1 An Introduction to Sociology

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Chapter Outline

1.1 Sociology and the Sociological Approach
1.2 The Development of Sociology
1.3 Theoretical Perspectives

Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe what the discipline of sociology is and why it is necessary.
- Understand the sociological imagination and to see the relationship between social issues and personal troubles.
- Discuss the work of early sociological theorists and their contributions to understanding modern society.
- Explain each of the theoretical perspectives in sociology with an eye toward using each to analyze elements of social life throughout the text.

In the 2013 documentary *American Winter*, eight families from the Portland, Oregon, area are followed for several months as they struggle in the wake of the economic downtown that started in the United States in late 2006. The film's families are confronted with unemployment, with some temporarily laid off and others facing long-term joblessness. They face a host of economic challenges caused by the lack of regular work, mounting medical bills, and unexpected deaths. Each family faces wrenching decisions: Pay the utility bills or the mortgage? Where do we go after our home has been foreclosed on—live in a car or turn to extended family for shelter? How will the kids be affected as they continue to attend school?

Although economists declared the recession technically over in 2009, thousands of individuals and families of all stripes have continued to struggle long after that. Many families had done what American culture asked of them. They pursued higher education. They found work. They started families and stayed together. They bought houses and took care of one another. Somehow they still ended up struggling to simply survive.

The Great Recession of 2007–2009 was the result of serious crises in the housing and banking sectors of the U.S. economy. In the previous decade, the housing market had seen unprecedented growth with a substantial increase in both the price of and demand for residential housing. During the height of the real estate boom, financial firms started to engage in a variety of high-risk lending practices (e.g., subprime mortgages). These high-risk mortgages were then pooled and sold as "mortgage-backed securities." Investment banks saw these mortgage-backed securities as highly profitable investments and they often acquired them on credit. This increased demand

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During the financial crisis of 2007–2009, many homeowners could not afford to keep their homes. Millions lost their homes to foreclosure.

encouraged underwriters to fund even more risky mortgages. These loans often had exotic terms with little or no down payment, interest-only payments for the first several years, and an adjustable interest rate.

In 2006, the real estate bubble burst. Home values rapidly declined and interest rates increased. Some home owners were now unable (or unwilling) to pay their mortgages. Over-extended investment banks were now holding "toxic assets," and many were no longer financially viable. In 2008, the colossal investment bank Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy (the largest in U.S. history). The federal government had to use tax money to "bail out" a number of other financial institutions. In turn, many businesses closed or laid off workers; others shelved plans for expansion. The entire economy slowed, consumers decreased spending, and oil prices began to rise. The Great Recession had a catastrophic impact on the American people. The unemployment rate peaked at over 10% and there were more than 4 million home foreclosures.

This was an example of a historical event, something occurring in the context of the larger society, that can have a dramatic influence of the life of an individual. The Pew Research Center (2010) conducted an insightful study of approximately 3,000 Americans regarding their personal experiences with the recession. The results illustrate several ways in which forces in the larger society impacted the lives of individual Americans:

- *Unemployment was a widespread concern.* Among American workers, nearly one third (32%) had experienced unemployment during the recession. The average worker had been unemployed for a period of six months.
- *Basic personal finances were a concern for many.* Just over one quarter of adults (27%) reported only having money to cover the necessities, while another 11% claimed they lacked sufficient funds to cover their needed expenses. One out of every five adults reported having problems paying their mortgage or rent.
- *Many employed adults experienced significant changes at their job.* More than one quarter (28%) of employees reported that their hours had been reduced, and 23% had received a pay cut. On the other hand, approximately one third of employees had to take extra hours or overtime shifts to cover their bills.
- *The wealth of the average American household was negatively affected.* In fact, in 2008, it shrank 20%, the greatest drop since World War II. Almost half of the homeowners (48%) reported a decrease in the value of their property. In fact, 21% of the homeowners were "underwater." This means that the mortgage holder owes more in loans than the current market value of the home.
- *The recession impacted individual retirement planning.* Nearly one third (32%) of adults age 62 or older reported they were delaying retirement because of the recession. Out of those adults who had retirement accounts (e.g., 401K), 41% reported taking withdrawals to pay their bills.
- *The economic crisis has even affected living arrangements.* About one tenth (9%) of adults who had previously lived independently returned home to live with their parents. However, this increased to nearly one out of every four (24%) of the adults in the 18–29 age group.

