

Structural  
functionalism is a  
theoretical  
understanding  
sociology essay



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There are three types of functions by Robert K. Merton which he divided according to society. Manifest function which is the intended and recognized consequence, latent function which is the unintended and unrecognized and finally dysfunction which is an unintended consequence that works against the intended purpose of the institution. Dysfunction has a negative impact on society. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions, and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as “organs” that work toward the proper functioning of the “body” as a whole.

### **Case study of Structural Functionalism**

An example of structural functionalism can best be seen in crime. As in Durkheim’s article, Structural-Functionalists view crime as a necessary part of society. Functionalists believe that crime and deviance are inevitable and necessary for a society. Crime shows other member of the society what is right and wrong. Social consensus decides how right and wrong is determined. In the eyes of manifest function, crime brings social change and justice to the people. The society continues to live harmoniously as crime offenders are caught. In latent function, crime can also help the economy of a society by creating jobs for law enforcement officers, psychiatrists, probation officers and counsellors. Crimes that happened, in turn create a living for law enforcement officers because by putting crime offenders behind bars, this bring income to people who are in charge of them. There is no category of social dysfunction that is more clearly a result of primitive concepts than the area of crime. When crime occurs, there is much

devastation to be compelled. Death toll rises and the safety of a society is questioned.

## **Conflict Theory paradigm**

Conflict theory is to emphasize the role of coercion and power in producing social order. According to conflict theory, inequality exists because those in control of a disproportionate share of society's resources actively defend their advantages. The masses are not bound to society by their shared values, but by coercion at the hands of those in power. This perspective emphasizes social control and conformity. Groups and individuals advance their own interests, struggling over control of societal resources. Those with the most resources exercise power over others with inequality and power struggles. Sociologists using the social conflict approach look at on-going conflict between dominant and disadvantaged categories. The conflict perspective, which originated primarily out of Karl Marx's ideas and thoughts of class struggles, presents society in a different light than the other perspectives. The main ideology of social conflict theory is the belief that rich and powerful force social order on the poor and the weak. Last time, Max Weber and Karl Marx constructed their arguments, giving different emphases to conflict theory in power and economics.

## **Case study of Conflict Theory Paradigm**

An interesting way of studying conflict theory is none other than the Caste system in India. The Caste system is a rigid social system, a hierarchy that determines occupation, marriage partners and rank. This system is an unjustly way of the upper class oppressing the lower class and manipulating them in terms of authority and power. In India, this system is life long, and a <https://assignbuster.com/structural-functionalism-is-a-theoretical-understanding-sociology-essay/>

person has no way of moving up the rank. There are three types of rank in India, mainly Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Sudras. According to the conflict theory the upper classes instituted religion in such a way that they kept control while at the same time they pacified the lower classes by promising a better life. In time, the rich are benefited in terms of crops, education and a better lifestyle and the poor are manipulated even lower and forced to work for the upper castes. Invariably, the personal spills over into the public sphere. Caste, thus, remains visible yet invisible. The invisible is rendered visible socially, culturally, politically and economically.

## **Symbolic Interaction Paradigm**

The symbolic interaction perspective, also called symbolic interactionism, is a major framework of sociological theory. This perspective relies on the symbolic meaning that people develop and rely upon in the process of social interaction. Symbolic interaction theory analyses society by addressing the subjective meanings that people impose on objects, events, and behaviours. Subjective meanings are given primacy because it is believe that people behave based on what they believe and not just on what is objectively true. Thus, society is thought to be socially constructed through human interpretation. People interpret one another's behaviour and it is these interpretations that form the social bond. George Herbert Mead is widely regarded as the founder of the interactionist perspective. Goffman, popularised a particular type of interactionist method known as the dramaturgical approach, in which people are seen as theatrical performers.

## **Case study of Symbolic Interaction paradigm**

An obvious study of symbolic paradigm is Gandhi himself and his symbol of subversion. Gandhi is the prototypical example of a symbolic interactionism on the world stage. The political course of the twentieth century was changed, thanks to his powerful use of non-violent symbols. For 37 years, he led nearly 300 million Indians in the battle “ for right against might”. His mega symbol of subversion is the ‘ Khadi’. The Khadi movement aimed at boycotting foreign goods and promoting Indian goods, thereby improving India’s economy. The freedom struggle revolved around the use of Khadi fabrics and the dumping of foreign-made clothes. When some people complained about the costliness of Khadi to Mahatma Gandhi, he started wearing only dhoti. Thus it symbolized the political ideas and independence itself, and to this day most politicians in India are seen only in Khadi clothing. Through this symbolic actions he brought the world’s largest empire to its knees and liberated the world from the ideology that justified colonialism on the grounds that it was doing those who were colonised a favour.

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