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Welcome this episode of Sociology, Studies of Society. Today's lesson is on Sociological Theory. As always, don't be afraid to pause, stop, rewind, or even fast forward to make sure get the most out of this tutorial. Now, we're taking a really broad approach here to look at sociological theory. Sometimes you need to look really broadly so you can later on understand the specifics.

So what is a theory, first off? A theory is just a way of thinking that explains how and why facts are related. So maybe you're collecting facts, and you start to put them together, and then you see the connections and you say, aha, these facts all fit together this way. That's a theory. Late in the lesson, you'll see some examples of some theories.

Now, a sociological theory is an attempt to explain the social behavior in the real world. So again, it's a theory. It's a statement on how these facts are related, but it's specifically looking at society and social behaviors.

Now, there are two different, I like to call them, levels of zoom for looking at society, and the first one is a macro-level orientation, so macro meaning very big. And it's a wide focus on the social structures of society. So I like to get to that one really zoomed out. You're looking at big actions or when many, many, many little actions can only be seen when many, many people are doing them. That's a very broad, zoomed out orientation.

Micro-level orientation, on the other hand, is a narrow focus, looking at specific situations and social interactions. So there, you're zooming in to a specific instance or specific set of instances. You're looking at the way people greet each other. You're looking very zoomed in, and that is a micro-level orientation.

Let me give an example. Micro-level orientation, maybe we're looking at the way this individual is giving a Valentine's present to this woman here. Micro-level, we're really zoomed in close. We're looking at the specifics of that situation.

Now, on a macro-level, we're looking at the big picture. So in this case, maybe we're looking at how much money was spent during Valentine's Day. And we're talking about-- and in this case, I'm talking about Valentine's Day in all of America.

So not just a small-level interaction, but this really big one where you're collecting all the data and

looking at the big picture. That's macro-level. So seeing that men spend more money on Valentine's Day than women is a macro-level orientation.

Now, there are different theoretical approaches in sociology. The term theoretical approach is just applying a theory to all thinking in research. So it kind of acts as a guide, a way to guide research, and a way to guide looking at the world within sociology.

And there are three different approaches in sociology. The first one is the structural function approach. Now, in this approach, society is a complex system that works together, and it really wants to keep society functioning and happy and the status quo going.

That's why it's, I like to call it, a complex machine. So every little part of society works together to keep this machine running. Even the exhaust of a car, maybe doesn't seem that good, it's putting bad stuff in the air, but it has an important function for making the car work. And society has similar things, where it may not seem on the outside being like a good thing, but it actually helps keep the society, the wheels of society turning.

Now, another approach is this social conflict approach. And this approach sees society as a place for conflict based on inequalities. So in this approach, everything that's going on is seen as a conflict, and it's really seen as a fight for resources.

The last approach is the symbolic interactions approach. And in this approach, society is a result of many individual and everyday interactions. So it's really looking, again, at the smaller level interactions instead of those two broader level earlier approaches. And you'll find out more about this in a different lesson.

So there's two parts to the takeaway message today. First one is this page here. So we learned about what a theory is. A theory just explains how some things that are related work together.

And then there's sociological theory, which is an attempt to explain the social world, the social behaviors in the real world. And there's two different levels of zoom, two different orientations for looking at society. There's a macro-level, which is really looking at the big pictures, and our micro-level, which is zooming in on small actions, small behaviors.

Then we also learned about a theoretical approach. So that's simply applying a theory to all thinking in research, a way to guide your thinking. And there's three of those in sociology.

There's the structural functional-- structural functional approach, which sees society as a complex

system that works together, there is the social conflict approach, which society is a place based for conflict on inequalities, and there's the symbolic interaction approach where society is a result of many individual and everyday interactions. That's it for this lesson. Good work, and hopefully, you'll be seeing me on your screen again soon. Peace.