Source: Based on Pew Research Center. (2010). A balance sheet at 30 months: How the great recession has changed life in America.

1.1 Sociology and the Sociological Approach

First and foremost, human beings are social beings. For ages, people have been faced with common problems, such as adapting to their physical environment, acquiring food and shelter, and caring for their offspring. Over the course of time, humans have developed various strategies for coordinating their efforts to collectively respond to these shared challenges. Successful group living requires cooperation, communication, and specialization. As a result of this collective organization, human behavior tends to occur in relatively stable and predictable patterns.

At birth, we enter a society with preexisting social arrangements. We are placed into social positions such as nationality, gender, race, social class, and religion. Over the course of our lives, we find ourselves positioned as members of various groups and organizations, such as the family, school, community, and workplace. As a result, each person is confronted with a variety of socially defined expectations. Social forces have a tremendous impact on us as individuals. They influence how we think and behave. They impact how we see other people, as well as how other people see us. In large part, the social environment determines our overall quality of life, for better or worse.

Sociology is the scientific study of society and the various aspects of social life, such as the interplay between the individual and society and the patterns of behavior that emerge. Specifically, sociologists study **social structure** or the preexisting patterns of expected behavior that organize society into predictable relationships. Structure emerges from interactions between social actors and can potentially be changed through these interactions. Sociologists also assume that the existing structure has an effect on the way actors think, act, and perceive their world. Therefore, sociologists have quite a task; we must understand these structural patterns (as they are likely influencing our behavior). We also need to understand the sources of these patterns (as any change that emerges in society will likely come from the same sources). Since the source of structure is human interaction, we need to understand the communication of meaning and, ultimately, the way these structures and meaning systems cause us to perceive things in our environment.

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Our social environment influences the way we think, behave, interact with one another, and perceive the world.

Sociology provides a unique and important perspective on human behavior by examining the role that broader social forces play in shaping human behavior. As an academic discipline, sociology is interested in topics such as social inequality based on race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexuality, physical ability, and a number of other variables. We study culture, socialization, and interaction. We try to understand how social control works to encourage pro-social behaviors, and why we get crime when these attempts fail. By understanding how the larger society affects the lives of its individual members, we achieve a greater understanding of the human experience. Sociology

can prepare students in every career track by helping them to better understand and deal with those they come into contact with on a daily basis, including co-workers, clients, patients, and customers. Sociology provides practical skills that are needed to identify the underlying social issues and solve "real world" problems.

There are two major levels of social reality, macroscopic and microscopic (Ritzer, 1988). As a result, there are two levels of sociological analysis. **Macrosociology** focuses on broader social forces, patterns, and trends. Macrosociology examines things such as unemployment rates and trends in the housing market. **Microsociology** examines the smaller-scale aspects of the social world: the individual and groups. This includes topics such as the individual's experience of losing a job or the family's experience of losing their home to foreclosure.

The Sociological Approach

Sociology provides a unique and important perspective on human behavior. The influential sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) emphasized the **sociological imagination**, which he defined as the ability to see the relationship between a person's experiences and the society in which he or she lives. An individual's biography is largely a product of history and social structure. Personal problems are often rooted in social issues. As Peter Berger (1963) observed, things are rarely, if ever, as simple as they seem on the surface. Social forces beyond the individuals' control, such as war, recession, and discrimination, can shape the course of their lives. If we can gain a better understanding of society and social forces, we can gain a better understanding of human behavior. This type of analysis helps us to uncover the underlying relationships among events and to place them in an understandable framework.

However, the sociological approach is often contrary to "conventional wisdom." For example, in the United States a tremendous amount of emphasis is placed on individualism. Many Americans believe that each person makes decisions and actions that determine that person's station in life (income, status in the community, and so on). Joel R. Feagin (2014) conducted an insightful study of Americans' attitudes toward the poor. The results indicated that people are more likely to attribute poverty to individual causes rather than social causes. Factors such as inadequate morals, alcoholism, and a lack of effort were cited more commonly than discrimination or systematic failures of industry or education.

