A word to strike fear into the hearts of Sociology teachers and students alike…

"Theory!"

It's going to be complicated – I'll never understand it…

It's complicated – how can I teach it so they'll grasp it?

However, as with everything in life, theory is as complicated as you want to make it.

And as with most things, if you understand the basics, it's much easier to grasp the harder bits…

And besides – (sociological) theory is **Important**.

If we grasp the theory behind something, everything else is much easier to understand…

Theory and Methods

A systematic and general attempt to explain something…

A suggested explanation for something…

"Theory"

"Why do people commit crimes?

"Why do people get married?"

"How does the media affect us?"

"Why do kids play truant from school?"

"Why do some people believe in God?"

"How is our identity shaped by culture?"

Theory and Methods

…is something we use all the time in our everyday life

"Theory"

We all use theory to construct explanations about the social world in which we live…

Which, in a way, is what Sociologists also try to do…

In a slightly different way, of course…

"Why do I feel unwell?"

"Why are my friends behaving oddly?"

"Why do I have to go to school?"

Comes in a variety of shapes and sizes…

Sociological Theory

High-Level Theories

Focus on trying to explain how and why society is ordered

Functionalism…

Marxism…

Interactionism…

Feminism…

Mid-Range Theories

Focus on trying to explain some general aspect of social behaviour

Why do girls achieve higher educational qualifications than boys?

Low-Level Theories

Focus on trying to explain a specific aspect of social behaviour.

Why do I always fall asleep in Psychology lessons?

If you understand the basic principles of **High-level** theories you will find it easier to understand other types of theory.

This is because **Mid-range** and **Low-level** theories are often based on the principles underpinning **High-level** theories.

High level theories are usually known by their more-common label of "**Sociological Perspectives**"

A "perspective", for our current purposes, is simply a way of looking at and understanding the social world.

Different sociologists, working within different perspectives, construct different theories about the nature of that world…

Sociological Perspectives…

The following slides are designed to help you understand the basic themes / principles of a range of sociological perspectives

They do this by using analogies…

In other words, they help you to decide "what society is like" (from different sociological perspectives) by asking you to compare "society" to something familiar…

Part of your task in the following screens, therefore, is to use a variety of different analogies to develop a picture of how the concept of "society" is seen and explained by different sociological perspectives…

Theory and Methods

Functionalism…

"Society Is Like": A Human Body

Characteristics of human body…	Characteristics of society…
Each part of the body works in harmony with all other parts	Each part of society works in harmony with all other parts

Theory and Methods

Marxism…

"Society Is Like": A League Table

Characteristics of league table…

A league is characterised by competition between teams

Characteristics of society…

Society involves competition between social groups / classes

FA BARCLAYCARD PREMIERSHIP	
1	Manchester United
2	Arsenal
3	Newcastle United
4	Chelsea
5	Liverpool
6	Blackburn Rovers
7	Everton
8	Southampton
9	Manchester City
10	Tottenham Hotspur
11	Middlesbrough
12	Charlton Athletic
13	Birmingham City
14	Fulham
15	Leeds United
16	Aston Villa
17	Bolton Wanderers
18	West Ham United
19	West Brom Albion
20	Sunderland

Interactionism…

"Society Is Like": A Play

Characteristics of a play…	Characteristics of society…
A play has actors who play their individual roles	Society consists of individual actors who play a variety of roles

Theory and Methods

Feminism…

"Society Is Like": A League Table

Characteristics of league table…

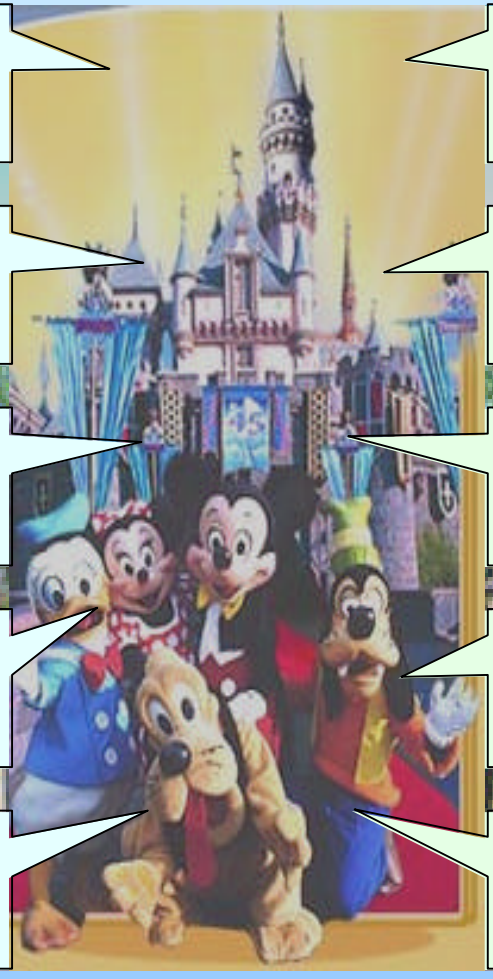
A league is characterised by competition between teams

Characteristics of society…

Society involves competition between men and women

FA BARCLAYCARD PREMIERSHIP	
1	Manchester United
2	Arsenal
3	Newcastle United
4	Chelsea
5	Liverpool
6	Blackburn Rovers
7	Everton
8	Southampton
9	Manchester City
10	Tottenham Hotspur
11	Middlesbrough
12	Charlton Athletic
13	Birmingham City
14	Fulham
15	Leeds United
16	Aston Villa
17	Bolton Wanderers
18	West Ham United
19	West Brom Albion
20	Sunderland

Post-Modernism…

"Society Is Like": A Theme Park

Characteristics of theme park…	Characteristics of society…
A theme park has numerous different rides	Society is characterised by a multiplicity of choices (work, education, leisure, etc.)