

WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY? 5

a science guided by the basic understanding that the social matters: our lives are affected not only by our individual characteristics, but by our place in the social world

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THREE MAJOR SOCIOLOGICAL PARADIGMS? 9

functionalism: defines society as a system of interrelated parts; primarily a macro orientation because it focuses on larger social structures rather than individuals

conflict theory: views society as an unequal system that brings about conflict and change; focuses on macro issues and supports the idea that the struggle for scarce resources holds a society together; concerned with inequality as it relates to wealth and power

symbolic interactionism: focuses on how individual people interact with other people in their everyday lives; studies how the use of “symbols” influence how people communicate; follows a micro approach because it is concerned with the individual’s role in creating society

WHY IS COMMUNITY LEARNING IMPORTANT TO A SOCIETY? 25

provides you with a fresh perspective and expands your understanding of sociology and your world

get the topic: WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

Sociology Defined	5	Functionalism in the United States	12	The Three Paradigms—How Are They Related?	22
Developing a Sociological Imagination	5	The Conflict Theorist’s Worldview	14	Getting Involved in Sociology—Community Learning	25
Emile Durkheim’s Theory on Suicide	7	The Symbolic Interactionist’s Worldview	18		
The Functionalist’s Worldview	10				

Theory**FUNCTIONALISM** 10

- society is a system of connected parts working together to keep society intact
- it is important to consider the function of any issue
- society is fairly stable, which means that things occur in society for a specific function
- suggests society will find a balance point of its own

CONFLICT THEORY 14

- focuses on social classes and their drastic differences in wealth, power, and prestige

- upper class controls society’s wealth and resources and exploits the lower class
- once a group has power, they want to keep it, so they are likely to create advantages for themselves

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM 18

- believes the root of society comes from its symbols
- society is fluid, meaning it is always in the process of change because the symbols we use and their interpretations change
- disputes arise when people do not share the same definitions of symbols

Key Terms

sociology is a science guided by the basic understanding that “the social matters: our lives are affected, not only by our individual characteristics but by our place in the social world.” 5

sociological imagination is the ability to look beyond the individual as the cause for success and failure and see how one’s society influences the outcome. 6

micro means small-scale. 6

macro means large-scale. 6

solidarity refers to the level of connectedness and integration a person feels to others in the environment. 7

social control refers to the social mechanisms that regulate a person’s actions. 7

egoistic suicides are suicides that result from a lack of solidarity, occurring among those who have few social connections, feel isolated and alone, and are more likely to fall into despair. 7

altruistic suicides are suicides that occur when the level of solidarity is exceptionally high and when the individual views the group’s interest as superior to all other interests. 7

fatalistic suicides are suicides that result from a lack of social control. 8

anomic suicides are suicides that occur as a result of social unrest. 8

paradigm refers to a theoretical framework through which scientists study the world. 9

(continued)

functionalism is a theoretical framework that defines society as a system of interrelated parts. 9

conflict theory is a theoretical framework that views society as an unequal system that brings about conflict and change. 9

symbolic interactionism is a theoretical framework that focuses on how people interact with others in their everyday lives. 9

social laws are statements of fact that are unchanging under given conditions and can be used as ground rules for any kind of society. 10

social statics are the existing structural elements of society. 10

social dynamics are the change in existing structural elements of society. 10

social Darwinism is a notion that suggests strong societies survive and weak ones become extinct. 11

mechanical solidarity refers to the state of community bonding in traditional societies in which people share beliefs and values and perform common activities. 12

organic solidarity occurs when people live in a society with a diverse division of labor. 12

functions are social factors that affect people in a society. 13

manifest functions are functions that lead to an expected consequence or outcome. 13

latent functions are functions that lead to unforeseen or unexpected consequences. 13

bourgeoisie refers to members of the capitalist class. 14

proletariat refers to members of the poor working class. 15

false consciousness is a person's lack of understanding of his or her position in society. 15

class consciousness is an understanding of one's position in the class system. 15

self refers to a person's identity and what makes that person different from others. 19

contagion is a rapid, irrational mode in which people do not think rationally or clearly. 20

dramaturgy is a theory of interaction in which all life is like acting. 20

community learning occurs when individuals and groups work to identify and address issues of public concern. 25

Sample Test Questions

These multiple-choice questions are similar to those found in the test bank that accompanies this textbook.

- Which of the following is a criticism of conflict theory?
 - It overlooks that fact that many willingly accept society's rules.
 - It does not recognize the differences between social classes.
 - It fails to acknowledge social inequality.
 - It is unsympathetic to homelessness.
- Which of the following questions might a symbolic interactionist ask about the social world?
 - Why does inequality exist in society?
 - Why do income disparities occur between the races?
 - How do social institutions keep society running smoothly?
 - How does a particular social setting affect a person's behavior?
- Erving Goffman's theory of dramaturgy suggests that
 - people behave similarly in a variety of situations.
 - people change their behavior to fit the setting they are in.
 - people's behavior has little to do with others' perceptions of them.
 - people's behavior is not affected by the behavior of others around them.
- Which could be considered a latent function of slavery in the United States?
 - The ease in which crops were harvested
 - The increase in the growth of crops
 - The mistreatment of African slaves
 - The wealth farmers generated
- All of the following are macro orientations *except*
 - functionalism.
 - conflict theory.
 - social Darwinism.
 - symbolic interactionism.

ESSAY

- The three sociological paradigms often overlap with one another. Choose a sociologist discussed in the chapter. Discuss how his or her ideas connect to all three sociological paradigms.
- Why is it important for a sociologist to use a sociological imagination? What consequences might arise if he or she failed to use this way of thinking?
- What sort of attitudes concerning homelessness might a symbolic interactionist discourage?
- Why is suicide a compelling sociological issue?
- Describe possible manifest and latent functions of a law that would legalize drugs.

WHERE TO START YOUR RESEARCH PAPER

To learn more about sociology as a scientific discipline, go to <http://www.asanet.org>

To find useful information about the famous figures of sociology, go to <http://www2.pfeiffer.edu/~lridener/DSS/INDEX.HTML>

To find an in-depth sociology dictionary, go to <http://www.webref.org/sociology/sociology.htm>

For more information about sociology departments in the United States, go to http://www.sociolog.com/us_links/

To find a guide for sociological Internet sources, go to <http://www.socioweb.com/>

For more information about the study of symbolic interactionism, go to <http://www.soci.niu.edu/~sssi/>

To find an online journal of sociology, go to <http://www.ou.edu/special/freeinq/>

To find a Web site dedicated to finding out the truth about urban myths, go to <http://www.truthorfiction.com/>

To find an excellent source for different information on sociology, go to <http://www.trinity.edu/~mkearl/theory.html>

Remember to check www.thethinkspot.com for additional information, downloadable flashcards, and other helpful resources.