**Perspective:**

A perspective is simply a way of looking at the world e.g. the climate change and scenario of Bangladesh. *Each perspective offers a variety of explanations about the social world and human behavior.*

**Theory:**

A theory is a set of interrelated propositions or principles designed to answer a question or explain a particular phenomenon; it provides us with a perspective.

**Paradigm:**

A paradigm is a distinct set of concepts or thought patterns, including theories, research methods, and standards for what constitutes legitimate contributions to a field.

**Three major sociological perspectives**

Sociology includes three major theoretical perspectives:

- The Functionalist Perspective
- The Conflict Perspective
- The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective
- Critical Perspective

**Functionalism**

According to functionalism, society is a system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium for the whole.

For example, each of the social institutions contributes important functions for society:
1. **Family** provides a context for reproducing, nurturing, and socializing children;

2. **Education** offers a way to transmit a society’s skills, knowledge, and culture to its youth;

3. **Politics** provides a means of governing members of society;

4. **Economics** provides for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services; and religion provides moral guidance and an outlet for worship of a higher power.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociological perspective/ pioneers</th>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functionalism:</strong></td>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Relationship between the parts of the society; how the aspects of society are functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert Merton</td>
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| **Conflict:**                      | Macro             | Power exercise, Competition for scarce resources; how the elite control the poor and weak |
| Karl Marx, W. E. B. Du Bois and Harriet Martineau |                   |       |

| **Interactionism:**                | Micro             | Dramaturgical approach, impression management, Use of symbols; face to face Interactions |
| George H. Mead, C.H. Cooley, E. Goofman and G. Simmel |                   |       |

The functionalist perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of society by focusing on how each part influences and is influenced by other parts.

For example, the increase in single parent and dual-earner families has contributed to the number of children who are failing in school because parents have become less available to supervise their children’s homework. As a result of changes in technology, colleges are offering more technical programs, and many adults are returning to school to learn new skills that are required in the workplace. The increasing number of women in the workforce has contributed to the formulation of policies against sexual harassment and job discrimination.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effects of social elements/action</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional</strong></td>
<td>Elements of society are functional if they contribute to social stability. e.g.; education, religion (education is to transmit knowledge and skills to society’s youth).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dysfunctional</strong></td>
<td>It’s dysfunctional if they disrupt social stability. e.g.; corruption and trafficking</td>
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<tr>
<th>Merton’s functionalist view</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manifest</strong></td>
<td>Manifest functions are consequences that are intended and commonly recognized; university’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latent</strong></td>
<td>Latent functions are consequences that are unintended and often hidden; merit of poor and political decision</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Emile Durkheim</th>
<th>Solidarity and social bondage, <strong>social consensus</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social facts and disorder, Suicidal issues</td>
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| Herbert Spencer                  | Organ of the human body |
Conflict perspectives

The functionalist perspective views society as composed of different parts working together. In contrast, the conflict perspective views society as composed of different groups and interest competing for power and resources.

- Explains various aspects of our social world by looking at which groups have power and benefit from a particular social arrangement.
- Feminist theory argues that we live in a patriarchal society—a hierarchical system of organization controlled by men
- Demands that existing economic, political, and social structures be changed"

The origins of the conflict perspective can be traced to the classic works of Karl Marx. Marx suggested that all societies go through stages of economic development

The division of society into two broad classes of people—the “have” and the “have nots”—is beneficial to the owners of the means of production

Marx (1818-83) Societal evolutions

- Primitive
- Slavery
- Feudalism
- Capitalism
- Socialism
- Communism
**Capitalism and Marx**

Surplus Value and means of production  
Alienation  
Capitalism- Bourgeoisie and Proletariat  
Socialism –  
Historical Materialism  
Class Conflict- Conflict as Positive  
Structure – Base and Super  
religion as opium  
Exploitation of labor

**Women empowerment and Martineau**

The feminist conflict theorist always try to provide the women as equal treatment  
H. Martineau denoted to the inequality of the patriarchal societies and given priority to the participation of women in social, economic and politics along with all spheres of society.

**Symbolic Interactionism**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Theorists of Interactionism</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. H Cooley</strong> (1864-1929,</td>
<td>looking glass self</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **E. Goffman**  (1922-1982) | face to face interactions  
face to face interactions  
impression management  
dramaturgical approach |
| **G. H Mead** (1863–1931) | Generalized others  
Significant others |
| **W. I. Thomas** (1863-1947) | definitions and meanings  
in social behavior and its consequences |
The **symbolic interactionist perspective**, also known as directs sociologists to consider the symbols and details of everyday life—what these symbols mean, and how people interact with each other.

It traces its origins to Max Weber's assertion that individuals act according to their interpretation of the meaning of their world, the American philosopher **George H. Mead** (1863–1931) introduced this perspective to American sociology in the 1920s.

People attach meanings to symbols, and then they act according to their subjective interpretation of these symbols.

Emphasizes that human behavior is influenced by definitions and meanings that are created and maintained through symbolic interaction with others.

**Critical Perspective**

This perspective says that we live in a society dominated capitalist society, based on exchange principles of value and profit. Capitalist society is not a peaceful society but based on unequal exchanges of power and privileges. Critical theory is a social theory whose aim is critiquing and changing society and culture, unlike traditional theory whose aim is only understanding or explaining it.

For eg. Instead of seeing the behavior of homeless youth as of criminal behaviour, the critical perspective would ask why did the youth become homeless and why are they connected to criminal behaviour? Critical theorists like Horkheimer criticized science calling it harmful and destructive as it is controlled by the elite and powerful. They also critique the role of media in society, as it diverts the attention of people and only makes them consumers.

**Conclusion**

Functionalism denotes the societal balance is being performed through the contribution of all parts of the society. Here each parts contribute importantly.

Conflict perspective explain we involve to conflict for our own interest and the society is understood by conflict; power and domination

Symbolic Interactionism also suggests that our identity or sense of self is shaped by social interaction. We develop our self-concept by observing how others interact with us a label us