Sociological Theories of Poverty

1. Structural Functional Theory of Poverty
   • Everything in society has a purpose and a function
   • Poverty and inequality serve a specific function in society
   • Inequality is a graded ladder of people at different income levels
   • Poverty motivates people to climb the ladder
   • Poverty ensures that all jobs (functions) in society will be filled

2. Conflict Theory of Poverty
   • Marx and Weber
   • Class conflict – bourgeoisie (owners of the means of production) control the market system
   • Proletariat (working class) rely on the bourgeoisie for wages
   • Gap in wealth between the two groups is significant
   • Without the proletariat, there would be no production, therefore, they must remain unequal to ensure production is stable and cost effective
   • Conflict between the two groups causes change