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# University College of the Cayman Islands

##### Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands BWI

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| Diploma in EducationCourse Code | EDU 530 | | | | Time | | | |  | |
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| Course Title | Introduction to the Sociology and Philosophy of Education | | | | | | | | | |
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| Academic Year | 2009/2010 | |  |  | | |  | Fall | |  |

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| Instructions | **Take Home Exam—Due date to be discussed with class.** | |
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| Lecturer | Dr. L. Malcolm | |
|  |  | |
| Number of Pages | 7 |  |

**Student’s full name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Shena L. Anglin\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Write a 2-3 page paper maximum, in response to the assigned reading on one of the following sociological theories: Functionalism, Conflict Theory or the Symbolic Interactionist Theory. Specifically, discuss how the theory selected relates to the purposes of schooling.

(In addition to the handout the following textbook will prove useful.

deMarrais, K. B. & LeCompte, M. D. (1999). The way schools work. New York: Longmans. (Available in the library).

The socialization of youth is currently in crisis. Write a 2-3 page paper in which you identify and discuss at least 3-4 of these critical issues. To guide your thinking, issues may include low literacy skills, dysfunctional family, gender education, impact of the media and absence of role models.

Write a 1-2 page summary of your own learning and growth in the course. What were the most significant areas for you? Have you changed your concept of teaching as a result of something we’ve read/discussed/done?

Write a 2-3 page paper maximum, in response to the assigned reading on one of the following sociological theories: Functionalism, Conflict Theory or the Symbolic Interactionist Theory. Specifically, discuss how the theory selected relates to the purposes of schooling.

Based on the assigned reading I believe that the functionalists’ theory best describes my sociological perspective on the purposes of education. In contrast to the symbolic interactionist theory which states that students’ success in school is determined by teachers’ perceptions of them, the functionalist theory maintains that it is through rewards that students learn to do well. I believe that a person’s low social position does not have to be the deciding factor that follows them throughout life and determines their final destiny as the conflict theory maintains. The odds can be surpassed.

Functionalism states the following purposes of education. Education has an intellectual function, a social function, a political function, and an economic function. Through fulfilling its duties in those four areas, society is able to survive.

For functionalists, probably the most important function of the education system is to instill individualism. This encourages individuals to try to achieve on their own merit, based on the fact that they will receive a reward. I believe that every person is born different with differing talents and abilities to contribute to society, and with determination a person can achieve almost anything they are committed to doing. Once a student knows that there are prizes and rewards available equally to everyone who is will to work hard enough, then it does not matter which social class they occupy in the society.

Education rewards excellence and I believe that a person by taking advantage of the opportunities available to him or her can climb the social ladder and step out of a lower social class if they do take advantage of the opportunities. The more dedicated individuals who are willing to persevere against the odds will be able to overcome teachers’ perceptions of them, proving their worth and rising above the adversity they are faced with.

Functionalism best relates to the intellectual purposes of education for me. After all we aim to have a literate society, with members who are equipped to be self sufficient. What would be the point in educating our people if literacy is not one of our end goals to be achieved?

Functionalism recognizes and rewards multiple intelligences. Athletes are rewarded for excellent performance, as are artists, dancers, vocalists and musicians. One very important purpose of education according to functionalists such as Durkheim, is to build a person’s self esteem. Every student has the opportunity to do their best and be rewarded. This encourages those who are full of determination and talented enough, to win.

This leads me to another function of education which I believe is very important – that of sorting the most capable individuals into the most important occupations. For instance, in order to maintain a healthy population and continue the day-to-day work of running a society, we need the best medical doctors. If it were not that the education system served the purpose of sorting out the best persons to train as doctors and surgeons, then we would not end up with any people in those positions or at least not the most capable individuals. Education should serve the purpose of singling-out the best individuals by merit and the curricula should provide for those individuals who are best suited to vocational careers and those who are best suited to professional training.

Therefore, another important role of education is networking. People are placed in groups o people with similar abilities and interests and this serves to help them create valuable relationships which they may take into their careers or which may become personal. Many social scientists as well as families are interested in the function of education in matchmaking, as education can lead people of similar ability, interest, level of education and income-earning ability to meet each other and marry.

