

**Dysfunction**  
**Manifest**  
**Social-Conflict**  
**Sociology**  
**Positivism**  
**Structure**  
**Macro-level**  
**Structural-Functional**  
**Micro-level**  
**Paradigm**  
**Symbolic-Interaction**  
**Theory**  
**Function**  
**Latent**

# Sociological Theory



(Openclipart: Head's Vase, 2017; Quote is 'Anonymous')

“We also need to gain access to the various sites and patterns of human interaction, the various structures of social life that seem to be inalienably ‘there’. By recognizing that what is ‘there’ is much more than just the visible, that it is much deeper or more deeply experienced than just as sensation, we begin the search for conceptual analysis and adventure - a process both precipitated and guided by the works of the classics. Moreover, sociology reveals that the big picture of society always has us enclosed within it, as observers and participants; we are located.” (Bailey and Gayle, 1993: p.2)

# OBJECTIVES

- Define theory and theoretical paradigm.
- Differentiate between macro- and micro-level theories.
- Outline the structure of Sociological Theory.
- Identify the assumptions and core questions of the 3 main sociological theoretical paradigms.

# Sociological Theory

- Theory: a statement of how and why facts are related that is testable
- Theoretical paradigm/approach: a basic image of society that guides thinking and research
  - Structural-functional
  - Social-conflict
  - Symbolic-interaction

# Why Do We Need Theory?

- Facts do not speak for themselves
- Sociological theory helps to explain social behaviour in the real world (Macionis et al., 2017)

# Level of Analysis

- **Micro-level theories** focus on individuals and their interactions (Macionis et al., 2017, p. 19).
- **Macro-level theories** “examine social structures or structural elements as they influence experiences and behaviors” (Bengtson, Burgess, & Parrott, 1997, p. S76).

# Individual – Society Relationship

## Macro-level Theories

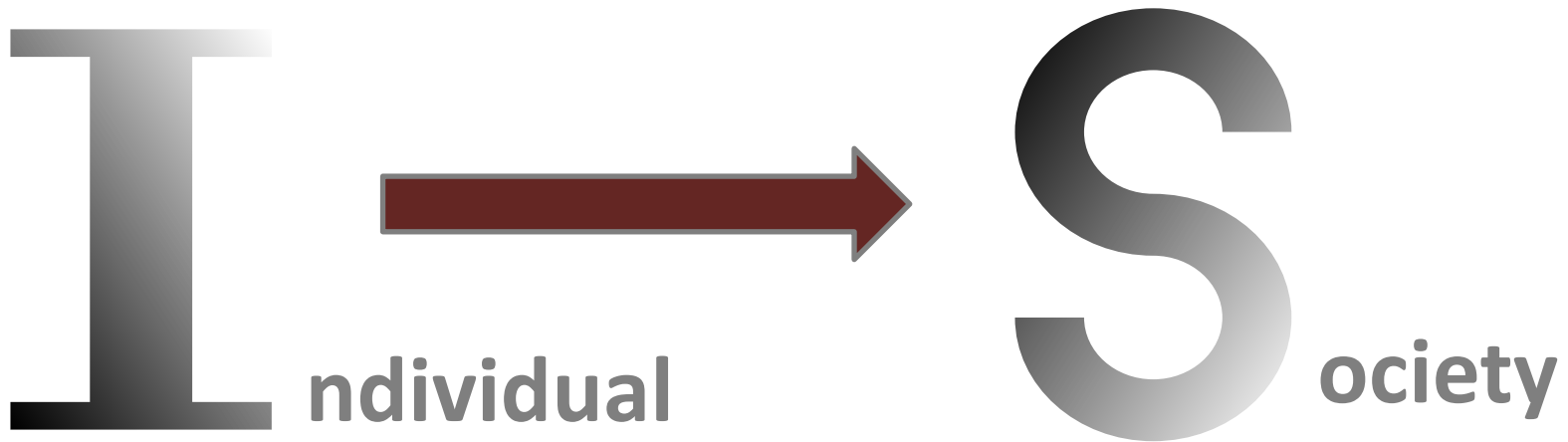


- Society/structural forces influence individual choices, experiences and behaviours



# Individual – Society Relationship

## Micro-level Theories



- The everyday actions and interactions of individuals creates society

# **SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**

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graph TD; A[SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY] --> B[MACRO-LEVEL]; A --> C[MICRO-LEVEL]; B --> D[STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL]; B --> E[\"SOCIAL-CONFLICT\"]; C --> F[\"SYMBOLIC-INTERACTION\"]
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**MACRO-LEVEL**

**MICRO-LEVEL**

**STRUCTURAL-  
FUNCTIONAL**

**SOCIAL-  
CONFLICT**

**SYMBOLIC-  
INTERACTION**

# Structural-Functional Paradigm

Views society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability

- **Social structure** refers to any relatively stable pattern of social behaviour
- **Social function** refers to the consequences of a social pattern for the operation of society as a whole: **manifest function** is intended; **latent function** is unintended; and **dysfunction** is disruptive.

# EMILE DURKHEIM

- Founding father of structural-functional paradigm
- A positivist – empirically test ideas with historical data
- 2 types of explanations; causal and functional
- Causal explanation - antecedent conditions that bring about an effect (e.g., Suicide rates depend on the level of social integration in society)
- Functional explanation – positive consequences of the social phenomena for the operation of society (e.g., Religion – promotes social solidarity)

# Social-Conflict Paradigm

Views society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and change

- **Society** is structured in ways to benefit a few at the expense of the majority
- **Factors** such as ethnicity, race, sex, class, and age are **linked to social inequality**
- **Dominant group vs. minority group relations**

# KARL MARX

- Classical sociological theorist that exemplifies social-conflict paradigm
- The most important predictors of social change are economic influences
- Capitalism is a class system with 2 classes: capitalists (bourgeoisie) and workers (proletariat)
- The two classes always exist in a state of conflict
- Best example of a theorist with a political agenda. Marx wanted to change the world (praxis).

