

# Introduction to sociology cours analysis

[Sociology](#)



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Part 1 Sociology, the scientific study of social groups (Chapter 1 Module 1), focuses primly on how our social relationships not only influence our behavior but the development of society as a whole. Sociologists analyze social phenomena at different levels and from different perspectives. From concrete interpretations to sweeping generalizations of society and social behavior, sociologists study everything from specific events (the micro level of analysis of small social patterns) to the “big picture” (the macro level of analysis of large social patterns).

The pioneering European sociologists, however, also offered a broad conceptualization of the fundamentals of society and its workings. Their views form the basis for today's theoretical perspectives which provide sociologists with a concrete framework of philosophical positions for asking certain kinds of questions about society and its people. Sociologists today employ three primary theoretical perspectives: Interactionist, Functionalist, and Conflict (Chapter 1 Module 3).

These perspectives offer sociologists theoretical paradigms for explaining how society influences people, and vice versa. The Functionalist perspective views each aspect of society is interdependent and contributes to society's functioning as a whole. An example of this is could be the cow worship in Indian society as the preservation of the cow allows it to plow the fields and produce milk, both of which are essential to long term survival of the inhabitants. In addition, the cow's feces double as fertilizer as well as fuel for cooking.

On the opposite side of the spectrum is the Conflict perspective that assumes social behavior is best understood through tension between groups

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over power and the allocation of resources such as housing, money, services, and political representation. While this doesn't always involve violence, such conflicts can be seen in labor negotiations, political elections, or the Occupy movement. The conflict perspective focuses on the negative, conflicted, and ever-changing nature of society. Unlike functionalists who defend the status quo, avoid social change, and believe people cooperate to effect social order, conflict theorists challenge the status quo, encourage social change (even when this means social revolution), and believe rich and powerful people force social order on the poor and the weak. Lastly, Interactionists generalize everyday forms of social interaction in order to explain society as a whole. This perspective directs sociologists to consider the symbols and details of everyday life, what these symbols mean, and how people interact with each other. Although symbolic interactionism traces its origins to Max Weber's assertion (Chapter 1 Module 2) that individuals act according to their interpretation of the meaning of their world.

Symbols have a shared social meaning that is understood and recognized by the entirety of a society. Widely recognized symbols such as tattoos, bumper stickers, and house flags allow individuals to communicate their values and beliefs to those around them. This nonverbal communication also consists of bodily gestures, facial expressions, and postures (Chapter 1 Module 3). Personally, I agree with some aspects of both the Functionalist and Conflict perspective as they present an image of how society should be construed and what it actually is.

To explain, functionalism appeals to my idealistic way of thinking as it relates to stability, order, and cohesion. I believed such a construct was fairly

possible when examining our democratic form of government. In theory, the system is made to provide equal representation as well as flexibility in respect to the voice of the people such as the several amendments made to the constitution as well as our right to decide our government officials through the election process. Unfortunately, this system is great in theory but rarely comes into practice which leads to my belief in the conflict perspective.

The constant struggle between the top 1% and the middle class is fairly apparent in respect to education, taxes, and healthcare. This is due to the 1% having a strong influence over the private sector as well as controlling the majority of the wealth. These shape the patterns of everyday life as well as things such as racial, ethnic, and class inequality and relations among nations and regions of the world. All in all, the conflict perspective represents the realistic way in which I view the world while the functionalist beckons to my belief in a harmony and justice that can be attained with the proper execution of our democratic system.

While these views may contradict each other they also present the two ways I see the world: how things actually are and what they could be. \* Part 2 Society can greatly impact the individual through its culture. As stated in Chapter 3 Module 9 culture is the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects, and behavior. Each society's distinctive culture presents its own form of cuisine, forms of recreation, family structure, and standards of right and wrong. These specific characteristics highly influence who we develop into as individuals.

In turn we impact society with our actions being separate individuals which create the culture through mutual cooperation. For example, if enough people vote in a new precedent that legalizes marijuana the culture is affected in a way that creates a new social norm. This adaptation of the set standard of rules and values that shape the society comes directly from the individuals that inhabit it. Social structure refers to the manner in which human relations and patterns of interaction repeat themselves in organized and “structured” ways (Chapter 5 Module 16).

Analyses of social structure point to the manner in which there are inequalities in human societies. Although individual, formal organizations, commonly identified as “institutions,” may be deliberately and intentionally created by people, the development and functioning of institutions in society in general may be regarded as an instance of emergence; that is, institutions arise, develop and function in a pattern of social self-organization, which goes beyond the conscious intentions of the individual humans involved.

As mechanisms of social interaction, societal institutions greatly influence individuals by setting certain expectations, goals, and regulations. They act as an organized pattern of beliefs and behavior centered on social such as: Government, Family, Education, and Media (Chapter 5 Module 16). Inequalities in these institutions can be seen through the conflict perspective which views them as having inherently conservative natures, operating in gendered and racist environments, and help maintain privileges of the most powerful individuals and groups within society.

For example, public schools are mostly financed by property taxes. This arrangement allows more affluent areas to provide their children with better

equipped schools and better paid teachers than the low income areas that can afford such resources. This inequality in the education system results in countless dropouts which contribute to the rising crime rate. Inequality based on gender, economic status, race, and ethnicity thrives in such an environment to which we might add discrimination based on age, physical, disability, and sexual orientation.