However, seemingly personal experiences, such as work, housing, and food shopping, are products of the employment, stock, and housing markets. The Great Recession of 2007–2009 is a recent illustration of how trends in the broader society intersect to influence reality for the individual. People lost their jobs and homes. Among the employed, millions endured cuts in hours and pay. Many people struggled just to pay the bills. Nest eggs were raided and retirements postponed. The values of the most common assets of many middle-class Americans, their homes and investment accounts (e.g., 401K, IRA), were devastated.

While it may be tempting for some to view many of these issues solely as "personal troubles," such an approach ignores important elements of the story. It was certainly a mistake each time home buyers signed a mortgage they couldn't afford, or workers failed to save money for emergency situations, or families lived above their means through credit cards. The value of Mills' approach in the sociological imagination is to encourage the examination of all factors: structural, historical, and individual. The widespread and common outcomes of the Great Recession strongly suggest that these outcomes resulted from something beyond millions of people all making the same

poor financial decisions. For example, banks were aggressively pursuing mortgage candidates—hence the term "predatory lending." The government had decreased its regulation of the lending industry so there was little oversight to notice the risky loans being approved.

Even the "bail out" that was needed to save some failing institutions requires a structural understanding. For example, two of the "big three" automakers required government assistance to stay afloat during the economic downturn. Some may see the failure of a car maker as an institutional level "personal issue" and think it best to simply let that car company fail. Such an approach fails to recognize the ripple effect such a failure would cause. Thousands of employees from these companies would be out of work, and so would all the employees of the companies that make parts for these cars. Additionally, employees in any company producing raw materials (i.e., iron, steel, rubber) used to make these cars would be hurt, as would the car dealers and the gas and oil companies that supply fuel. Had these companies simply failed, the impact to the overall economy would have been catastrophic. Mills directs us to understand that the outcomes are driven by personal choices but are equally effected by the historical time frame and existing patterns of behavior that are enveloped by society.

Norbert Elias wrote in his book *What is Sociology?* (1978) that the job of the sociologist is to be the destroyer of myths. The sociologist questions common sense instead of simply accepting cultural ideas or standards at face value. It is the task of sociology to ask questions that typically do not get asked and to look for connections that people are typically not willing or not able to see. Most importantly, it is the job of the sociologist to look for facts that support or refute common-sense claims, moving past "hope" or "idea" or "belief" to draw conclusions based on empirical fact and evidence. In short, we must be able to understand the personal issue, the historical era, and the social patterns to be able to ascertain and explain how those elements interact and cause the observed outcome.

1.2 The Development of Sociology

The historical and social setting of 18th- and 19th-century Western Europe dramatically influenced the development of sociology. While a number of factors influenced the development of sociology as an academic discipline (see Ritzer, 1988), the Industrial Revolution was an especially noteworthy influence. In a relatively short period of time, Western Europe was transformed from an agricultural society to an industrial society. Rather than working in a farm setting, most people now worked manufacturing jobs in a factory setting. Most worked long hours in an unsafe environment and received relatively little pay. Urbanization was a second important factor. Since the

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The rapid social changes of the 17th and 18th centuries, including the Industrial Revolution, were driving forces behind the development of sociology.

manufacturing jobs were located in urban areas, workers and their families had to pull up their rural roots and relocate to rapidly growing cities. These urban areas were plagued by a variety of problems, including overcrowding, poverty, crime, and pollution.

In addition, during the Enlightenment, there was an increasing emphasis on logical and rational inquiry via the scientific method. The *scientific method* does not refer to a singular research technique, but rather to a systematic approach to studying a given subject matter. Because scholars took a more systematic approach and shared their methods and results, great advances were made in the fields of biology, chemistry, and physics. Consequently, some researchers became interested in applying the scientific method to the study of society and social problems.