# Symbolic-Interaction Paradigm

Structural-functional and social-conflict approaches are **macro-level**: focus on society as a whole.

SI views society as the product of everyday interactions of individuals: **micro-level**

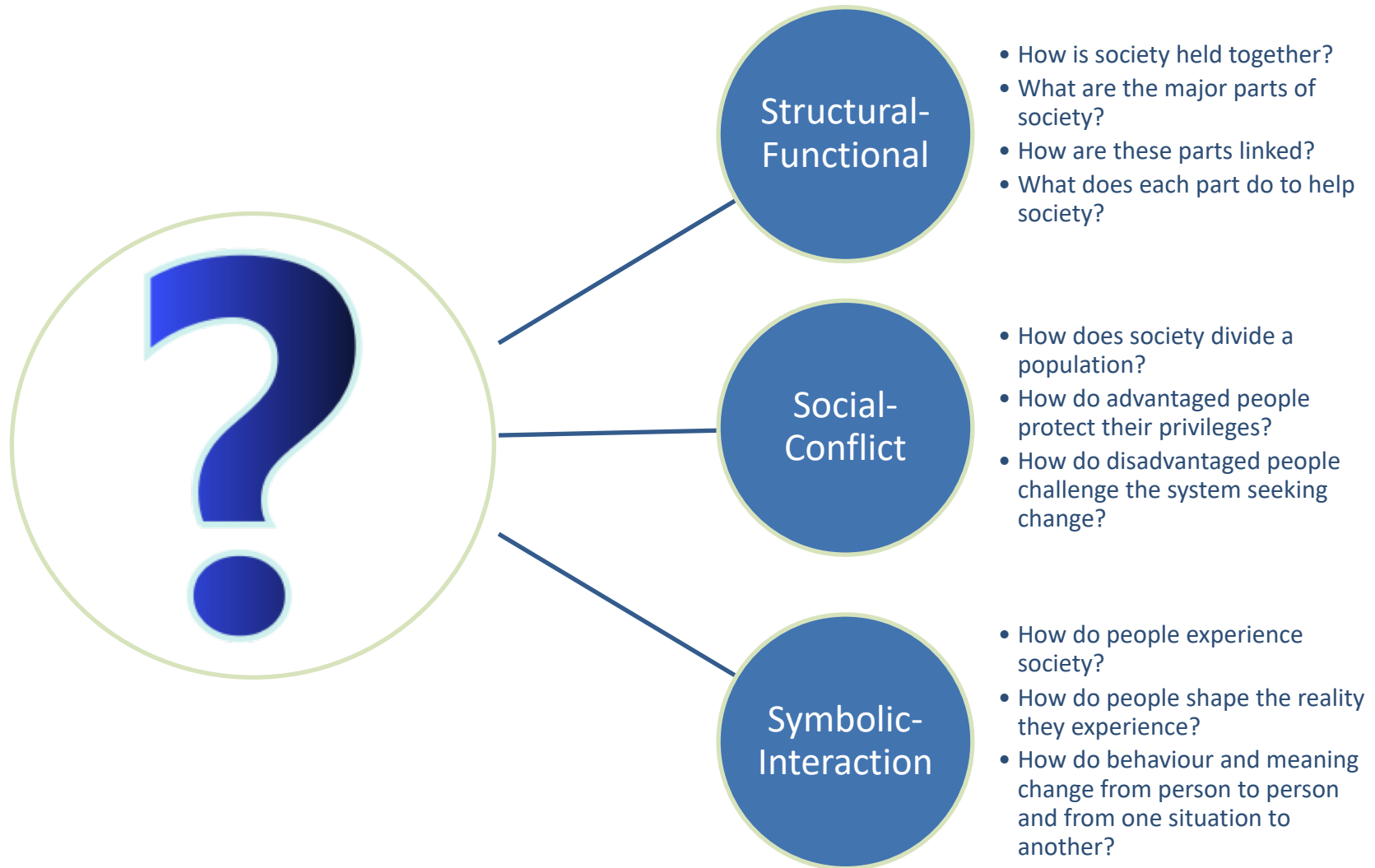
- Society is nothing more than the shared reality that people construct as they interact with one another
- Society is a complex, ever-changing mosaic of subjective meanings

# MAX WEBER

- A positivist like Durkheim and Marx
- Symbolic-interaction paradigm is based on Weber's work
- People are thinking reasoning beings that attach meaning to their behaviour
- Our actions are influenced by actions of others with whom we interact



# Core Questions



(Openclipart: Question Mark, 2015)

(Maconis, et al., 2017, p. 20)

# Critical Review

- **Structural-functional**
  - Ignores inequalities of social class, race, and gender; focuses on stability at the expense of conflict
  - Key words: order, stability, harmony, consensus
  - Concepts: structure, function, manifest and latent function, dysfunction
- **Social-conflict**
  - Ignores how shared values and mutual interdependence unify society
  - Key words: conflict, power, domination/subordination
  - Concepts: inequality, power
- **Symbolic-interaction**
  - Ignores larger social structures, effects of culture, factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, and race
  - Key words: social construction of reality, definition of the situation
  - Concepts: social interaction

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