Different Ways of Looking at or Understanding Society
Society creates individuals

Society

structure

studies how society affects individuals

Structural Functionalism

Marxism

Social Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism

Individual creates society

Individual

social action

studies individuals within society

Feminism

studies individuals within society
THE THEORIES...

- the theories are different ways of looking at society
- each one giving us a different image of the same thing
- some stress some aspects while others examine others
- each view the relationship between the individual and society but from a different perspective
STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

is often referred to as consensus theory because it doesn’t address the issue of conflict in society, instead it looks at an ideal* picture of social order and harmony.

*not everyone’s ideal
STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

- All societies have certain basic needs.
- These needs or functional requirements need to be met if a society is to survive.
- Concerned with the contribution the various parts of a society make towards those needs (family, religion, politics etc.)
- Concerned with the basic need and desire for social order and stability in society.
- Look at whole societies and not the individual; it explores ways that different parts that make up a society function to keep social order.
- Know your role!
Know your role!
**MARXISM** is often referred to as the Conflict Theory.

while **Functionalism** emphasizes ‘shared’ values and harmony, the conflict view of society sees society as divided into groups or classes whose interests conflict with each other.
MARXISM

✓ history is a record of how individuals organize themselves to satisfy their material needs for food, shelter and clothing.

✓ focuses on how goods are produced basically who is doing the labour or being used and who is benefiting.

✓ also looks at how people are organized in connection to the goods ...who has stuff and who doesn't have stuff.

✓ questions the fairness of society and the social class system.
CAPITALISM
IN A SIMPLE GRAPHIC

This graphic is meant to explain the vast inequality between the rich and the poor. Imagine as if the total percentage of a nation’s wealth and population was directly represented by 100 people. So the top 1% equals one person in this graphic, and 1% of total national wealth equals one coin in this graphic. This graphic is for the United States of America. Source address located at the bottom of this graphic.

THE TOP
1% WEALTHY

OWN 43%

One man = 43% of all wealth

THE NEXT
9% WEALTHY

OWN 40%

One man = 4.4% of all wealth

THE BOTTOM
90% WEALTHY

OWN 17%
FEMINISM

Like Marxism it is a Conflict Theory.

Functionalism stresses shared values & harmony but it ignores inequalities that might exist in a society.

The conflict view of society sees society as divided into groups or classes whose interests conflict with each other.

For feminists gender inequality is looked at.
FEMINISM

✓ this view of society stresses a better understanding of the social roles of men and women.

✓ it strives to raise awareness about inequality and to work toward social and political change.

✓ has raised awareness about discrimination, spousal violence, date rape and stalking.

✓ has related interests to race, class, sexual orientation, ageism, those with challenges and essentially any other marginalized groups.
On the flip side...

**SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM**

while *Structural Functionalism*, *Marxism* and *Feminism* all look at society from a larger viewpoint and how society influences the individual.

(macro)

*Symbolic Interactionism* looks at how the individual influences society. It approaches society from a different viewpoint.

(micro)
**SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM**

- focuses on how individuals learn about their society or culture through personal experiences and how they interpret things or give them meaning.

- we are motivated by what we learn more than by other factors like class or gender or societal needs.

- we learn our roles in society as sons or daughters, wives and mothers or husbands & fathers through our own participation in society and how we come to understand or view things.
DIFFERENT WAYS OF LOOKING AT SOCIETY

- these theories each have a different way of looking at society.
- each one gives us a different image of the same thing.
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- each view the relationship between the individual and society but from a different perspective.
Society creates individuals

structure

studies how society affects individuals

- Structural Functionalism
- Marxism
  - Feminism

Individuals create society

social action

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- Symbolic Interactionism