Auguste Comte

Auguste Comte (1794–1859) was a French philosopher who is widely considered to be the ideological founder of sociology. Comte believed that his "social physics" could use observable facts to locate the existence of abstract social laws, much like Isaac Newton did in identifying the laws of gravity. Comte was concerned with two issues that that had plagued social philosophers for years—what holds society together (which he termed "social statics") and what causes social change ("social dynamics"). Comte believed that these had been incorrectly regarded as contradictory forces because revolutionary groups had generally supported social dynamics, while those who were more conservative hoped to maintain the status quo. He wished to resolve this dispute.

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Auguste Comte introduced the term *sociology* and is generally considered to be the "father" of sociology.

Comte argued that all societies progress through three stages of history. First, in the theological phase, humanity is understood with reference to an almighty god. Eventually the society moves away from a strictly religious understanding and relies more on logical speculation and abstract thought. Finally, society shifts into a positivist stage in which knowledge comes from scientific empiricism and all social behavior is governed by facts. Comte maintained that modern society must stop the constant negativity and criticism that had plagued much of Europe during his lifetime and instead build a body of common knowledge using proof and facts. Comte believed this body of knowledge would result in a unity of ideas and beliefs under the umbrella of scientific empiricism that he called "positivism." Scientific knowledge, as the moral force that unites society, would become both the engine for change *and* the cause of consistency.

Emile Durkheim

Emile Durkheim (1858–1916) was a pioneering French sociologist. Although he descended from a long line of rabbis, his interest in religion was purely academic. He was troubled by what he perceived as a moral disintegration in French society and he was interested in the notion of moral education. Durkheim was largely responsible for the idea of a "science" of social life and the social world (Ritzer, 1988). His work focused on actual research and scientific investigation, rather than solely abstract theorizing. Durkheim was particularly interested in the impact of large-scale social structures on the thoughts and actions of the individual. He rejected any attempts to explain human behavior that were based solely on individual factors such as psychology and biology (Coser, 1977).

Fundamental to Durkheim's sociology was the concept of **social facts**. Social facts are social forces and cultural factors that are outside of and coercive to the individual. Examples include laws, customs, collective morality, public opinion, and cultural norms. Durkheim believed that social facts exert a real influence on individuals that is independent of any personal, psychological, and biological characteristics. These forces and factors are objectively real and exert a constraint over the individual; that is, they influence and can even control the individual's conduct. Durkheim argued that humans were moral beings to the extent that they were social beings, and he believed a connection to society would provide a **collective consciousness**—a set of moral attitudes and shared beliefs that give direction and purpose to the life of the individual and assure interconnection to all in society. However, he asserted, when there are problems in the social structure, the regulations that govern an individual's actions can break down, making it hard for people to behave morally. Durkheim's most famous contribution to sociology, his study of suicide rates in Western Europe, is featured in the box titled, "Sociology in Action: Durkheim's Suicide Study."

Sociology in Action: Durkheim's Suicide Study

Emile Durkheim is perhaps best known for his comprehensive study of suicide rates in Western Europe. Drawing on data from government sources, he examined suicide rates for the latter half of the 19th century. To start his argument that suicide is a social act, Durkheim preemptively refuted competing explanations that attributed suicide to biology, psychology, heredity, race, and climate. He found that the rates of suicide varied by region, and the high rates of this behavior tended to cluster in certain geographical spaces. Even within certain societies, there were systematic variations in the rates of this behavior. If, indeed, suicide was an individual act, there should be no systematic differences between group rates—suicide should be randomly distributed across groups.

Durkheim (1897/1951) found several differences in the patterns of suicide rates that included:

1. Protestants had a higher suicide rate than Catholics.
2. Single people had higher suicide rates than married people.
3. Individuals who did not have children had a higher rate than people who were parents.
4. Suicide rates were higher during times of war than in times of peace.
5. Economic upheaval (e.g., recession, economic expansion) results in an increase in suicide rates.

(continued)

Sociology in Action: Durkheim's Suicide Study *(continued)*

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According to Durkheim, all types of personal problems, including suicide, are more common among isolated individuals who have low levels of social integration.

