

# Sociological perspectives argumentative essay



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Whenever one takes a look at any human society, there are certain aspects that come out regarding its organization. This look however, needs to be more than superficial.

As soon as one takes a deeper look at the reality of social relationships, one realizes that there is a very elaborate network of intertwined realities. In the modern day sociology, three theoretical perspectives have been accepted and acknowledged as playing a major role in understanding how social entities relate to each other. This study aims at understanding each of these perspectives, with a particular bias in the family as a unit of the social institution. The perspectives that will be looked at in this study include; functionalist, interactionist, and the conflict perspectives.

The consideration of normalcy or deviance largely depends on the kind of definition accorded the idea of family. For the purposes of this study, the word family will be used in reference to the traditional family, namely nuclear and extended family. The Functionalist Perspective on the Family From a functionalist point of view, the role of the family is no more than a fulfillment of certain functions, which are aimed at making life easier. Core among these functions are: socialization, reproduction, assignment of status, emotional support, as well as sexual behavior regulation (Foss, 1978).

Socialization- according to this perspective, young children need to be taught how to participate in the various aspects of society.

This thus becomes one of the core functions of the family unit. An important aspect of socialization is the emphasis of the gender of the child and the roles related to that particular gender. It is considered that the family is the

most important units as far as these roles are concerned. Reproduction- according to this perspective, reproduction is a very important function of the family. This role is important not only to the family, but to the society as a whole. This is because, society is very well aware of its need to survive.

It is understood that the family is the best place for this role. Assignment of status - the functionalists consider the family as an important framework within which the social statuses of the various family units are transmitted to the children. Along with this role, the family also teaches the values that relate to that particular status to the children. Emotional support- for the functionalist, emotional support is very essential as a function of the family.

This is because; the family passes as the place where unconditional love and acceptance can be offered. This is crucial for the healthy development of the children. It is considered essential for the development of esteem, and self worth in the children. Sexual behavior regulation- this function of the family is considered as acting as a reinforcement of the cultural demand with regard to mating and marriage.

Every family is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the children grow within the expected norms. The Conflict Perspective Sociologists see this perspective as having emanated from the Marxian theory of the struggle between the classes. Karl Marx had argued that there was a kind of struggle that always existed between the various social classes, mainly due to the inequalities that existed. This was taken and advanced further by sociologists (Alix, 1970). Generally speaking, this perspective concerns itself

with the competition as well as the cooperation among family members (Foss, 1978).

It is claimed by some theorists that, in this perspective, the male counterparts stand to benefit more than the female. Some argue that ultimately, the relation in the family is bound to experience this conflict. This state of affairs is seen as emanating from the historical family structures, which were mostly patriarchal in nature. This, ideally, is the reason why men tend to control and dominate family relationships.

The general societal expectation was that the females be submissive to their male partners (Alix, 1970). This was evident as well, in the financial dependency that had to be there. If another situation was presented, conflict was bound to be experienced. This is particularly the case, when women seek to empower themselves within the family structure. The Interactionist Perspective Supporters of this theory posit that family bonds are strengthened through ritual acts such as holidays, or common family meals.

In order to understand the family, it is critical that an observation be made, of the interactions and the meaning attached to those interactions among members of the various families (Foss, 1978). The interactionist considers the family as being central to the development of the concept of the self. This is done through the expression of feelings within family structures. At the same time, the children learn the importance of the changing nature of family relationships (Foss, 1978). This understanding is facilitated through interaction.

An important thing that happens within this perspective is that the various member of the family learn to subjectively interpret those interactions and consequently influence their behavior. According to the interactionist sociologist, signs also play an important part within the family in this perspective. Members learn how to interpret the signs made by other members, so that even without using words, it is possible to know what is going on. Observation is therefore very important in order to properly interpret what members are attempting to express in an accurate manner (Alix, 1970).

Conclusion As already indicated, sociologists consider these three perspectives as the framework within which society operates. There are those who consider the functionalist perspective as the best to describe family relationships. From a functionalist point of view, the role of the family is no more than a fulfillment of certain functions, which are aimed at making life easier. As already established, some of the most important functions of the family include: socialization, reproduction, assignment of status, emotional support, as well as sexual behavior regulation. Others consider the conflict theory as their choice perspective. As already indicated, this perspective concerns itself with the competition as well as the cooperation among family members.

The argument here is that ultimately, the relation in the family is bound to experience conflict. This state of affairs is seen as emanating from the historical family structures, which were mostly patriarchal in nature. In this theory therefore, a certain gender always makes the attempt to be

dominant. According to the Interactionist theory, it is very crucial that families come together in order to strengthen their bonds.

The only way to understand a family, according to the sociologists in this perspective, is through observation of trends in family interactions. In conclusion, each of these perspectives seeks to understand how family members relate to each other and why they relate in the way they do. Each perspective has taken a position divorced from each other.