Horace Miner's "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" was one of the few readings in the class that challenged me sociologically by likening the current American society to a primitive tribe with clever wordplay. Even if the title isn't an obvious indicator that it is American backwards, there are indicators in the story that help reveal the topic that is being discussed. Starting with a brief history of how the nation became the way it is, with Notgnishaw cutting down the cherry tree. Even to young children this idea of cutting down the tree may seem familiar, and it should because it is really Washington that cut the tree down.

The title Washington was spelled backwards to add an interesting twist to this story. Many people do not realize that words are backward; this idea gives readers the sense that this may actually be a tribe. The events that take place in our everyday lives are described as rituals. These rituals that are talked about are made to sound like the culture that partakes in such things is crazy. It starts with the ritual of getting ready in the morning, as a long drawn out process. The story then moves to talk about how American people have cabinets full of medications that supposedly make us better.

However, most the medications are used once or twice, but then left in the cabinet. Along with the amount of medications, there are the trips to the

hospital that most people find necessary. Most adults are not afraid to go to the doctor for an illness, which only leads to more medications, but children have a fear of the people in white coats. Horace Miner demonstrates that "attitudes about the body" have a pervasive influence on many institutions in Nacirema society. Basically, he uses this entire article as a way to describe American rituals from an outsider's point of view.

The sociological standpoint is that culture is based on rituals and that each culture defines its reality and acceptable behavior and chooses its authorities by rituals. These rituals help us discover our knowledge because it makes the rituals the authority and those who follow it the ones that know the truth as our society defines it. Sociologists define rituals as what you do on a regular basis, repeated over time; that which binds people together; shared beliefs; assigned roles; loyalty.

Structural-functional sociologist Emile Durkheim theorized that rituals support social order and roles and shared sets of values holds people together. Since rituals enforce these roles and values, they create social solidarity. \* Part 3 Class refers to a group of people who have a similar level of wealth and income (Chapter 8 Module 26). Sociologists typically use three methods to determine social class: the objective method that measures and analyzes "hard" facts, the subjective method asks which people what they think of themselves, and the reputational method that asks what people think of others.

Results from these three research methods suggests that in the United States today approximately 15 to 20 percent are in the poor, lower class; 30 to 40 percent are in the working class; 40 to 50 percent are in the middle

class; and 1 to 3 percent are in the rich, upper class. Wherever their money comes from, the upper class is exceptionally rich. They have more money than they could possibly spend, which leaves them with much leisure time for cultivating a variety of interests.

They live in exclusive neighborhoods, gather at expensive social clubs, and send their children to the finest schools. As might be expected, they also exercise a great deal of influence and power both nationally and globally. Class tends to be a touch subject especially in America as it reflects on the vast economic and social divide present in a country founded on the premise of being a land of opportunity. The United States is not a classless society. For example, people with a certain quality of life raise children differently than those with a different quality of life.

It is also very difficult for one to move from a certain position in life to a higher position. A concentration of wealth threatens to create a host of problems. Each of these points show that there are differences in life based on what kind of life one has, thus demonstrating that class still exists. Social stratification it sets up a structure of roles for each person in the society and ensures that all the bases get covered. You need your share of laborers, executives, etc. In a free society this will be based on education and ability.

If you are a certain status, you are expected to do certain things and you have a certain amount of social power. The system is rarely upset but in many societies you can change your status if you prove you deserve a certain social standing. According to Karl Marx, class differentiation is the crucial determinant of social, economic, and political inequality (Chapter 8 Module 26). How this relates to America is the top 1% of the population

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controls 43% and of the wealth and pays little to taxes while the shrinking middle class pays an unfair amount of taxes.

There is an old saying that artists do not choose a form of art, but rather a form of art chooses them. This means that as people explore ways of doing creative work, they eventually find a way to which they are, for reasons hard to fathom, powerfully drawn. We can take this idea beyond the realm of art and observe that many people find a hobby, a sport, a craft, a topic of study, or a kind of work that seems naturally to compel their devotion. When this happens, people often strive with great intensity to acquire knowledge and skill.

The opportunity for one to explore a hobby or subject one finds interesting depends on crucial social conditions such as : economic stability, environmental influences, values, and morals. This points to those who are positively influenced having the freedom to participate in activities of their choice. What difference does it make if a person never has the experience of being chosen by a form of activity? The person who is drawn to a certain skill, sport, or activity has achieved a sense of purpose with the desire to improve on and progress in that skill. On the other hand, those without that xperience have a tougher time deciding what to do in their lives as thatmotivationto excel is misguided without a set occupation, skill, or pastime. \* Part 4 Seeing the world through others eyes is essential to gaining understanding on how the world truly works in addition to becoming a well-rounded individual. Such a mindset allows one to acknowledge injustice and inequality in the world along with the desire to abolish it. With the use ofsociological imagination, individuals can properly examine how their

actions as well as the actions of others affect society and even the world as a whole.

This class has given me the advantage in respect to being socially responsible by surrounding me with a diverse collection of my peers, thus enhancing my social techniques in addition to learning more about myself in the process. With the introduction of the purple textbook, research project and online quizzes I learned valuable information about the world around me in ways I never could have imagined. This course has made me a better person with a new sense of empathy and social awareness.