Durkheim concluded that these differences in suicide rates were a function of social relations among groups. He argued that **social integration**, or the connection of an individual to a group, was key to understanding suicide rates. The greater the level of social integration for any particular group, the less likely its members will be to commit suicide. For example, Catholics had a very strong communal base to their religion and a higher level of social integration. Married people are generally more socially integrated than single people. Individuals who have children are typically more socially integrated than people who do not have children. However, those who lack adequate integration (the unchurched, unmarried, and childless, among others) are less likely to feel the normal pressure of society. Durkheim referred to this condition as *egoism*, as the individual is left to make decisions on his or her own without the influence of the collective consciousness that guides normal moral behavior. When we are left to make decisions on our own, we are more likely to take radical options, such as choosing to end our lives.

War is a significant event for a society and it typically creates disruption in the integrations of that society. Similarly, any economic upheaval, such as a recession, will have an adverse impact on social integration. In these situations, the suicide rate increases not simply because of a lack of integration but because of rapid changes to the social structures. Suddenly, what people had experienced as normal disappears and individuals are forced to make sense of a world with which they are unfamiliar. Durkheim termed this *anomie*, or normlessness. Consider college students away from home for the first time. They are suddenly able to make their own rules and choices, away from their parents' prying eyes. However, they also have left the familiarity of home behind, as well as most of their friends. They are now in a place where the social dangers that they have been warned about their entire lives (i.e., drinking, drugs, sex) may be taking place in the bunk above them on a nightly basis. The norms of home are not always replaced by new ones at school, which leaves students feeling adrift. Durkheim's work helps explain why suicide has been shown to be the leading cause of mortality among college students, far outpacing traffic-related deaths (Turner, Leno, & Keller 2013).

Durkheim concluded that suicide is not solely an individual act and it is not solely the result of individual characteristics. Although suicide is an act done by one person, that act has its roots in social forces. The suicide rate for any group or society is a social fact that reflects the level of social integration within a group or society. A change in the level of social integration translates into a change in the suicide rate. Increased social integration increases the bonds among members of a society. In turn, these bonds serve to regulate an individual's behavior and provide constraints against self-destructive behaviors such as suicide.

Karl Marx

Karl Marx (1818–1883) slightly predated sociology, but his ideas on power and domination have been influential in informing our understanding of stratification and inequality in society. Marx's work must be read as an analysis of economic factors as nearly all of his work focused entirely on social class, which he believed to be the fundamental challenge of the capitalist era. Marx believed that economic capitalism was a flawed system that could only end one way—with the dominant economic class (termed the "bourgeoisie") using their ever-increasing power to dominate the economic, social, and ideological elements of society. He predicted that eventually there would be a point where a small number of people controlled nearly all the resources available in society while the masses, or working class (termed the "proletariat"), fought over the leftovers. He further explained that the exploited classes would not recognize their true class location because of the "false consciousness" created by the bourgeoisie to distract them from recognizing their misery. Marx cites organized religion as one form of false consciousness because many of the major religions encourage sacrifice and forbid coveting your neighbors' goods. The religions promise that if people live a pure, industrious, non-violent life they will be rewarded in the afterlife. (Consider sayings about how it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven and about how the meek shall inherit the earth.) By believing in this promise, even if they recognize how much the existing system is taking advantage of them, the proletarians are unlikely to jeopardize their heavenly rewards by attempting reforms. Some Marxists see other variables that divide and distract the proletariat from their true class locations as false consciousnesses, and these include race, nationality, sexuality, and gender. Essentially, they believe class is the source of all inequality.

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This Occupy Wall Street protest is an expression of the working class's frustrations with capitalism that Karl Marx wrote about.

