functionalism

5 characteristics

1. Structural-functionalism holds that society is ‘normative’ order

2. People’s behaviour is organized around social institutions comprised of rules and norms
3. **Institutions** are comprised of rules and norms, promote **social integration**

4. Functionalists tend to ask questions about the **functional and dysfunctional** elements of human behaviour and social institutions.
5. System Equilibrium

- **Functionalists** emphasize:
  - system equilibrium,
  - normative consensus,
  - institutional symbiosis.

- Therefore, **Functionalists** such as T. Parsons (1955) believe that **conflict is temporary and resolvable.**
SF-Conservative paradigm

• Societies tend to *towards equilibrium, harmony, balance.*

• A *conservative perspective `IS’ ORIENTATION*

• At the root of structural functionalism is the *Hobbesian view of the state of nature.*
Hobbesian

- The structural functionalist is accepting of the Hobbesian view of man.
- It accepts that society is biologically based hierarchy as inevitable.
- The theory has its roots in Social Darwinism.
- Status differences are natural and functional.
Structural Functionalism

- Structural Functionalism is a **macro-level** perspective
- It views society as a **system of interrelated parts**
  - **Society is integrated by** (rules & norms=institutions)
- The major parts of society are **institutions**
- The institutions interrelated and interdependent. (symbiosis)
SF- Socialization Paradigm

Idealism

• **Ideas** exist independent of social forces
• **Ideas** about family, religion, politics derive from human reproduction
• **Ideas** are produced inter-generationally
Agents of Socialization

- **Ideas are internalized** through socialization
- **Agents of socialization**—parents, peers, teachers, religious leaders, mass media are the voices of society.
- Society does not speak with one voice but rather **many voices—agents**.
Criticisms of SF

• Functionalism has been criticized as **ahistorical, conservative and static**

1. It fails to account for the historical processes that have produced social inequality (SF is **ahistorical**)

“The Way it is”

2. It accepts the system as it is…

3. Individual status difference- meritocracy and achievement are inevitable.
Functionalist APPROACH TO ETHNICITY

1. The Primordialist Approach
2. An `essentialist’ position
3. Ethnicity is `ascribed
   • “Primordial affinities and attachments”
     (Isaacs, 1975)
Primordial approach: Below are important

- A group’s –
- Physical characteristics
- History and origin
- Language, religion and value system
- Geographical origin
- Economic and political history/conditions
SF on Ethnicity

• Structural functionalists believe *ethnicity* generates *social integration*.

1. Ethnic identification is *functional*
2. Ethnicity *provides belonging*
3. Ethnicity guards against anomie and egoism
Sociologists adopting a functionalist approach

- **Observe** how certain groups are held together through ethnic affiliation.

- For example, Raymond Breton (1964) studies ethnic groups in terms of ‘Institutional Completeness’
1964

- Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants
- by Raymond Breton U of Chicago Press
2. The Conflict Paradigm

Conflict/Materialist Thesis.

• Society is viewed a system of unequal parts engaged in a struggle for power.

• Historically modes of production have been divided between haves and havenots
Conflict theory

- At the root of Marx and other conflict theorist is the JJ. Rouseau’s view of man in a state of nature
- “Human are born free but everywhere they in chains”.
- Man is basically good and altruistic—he becomes corrupted however by society’s institutions—particularly economic.
Dialectical Materialism

• **D dominators and dominated**- unequal groups

• **Examples**: Household owner/slaves, aristocracy and peasantry, bourgeoisie and proletariat
Conflict.

• Society is viewed a system of unequal parts engaged in a struggle for power.

• Groups are involved in a struggle which has an ultimate source - the owners of the means of production.

• Their ethnic ideology is an ‘opiate’ directed towards other groups not the owners of the means of production.
CPR Example

• Workers on the CPR did not unite into a proletarian revolution.

• **The Reason:** Ethnic cleavages, ethnic suspicions…

• Thus, the bourgeoisie-divide and conquer..
The white Working Class

• The white oppressed to turn to people of colour, jews native

• Displaced aggression and develop fantastic ideologies rooted in the Bible and others.

• It is a means of protecting private property.
White Oppression

• The white working class has very little in common with the true owners of the means of production,

• Yet they portray themselves as the colonizers over the colonized rather than an issue between the rich and poor.

• They buy into the ideology of the bourgeoisie.
Ideologies of Bourgeoisie

• **Disseminated** upon all groups in capitalist society
• An **ideologies** of achievement,
• The **system is fair** and the **State is neutral**.
• “Any man can become President” …”The Cream rises to the top”
• **Competition is healthy**-‘survival of the fittest’
Historical Materialism

- TRIBAL
- ANCIENT COMMUNAL
- FUEDAL

- CAPITALISM====false
  consciousness
- Socialism or `true’ communism
Key Notions

• **History is dialectical, staged and conflicted**
• **Dialectical** - each mode of production sows the seeds of its own destruction
• **All modes** above have been **beyond human control** - forces of production
• **Socialism** - the first mode of production in the interests of all
• .
The conflict perspective

- The conflict perspective holds that each prevailing system is maintained by an ideology used to justify inequality.
- See Oscar Lewis’ “culture of poverty” — a blame the victim thesis.
- Conflict theorists argue that should blame the system.
• The ideas of any epoch (mode of production) are the ideas of the ruling class.”

• These ideas maintain group hegemony
Epiphenomenon

- Derived from Marxism
- Ethnicity is one aspect of exploitation of labour by the capitalist class.
- Ethnicity and race issues are a bi-products of class relations and class conflict.
EPIPHENOMENON.

