

# Sociological concepts and theories sociology essay



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Within sociology, there are different concepts used. The most important ones are socialisation, social order and social stratification. The definition of these three differs from theory to theory but share the same basic meaning.

The term socialisation is something everyone can relate to. It is a process where the children in society are taught by the adults. Society's norms and values are transferred to the younger generation through the socialisation process. These norms and values dictate our behaviour within society and what is expected of us. This process can come in the form of primary socialisation; which is through direct family or care givers and secondary socialisation; which is everything else we interact with such as the mass media or education. (Unknown. (2001). What is the socialization process?)

The second concept is social order. This is linked in with the socialisation process as social order is maintained through society agreeing with the norms and values passed on through the socialisation process. This is the only way for society to continue.

The last concept is social stratification. This is based on some form of structured inequality or unequal distribution in society. it forms a division between groups of people e. g. where a society is divided into two class groups; the upper class and the lower class. (Cliffs Notes. (2012). What Divides Us: Stratification)

Different key theories in Sociology link these aspects into society in different ways.

The Functionalist theory is otherwise known as a consensus theory meaning there is a general agreement throughout society. It adopts the idea that various parts of society interrelate which helps form a complete system. Socialisation within the Functionalist theory is said to be extremely important since order, stability, harmony and cooperation is derived from agreed shared norms and values. Functionalism also emphasises the idea of meritocracy as it believes that if individuals work hard they will be rewarded afterwards. It believes that social order will only occur if society agrees to what they call a value consensus. This is basic shared beliefs that have to be agreed upon and are also worth striving for. Functionalism says that social stratification in society is based around the idea of meritocracy and that individuals are trained skills to fulfil different roles which help direct society. It acknowledges that there is some conflict between groups over different interests but believes it is not as important as groups that share common interests. Haralambos, M and Holborn, M. (2008) A.

Conflict theories on the other hand have a different perspective on these concepts. Marxism sees socialisation as a process of passing over a dominant ideology that Capitalism is good and equal when really it's not. This creates conflict between the two groups in society. Social order within a Capitalist system is maintained by a false consciousness produced by the Bourgeoisie. This fake picture of reality teaches the Proletariat that society is equal and that they should comply with the ruling class's norms and values. Marxism has an alternate perspective on social stratification; they see it as "a mechanism whereby some exploit others, rather than a means of furthering collective goals". Marx views society as being a two-class model

with two major class groups being the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat.

However, these two groups are in constant conflict over the ownership and control of the means of production which the ruling class uses to exploit and oppress the subject class. Haralambos, M and Holborn, M. (2008) B.

Another theory that has a completely different take on these concepts is Symbolic Interactionism. Since Symbolic Interactionism is a social action theory, it studies the individual and smaller scale interactions in society rather than as a complete system. The main focus of this theory is the ability to explain the meaning behind an individual's actions. Symbolic Interactionism believes that we are socialised through shared meanings and symbols, which dictate our behaviour and our interaction with others. Through this, an individual will develop a self-concept. It is through social interaction with others that we develop a picture of ourselves in relation to other individual's reactions. Social order is maintained by the majority holding the same shared meanings and symbols and also by looking at the world in a similar way. Weber would say that empathising with others helps us understand the meanings and interpretations of individuals. As for social stratification, individuals who do not share the same meanings with the rest of society are labelled, which is judged by others. Individuals may behave and interact differently with those who are labelled leading to them adapting to this label thus changing their self-concept. Haralambos, M and Holborn, M. (2008) C.