One of the primary objectives of education according to functionalists is to maintain social order. Each structure helps to maintain the wellbeing of the society and there should constantly be a balance or what the functionalists call equilibrium. When one institution does not perform its function another institution steps in to fulfill the particular role or duty. In order that the entire society can thrive, it forms many structures that are able to perform the various functions required for survival to take place. Functionalists liken society to a complex living organism with many interdependent parts each fulfilling its role.

I believe that by transmission of core values, people are in a better position for example to maintain the economic and political structure of their countries and run their countries by making the best contribution that they can to the society in which they live. People are also in a better position to decide who should be the leaders of their countries and stable political structures help to keep societies functioning properly. The transmitters of these values are families, churches and schools. I believe that core values such as meeting deadlines, obedience to authority, following instructions and schedules are very important values for every individual to learn and a person who has these abilities should be rewarded. Functionalists believe that this is one very important function of education in that it aims to prepare a person for their role in society within the workforce.

According to functionalists, education also aims to instill patriotism – another important value to possess. Acculturalization has been the subject of much debate and as a result a more multicultural curriculum has evolved. Education has served to make a more liberal society and has changed the way society perceives itself.

**References**

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I will discuss three of the social ills faced by society today, that are at the root of this social crisis surrounding our youth – dysfunctional families, the impact of mass media, and the absence of positive role models.

Dysfunctional family is a major cause of many of the problems faced by our youth. Teens from such families are products of an environment in which they have experienced much violence, physical and emotional abuse, disrespect and parental imprisonment and their lives are usually negatively impacted for the long-term. The cycle almost inevitably continues unless there is dedicated intervention and a serious determination on the part of the youth to break the cycle. ("Family Conflict," n.d., para. 1).

One factor stemming from dysfunctional family which can have a negative impact on a teenager is parental divorce ("Family Conflict," n.d., para. 1). Parental divorce can influence a student dropping-out of high school due to depression and low self-esteem ("Family Conflict," n.d., para. 1). College enrollment is also lower as a result of parental neglect while in high school ("Family Conflict," n.d., para. 1). School attendance is lower with teens from divided homes as it seems that single parents are less able to keep track of their teens ("Family Conflict," n.d., para. 1). Teens from non-intact or dysfunctional families are also more likely to engage in addictive behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse, and smoking ("Family Conflict," n.d., para. 2). In the Cayman Islands, such programs as Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous help to get people who recognize that they need help, to get back on their feet. The Crisis Centre is available as a refuge to women and children who live in homes with abusive men. However, many women are afraid to go there, or are too embarrassed or proud to share their problem with others. Teens from dysfunctional or non-intact homes are also at risk for becoming sexually active as they try to fill the emotional void and they are therefore more likely to become pregnant ("Family Conflict," n.d., para. 2). Teens who are neglected at home may also try to get their attention by committing crimes such as shoplifting and are more vulnerable to becoming delinquent by age fifteen ("Family Conflict," n.d., para. 6).

America is faced with a divorce rate of 50% (“Studies Show Divorce Rate,” n.d., para. 1). In the Cayman Islands we are faced with similar rates of divorce. According to the Statistics Office’s 2008 Population and Vital statistics report there were 487 marriages, 215 divorces filed and 196 granted. We are therefore made aware of the magnitude of social ills that we have here in the Cayman Islands as well. Just by looking around us we can see the drug addicts and alcoholics. We now hear something in the news everyday about violence, and crime is on the rise. Many of these crimes involve our youth under the age of twenty. Teen pregnancy is also prevalent in our islands. These are all phenomena cited as being the results of youth growing up in non-intact homes and dysfunctional families.

I will now begin my discussion of the effect of the media on our youth. It has seemingly become impossible to live without technology and the mass media, in the form of television, internet and radio, plays a tremendous role in influencing the lives of teens with regard to their sexuality, their level of aggression, the products they purchase and their self-image as they are targeted by advertisements (Burtina, 2005). It has also become commonplace to watch shows that do not portray the standard family setting of Mom, Dad and children, but rather single-parents, step-siblings and homosexuality (Tonic, 2007). These factors, no doubt can have a negative influence on teens sexual behavior and in the Cayman Islands our youth are exposed to American media, many have televisions in their bedrooms as well. With both parents working outside of the home, children are left alone and have much freedom to watch what they want to watch.

