SR 968 Sociological Methodology

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**Sociological Frameworks for Cultural Analysis**

Professor

Dr. Joshua Reichard

# Assignment #1 – Course Essential Elements

1. **Select One (1) Core Essential Element from the Syllabus Outline:**
   1. Create a 350-word original discussion paper (with cited sources) during the week of the residency. Be prepared to discuss and engage with other students during the live sessions. Post this document in DIAL.
   2. Professor will check for quality of content and word-count requirements. Grade assigned will be Credit or No Credit (CR/NC).

The sociological frameworks for cultural analysis consist of three major frameworks: structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. Each framework looks at a different area of social life and contributes to a better understanding of society. A complete understanding of cultural analysis looks at all three frameworks to see how they can work together.

Structural functionalism looks at society as a whole and seeks to understand the interrelatedness of its parts. These interconnected elements work together to stabilize and maintain social order (Izadi, et al, 2020). These cultural elements are the norms, traditions, and institutions that help society function smoothly and efficiently (Izadi, et al, 2020).

In some circles, there has been a departure from structural functionalism to focus on social action. However, social action alone does not embrace the design or structure of social function, which is seen in human activity (Sohlberg, 2020).

Conﬂicts are often explained in terms of the interests of the groups involved, especially their competition for resources or gains (Schlee, 2004). This theory looks beyond the conflict to understand who is in conflict and why they are in conflict.

Conflict theory deals with social conflicts as well as with conflicts within an individual. For example, individuals struggling with weight issues prefer to eat food that tastes good. The desire to consume good tasting foods and the desire to maintain or lose weight are often incompatible (Timko, 2008).

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological theory that describes how society is created and maintained because of individual interactions. It emphasizes that social structures result from multitudes of small-scale, face-to-face interactions and not vice versa. It highlights the importance of symbols as a way to communicate on an individual level (Morden, 2021).

Symbolic interactionism as a theory has stood the test of time. Differences in the conceptualization of symbolic interaction and the focus of scholars led to the application of different methods related to the universities where they were formed (Fuller, 2020).

The sociological frameworks of structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism offer distinct yet complementary lenses for examining culture. Structural functionalism provides a macro-level perspective on how social institutions maintain order and stability, while conflict theory highlights the inherent power struggles and inequalities that shape social interactions. Symbolic interactionism, in contrast, delves into the micro-level, emphasizing the role of individual interpretations and shared meanings in constructing social reality. While each approach possesses strengths and limitations, recognizing their interconnectedness allows for a more holistic and insightful analysis of the complexities of human society.

**References**

Fuller, C. (2020). Symbolic Interactionism. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Religion.*

Izadi, A., Mohammadi, M., Nasekhian, S., & Memar, S. (2020). Structural functionalism, social sustainability and the historic environment: A role for theory in urban regeneration. The historic environment*: Policy practice, 11(2-3),* 158–180. https://doi.org/10.1080/17567505.2020.1723248

Mardon, A. A., Tang, M., Patel, A., & Haq, N. (2021). Symbolic Interactionism. *Golden Meteorite Press.*

Schlee, G. (2004). Taking sides and constructing identities: reflections on conflict theory. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*.

Sohlberg, Peter. (2021). Functionalist construction work in social science*.* https://www.academia.edu/115622158/Functionalist\_Construction\_Work\_in\_Social\_Science

Timko, A. (2008). What To eat? Goal-conflict theory and weight maintenance. *Psyccritiques*.