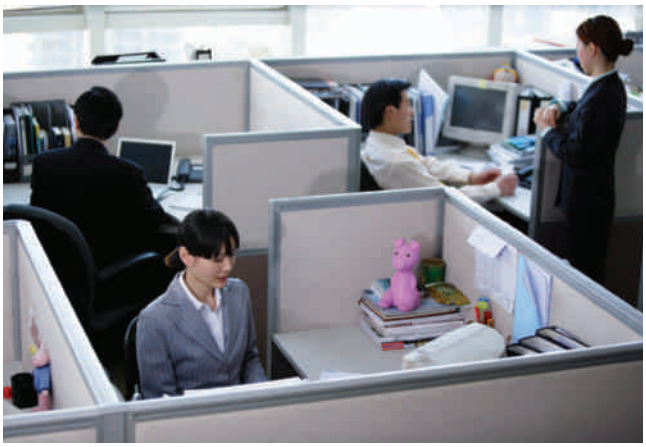
Marx believed that eventually the false consciousness would fail to work and the masses would become united, recognize their similarities and common interests (termed "class consciousness"), and overthrow the capitalist system. A new economic system would rise that would avoid capitalism's class inequality; it would instead be a communist system that restricts private ownership and encourages all to work together for the common good. While the inevitable global, communist revolution that Marx believed was imminent in the 1870s has yet to occur, the focus on class inequality, power dynamics, and domination and oppression continue to inform sociological understanding of inequality and social justice. Even today, many Marxists will argue that global indicators all continue to move in the

direction that Marx predicted and the fall of capitalism may be just around the corner. Later discussions in this text will highlight other Marxist concepts, such as the alienation of the worker in capitalism. The economics chapter (Chapter 10) will also highlight the differences between capitalism and socialism and communism, as well as the misuse of these terms in the modern world.

Max Weber

Max Weber (1864–1920) was a German sociologist who wrote in the early 1900s. Weber has a diverse legacy in sociology that includes some of the earliest microsociological work as well as influential works on religion, the nature of power, and social organizations. Weber's work notes an increasing reliance on rationality in western societies that Weber was concerned would be detrimental to society in the long run. For generations, those studying society had argued that society would be best served moving toward evidence-based understandings of the world. Weber noted that in modern societies, people pursued goals almost exclusively using rules and regulations that would lead to achieving those goals in the most efficient way possible. He feared that the increase in rationality would lead to a decrease in valuing traditions, emotions, and beliefs, which could leave humans lacking creativity.

As evidence, Weber pointed to the increased use of bureaucracy as the organizing principle of any large group of people. The bureaucracy is a set of formal rules and regulations designed to create an organization that operates at maximum efficiency. For Weber, the rise of bureaucracies was necessary because traditional ways of organizing people had fallen out of favor. It was no longer acceptable to structure society based on caste, bloodlines, race, ethnicity, or gender in modern society. Instead, decisions were made solely on skills and technical qualifications that could improve the efficiency of the group (Gerth & Mills, 1946). While all of this sounds appropriate and acceptable to those in modern society, the heavy reliance on rules and regulations threatens individual decision making and makes us increasingly reliant on the bureaucracy. Weber feared it could ultimately lock us in an "iron cage of rationality" where our entire purpose is to follow the rules placed in front of us (Gerth & Mills, 1946). In later discussions in this text, Weber's work on bureaucracy will resurface, as will his discussions of the source of power in society, and his role in the development of sociological research methods.



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Max Weber believed that although bureaucracies are highly efficient, they can be an "iron cage" that traps the human spirit.

Early Contributors to Sociology in the United States

Sociology as a discipline has its roots in the Enlightenment and the subsequent philosophical debates about the nature of man that followed. Questions about the role of industry, the influence of government, and the rights of individuals drove early sociological thought in Europe. On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, the United States was experiencing the same type of industrial growth and social change. Inevitably, sociological thought and practice found a home in America.

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Harriet Martineau was an early feminist and social critic who made a number of important contributions to sociology in early America.

Harriet Martineau

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) was an early British social critic and feminist. Martineau translated and interpreted Auguste Comte's *Positive Philosophy* into English in 1851. She traveled to the United States in 1835 and, after her travels, wrote *Society in America* in 1837, a work that was highly critical of inequality in the United States. Martineau found American claims of being a practicing democracy questionable because the country maintained slavery, engaged in the oppression of women, and actively denied both groups education. Martineau was responsible for devising measures and field protocols to determine the progress of society, including measuring the condition of the less powerful groups, cultural attitudes toward authority and autonomy, and the extent to which individuals are able to be independent in the society.