• Definition: [noun] a secondary phenomenon that is a by-product of another phenomenon. Synonyms: Search for synonyms for ..
A secondary phenomenon that results from and accompanies another: "Exploitation of one social class or ethnic group by another [is] an epiphenomenon of real differences in power between social groups" (Harper's)
Internal colonialism

• The term is used to describe the uneven effects of economic development on a regional basis,
• otherwise known as "uneven development",
• IC describes the exploitation of minority groups within a wider society.

• This is held to be similar to the relationship between metropole and colony, in colonialism proper.
Example of Internal Colonialism

• **Internal Colonialism** (Hechter, 1978)
• Boynetown
• **Peripheral labour** - agriculture, community and ethnicity.
• Groups create solidarity detached from the center of political economy.
• See Peter S. Li, *Ethnicity in a Class Society*
CRITICISMS of Conflict Theory

• The only problem weakness in the conflict approach is that it’s deterministic and reductionist,
• Society is viewed in terms of conspiracy
• Fails to account for individual values and beliefs
• Lower classes support the system with their own ideas- this is not ideology
3. Symbolic Interactionism: the interpretive approach

- Symbolic interactionism portrays the social world as constructed, negotiated and meaningful.
- Sociologist use techniques such as participant observation to interpret members points of view.
- The approach focused on micro-sociological level of intersubjective experiences.
Social constructionism

• A symbolic interactionist looks at the **processes** by which intra-group and **intergroup relations** are defined and constructed through **on-going activities**

• Societal is social constructed and meaningful.
Symbolic Interaction Key ideas

1. Interpersonal relations and process construct an on-going reality

2. Macro-levels are constructed by micro-level processes

3. Social reality is fluid and negotiated in the moments

4. Reality is constructed, interpreted assessed by its members (situational)
SI Methods

- Symbolic interactionism adopts **qualitative methods**
- Symbolic interactionist study the world from `the **bottom up**`
- Their approach is **inductive** as opposed to deductive
- SI –an **Interpretative approach**- a perspective of details, situations-.
WEBER

• THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM…(1904)

• Debating with the ghost of Karl Marx?
• Or filling in Marx materialist conception?
• Weber is **not a radical** -liberal
• Weber a social democratic thinker (left of center)
Max Weber

- Weber argues that capitalism has its own spirit or ethos
- Individual rationality - time is money, rational bookkeeping, saving, investment are individual choices
- Capitalism Not solely determined by ideology
- People 'value' capitalism.
Status vs. Class

• **Social class** is Marx’s description of objective relations to the mode of production

• **To Weber, status groups** underlie social classes…

• **Status** determined **badges of honor** and preference. See McCauley “Nativism and Social Closure” IJCS (1990)
Spirit of capitalism

• The source of the ethic derives initially from **THE PROTESTANT ETHIC**
• Specifically, **Calvinism**
• Calvinism generated notions of **predestination** and **The Calling**…
• Found its way into 19th attitudes and beliefs.
• For example, Ben Franklin embodies **The SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM**
**Weber and Symbolic Interactionism**

- Max Weber’s work helped in the development of the Symbolic Interactionist paradigm.
- **Micro Sociology**-developed and enhanced by The Chicago School of Sociology
Symbolic interactionist

- A symbolic interactionist looks at the process by which intra-group and intergroup relations.
- **Inter-group relations** are defined and constructed through on-going activities.
For example,

- In their social world a KKK member, Neo Nazi, Arian Nation have a choice.
- They may either adopt inclusion or exclusion.
- They choose Social Closure and exclusion.
Social constructionism

• A symbolic interactionist looks at the **processes** by which intra-group and **intergroup relations** are defined and constructed through **on-going activities**

• Societal is social constructed and meaningful.
Social Closure (Weber, 1926)

• These groups believe their interest are like the bourgeoisie…Christianity, Anglo-Saxonism.

• **They use closure** to restrict access to resources and power
Internal colonialism

- the dominant group (bourgeoisie) imposes its social, political and cultural institutions upon upon others (both black and white proletariat) who the compete against each other.
Symbolic Interaction

• Ethnic association is about `membership’ and political advantage

• Ethnicity `re-emerges as a strategic choice in a competitive environment

• Ethnicity is about `power, status and privilege’
Ethnicity

• Is social psychological-an interpretive process
• Us and Them
• Ethnicity is purely symbolic
• Ethnicity is negotiated and constructed
Subjectivist Studies

- **Bennet** (1975) ethnicity is something new in the world….people of **seize their own cultural symbols** as a definition of their own identity.

- **Isajiw**-the persistence of ethnicity depends not on maintenance of identity (1gen)

- Rather new forms constructed (ie third gen)
Summary Paradigms

1. Structural Functional – primordial

2. Conflict– Epiphenomenon

3. Situational– symbolic Interaction
   • n
Three perspectives:

- **Functionalists** assume a stable cooperative social system. During times of stress and rapid social change, elements of the system unravel.

- Countervailing forces are activated by self-righting mechanisms to provide resolution of problems and management of contradiction.
Symbolic Interactionists

- Symbolic interactionism portrays the social world as constructed, negotiated and meaningful.
- The approach focuses on micro-sociological level of intersubjective experiences.
Symbolic interactionist

- A symbolic interactionist looks at the process by which intra-group and intergroup relations are defined and constructed through on-going activities. In their social world a KKK member, Neo Nazi, Arian Nation has a choice. They may either adopt **inclusion or exclusion.**
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:

- I.e. 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 gender 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.