Researchers argue whether or not screen violence impacts youth aggression, but it has been proven that it does produce higher heart rates and blood pressure as well as respiration that can in turn produce aggression (“Effects of Media on Violence,” n.d., para. 6). University of Michigan Professor Leonard Eron conducted a study of 856 of the same subjects over twenty two years from 1960 to 1982 and the study showed that those who had watched more violent television shows at the age of eight were more likely as adults, to behave more violently and aggressively with their children and spouses and commit serious crimes (“Effects of Media on Violence,” n.d., para. 19). As mentioned earlier, our children in the Cayman Islands are often left alone at home and have access to the same shows as children in the United States. Since the early 1980s when television began to appear in our homes we have seen a steady increase in violence among our young people. We cannot afford to leave our youth’s media exposure unmonitored.

This leads me into my discussion of the third social ill influencing the youth of today – the absence of positive role models. Television celebrities too often play the part of role models for our youth as well. Our youth not only mimic behaviours they have seen portrayed on television, but set their sights on becoming like these stars whose own lives are wrapped-up in sex, and on becoming wealthy and famous (Bressi, n.d., para. 2). In the Cayman Islands, children’s heroes have changed from the real heroes - the men who went to sea or war and the women who were left behind to build the country. These men and women demonstrated strong values of perseverance and bravery. Children now want to become like the teen rock star, because as a society we fail to teach them that the real heroes are our police who risk their lives to protect us or the doctors and nurses who work around the clock to help the sick (Bressi, n.d., para. 4). If our schools and parents could highlight the lives of community heroes more often this might help to teach our children who the real heroes are. Teens in the Cayman Islands are also apparently adhering to the moral values they learn from celebrity “role models” as is evident in the astounding rate of teen and single-mother pregnancies throughout our islands. It costs society even more in the way of keeping programs such as the Young Parents Program in operation. This program helps teenage mothers to be better mothers and to continue their education after their child is born.

According to a report published by the Youth Justice Board on May 23, 2007, young people may also want to copy gang behavior because they lack the positive role models they need (“Absence of positive role models,” 2007, para. 1). Our youth need attention and they go where they can get it. Our youth also have the need to “fit in” and they seek to be accepted. Teens report that if they are able to turn to a positive adult figure, have help in becoming their personal best by having access to fulfilling activities and good facilities, their involvement in group offending could be curbed (“Absence of positive role models,” 2007, para. 7). Big Brother, Big Sister programs in our islands as well as study mentors are making a difference in the lives of our youth but we also need more male teachers inour classrooms.

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[Tatyana Burtina](http://www.associatedcontent.com/user/4891/tatyana_burtina.html)

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Write a 1-2 page summary of your own learning and growth in the course. What were the most significant areas for you? Have you changed your concept of teaching as a result of something we’ve read/discussed/done?

I have grown tremendously since I began this course, gaining a wealth of information and knowledge that has already proven useful and will continue to be useful for many years to come.

There have been many significant areas of growth for me, including learning about all the different philosophies of education and the sociological theories on the purposes of education.

I have reflected on what my individual philosophies of education are and I have learned more about myself in the process. I now have the opportunity to grow even more by reflecting on the areas of my philosophy that I can improve on.

My presentation on Progressivism also was a significant learning experience as was the presentation on the Boy Crisis in education, as this latter presentation highlighted in my mind some of the issues we will the face as teachers concerning boys. With this greater awareness I can prepare myself to better deal with these issues.

By doing this take-home exam, I was inundated by a whole wealth of information that has increased my awareness and brought to the forefront of my mind, the many social ills that we face in this world today. As a result I am in a position to understand our children even better, including the many pressures they are faced with in society as they are bombarded by advertising in the media, parental divorce and abandonment, abusive households and a whole host of other injustices.

I will then be better equipped to form relationships with my students and be the positive female figure they may need in their lives, to make a difference. This paper has also helped me to be cognizant of the tendency of teachers to form perceptions of their students based on family background. I must be wary and fight this tendency by all means, as teachers’ perceptions of them can have lasting effects on a person that follow him or her throughout life. I instead will encourage them to persevere and be the best that they can be, as nothing less that the best will do.

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