



## Teaching and Learning



## Society Is Like...

### Analogies



## Objective

The main purpose of this exercise is to use simple analogies to introduce the idea of different theoretical views about the nature of society.

Many teachers, for example, use the standard **organismic analogy** as a means of teaching students about the fundamentals of **Functionalism** and, within certain limits, this is a good and interesting way to both outline general ideas and promote understanding by encouraging students to associate something unfamiliar (Functionalism) with something familiar (a human body).

If you find this idea useful it can be extended to alternative sociological perspectives in the following way:

Analogy	Perspective
Human Body	Functionalism
League Table(e.g. Football, school league tables)	Marxism
A Play	Interactionism
War	Radical Feminism
Theme Park (e.g. Disneyland)	Postmodernism

## Time

20 minutes working in groups to brainstorm their respective perspective / analogy. Each group then presents their work to the whole class for explanation / discussion (5 - 10 minutes per group).

## Preparation

The class can be divided into groups of 2 or 3 students, depending on the number of perspectives to be analysed. Each group is given a perspective (e.g. Functionalism) and an analogy (e.g. "Society is like a human body") to brainstorm.

## Materials

One copy of a "Society Is Like..." table per student. This sheet has two columns. The first requires students to brainstorm some characteristics of the analogy being used.

The second requires the students to say how *each* characteristic is similar to society.

Some way (whiteboard, flipchart, powerpoint...) for each group to present their ideas to the rest of the class.

## Prior Knowledge

Students need a general introduction to the idea of sociological perspectives such as Functionalism, Marxism, Feminism, Interactionism and Postmodernism. This should be quite general in tone, but sufficient to give students a basic idea of the perspectives they are going to analyse.

# Society Is Like...

## Functionalism

Five Characteristics of a Human Body		How society is like each of these characteristics
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	

# Society Is Like...

## Marxism

Five Characteristics of a League Table		How society is like each of these characteristics
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	

# Society Is Like...

## Interactionism

Five Characteristics of a Play		How society is like each of these characteristics
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	

# Society Is Like...

## Postmodernism

Five Characteristics of a Theme Park		How society is like each of these characteristics
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	

## Radical Feminism

Five Characteristics of War		How society is like each of these characteristics
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	

# Society Is Like...

**How society is like  
each of these characteristics**

1

2

3

4

5



# Society Is Like...

**How society is like  
each of these characteristics**

1

2

3

4

5

# Society Is Like...

**How society is like  
each of these characteristics**

1

2

3

4

5

# Society Is Like...

**How society is like  
each of these characteristics**

1

2

3

4

5

# Society Is Like...

**How society is like  
each of these characteristics**

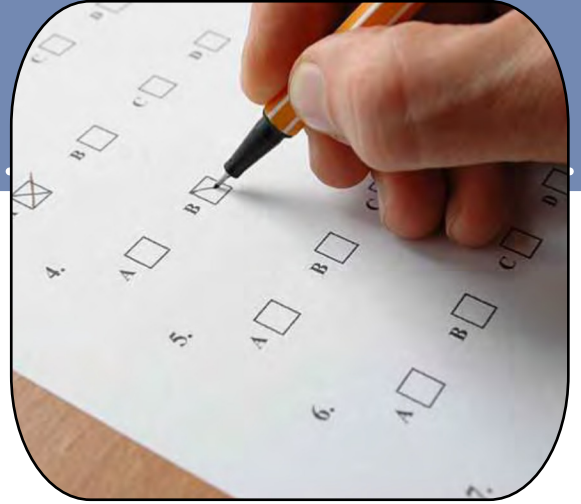
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