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Welcome to this episode of *Sociology-- Studies of Society* today's lesson is on structural-functional approach. As always, don't be afraid to pause, stop, rewind, or even fast forward to make sure get the most out of this tutorial.

The structural-functional approach really sees society as a complex system with many independent parts that work together to maintain itself. So society is this machine, and all the different parts are working together to make sure that society continues to run. Now, even bad things are considered part of this machine and are simply helping the machine to go.

Let me give you a visual example. In your head, picture a car. A car has many parts. All these parts work together to make sure that the car runs. So the wheels, the drive shaft, the engine, the exhaust-- all those things work together to make sure this car can run.

Now, sociology with this structural-functional function approach sees society as something like that car. And all those different parts of the car are just parts of society, and all work together to help make sure society runs.

Now, what I mean by even bad things is that there are things in society that we maybe don't want at all, or we don't want very much of, like crime or poverty or homelessness. Now, the structural-functional approach would argue that even these things that we would label as bad are still part of this machine, and really exist to help make sure that society continues to run.

Now, there are two key components to understanding the structural-functional approach. There's social structure and social function. A social structure is any repeated and routine-like pattern of social interaction or behavior. So this is where human beings are behaving the same way, and it's saying relatively. So it might change, but they're basically behaving in a similar way.

And it's a pattern, so we're doing this over and over and over. So it might be going to sporting events. It might be the social structure of religion. There are many different social structures.

Now, a social function is the mechanism by which the structures of society are maintained. So it's really the purpose. Why does this social structure exist? And on the next slide, I'll give you an example of how to look at that. But when we're looking at this, really consider that this is a macro-level orientation. This approach is looking at the broad, big, zoomed-out issues in society.

So here's an example. Social structure could be, or is, religion. The social function is the purpose, is the mechanism of why the social structure exists. So social function might be to keep the family together, or it might be to create community. There are many different social functions for each social structure. And in fact, people can disagree about what exactly the social function of a social structure is.

Now, Emile Durkheim is a French sociologist who coined the term social facts. Now, social facts are separate from individual responses. So they might be an individual response, but they're really external from the individuals. They're coming from somewhere else, and specifically, they're coming from social life. So they're pieces of information about social life.

And Emile Durkheim was looking for correlations between social facts in order to reveal the laws of social structure. Now, if you're not exactly following that, let's look at his most famous study. So he had these suicide studies. Emile looked at the records from police and death reports in France, where he's from, and specifically looking at suicide rates.

And he found that men, Protestants, wealthy people, and unmarried people were more likely to take their own lives than other groups of people. So he hypothesized that social ties were something that was maybe limiting people's likelihood to take their own lives, or on the other side of that coin, that freedom was something that was actually a key factor for having people make the decision to take their own lives.

So the social fact that he was looking at was the suicide-- the data there-- the records. And he's looking, and he's making this hypothesis that it's coming from these social ties and freedom.

Today's takeaway message-- and there's two parts to today's takeaway message-- the structural-functional function approach-- society is a complex system that works together to promote solidarity and stability. And this is a macro-level orientation, so it's really zoomed-out.

The two key components of this approach is the social structure, so that's the relatively stable pattern of behavior, and the social function, which is the mechanisms-- the purpose behind why the social structure exists.

Then, we learned about Emile Durkheim, the pioneer of sociology in France. And he coined the term social facts, and he's famous for suicide studies. So the suicide studies found that social ties and/or freedom, depending how you like to look at it, really determine the likeliness of suicide. And social

facts are these collective things from society, and they can be studied to review the laws of social structure.

Well, that's it for this lesson. Good work, and hopefully you'll be seeing me on your screen again soon.

Peace.