Jane Addams

Jane Addams (1860–1935) was among the earliest practitioners of applied sociology working with the University of Chicago's school of sociology and criminology. At the time, the Chicago School included many of the preeminent early American sociologists and social philosophers, including George Herbert Mead, W. I. Thomas, Robert Park, and Edwin Sutherland and Florian Znaniecki—many of whose work will be covered later in the text. The Chicago School is best known for their work on urban sociology and for laying the framework for symbolic interactionism, the preeminent microsociological theory of the 20th century. Addams is best known for establishing Hull House in Chicago, a prototype of a community center where needy people could go to get basic services, food, social support, and education. At Hull House, the microsociological ideas of the Chicago School were put into practice. Addams was well published in areas of community studies and dealt regularly with needs of women, the poor, and children. She is also seen as an early proponent of using social science to study public health and is recognized as a pioneer in the discipline of social work. Addams fought often for social justice causes, including women's suffrage and world peace. Her efforts were rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. Despite her accomplishments, she was rarely recognized as a full member of the Chicago School because of the sexism of the time.

W. E. B. Dubois

W. E. B. DuBois was among the first African Americans to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard and quickly started a career using social science to understand the questions of race in the United States. DuBois completed *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1899, which was one of the first ethnographies of a Black community in the United States. In *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903), DuBois pointed out that Blacks (and ultimately all other minorities as well) maintain a **double consciousness**. This phenomenon meant that a person in a minority group performs two scripts, so to speak. One script is typical of anyone in a given culture. The second script is specific to the minority group. This second script takes into account the external opinions of others who might view the person with pity, prejudice, or contempt simply because of skin color (or other markers of difference). For example, while most Americans would enter a store with a list of items to purchase and credit cards to buy these goods, a minority group member may face other challenges while undertaking this shopping trip. Trayon Christian, a 19-year-old engineering student, purchased a $349 belt at Barney's, a high-end store in New York City. After paying with his debit card and showing identification to the cashier, he left the store. One block later store security stopped him. They questioned how he could afford such a purchase, told Christian his card had been reported stolen, handcuffed him, and took him to the police station. He was released 42 minutes later with an apology from police (Burke, Morales, Ross, & Otis, 2013). Christian believed he was being watched closely by security because he was a young, Black male shopping for expensive clothes, which led to the assumption that a person "like him" should be viewed as "suspicious."

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Sociologist and NAACP founder W. E. B. Dubois argued that the only way to end poor treatment of African Americans is to demand social change and equality outright, rather than to accept discrimination in hopes of long-term opportunities.

DuBois hoped to use social science to address the prejudice and discrimination that surrounded race in America. Later in his career he became increasingly convinced that agitation was the only way to solve the problems of race. He was critical of the ideas of Booker T. Washington, the head of the Tuskegee Institute and an early civil rights leader, regarding how African Americans should work to integrate. Washington believed short-term acceptance of discrimination would lead to increased opportunities in the long run. DuBois argued that only demanding equality and full acceptance would change how Caucasian Americans treated African Americans. To this end, DuBois helped found the NAACP in 1909 and used his editorship of the organization's magazine, *The Crisis*, to combat racism in all forms.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives

The work of these theorists laid the groundwork for the evolution of various theoretical perspectives. In sociology, a **theory** is the framework for analysis that outlines what to focus on and provides predictions about logical outcomes within the framework. Many sociologists have attempted to undercover a single, universal theory to explain human social behavior. Instead of finding a unified "metatheory," in most cases these works have simply caused further debate about how society should best be understood. Today, rather than searching for a single **paradigm** where there are taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions not debated by members within a scientific discipline, sociology is multiparadigmatic (see *Sociology in action: Veblen's Conspicuous Consumption*). In the following section, several of the sociological paradigms will be outlined. These paradigms will be used throughout the text to analyze any and all social phenomena we encounter.

Functionalism

Functionalism is a theoretical perspective that draws from some of the earliest ideas of sociology. Comte argued that society must be considered a cohesive unit in which all parts work together. Durkheim built off Comte's work and argued that society is only possible with solidarity and integration among all parts (Durkheim, 1895/1982). The functionalist perspective argues that society is best understood as an ordered, stable, interconnected system of parts, each of which helps meet the needs of the system. The system itself will be 1) organized to maintain stability and consistency, which should 2) prevent radical or unexpected change and 3) allow all parts of the system to serve some purpose. Under this model, functionalist analysis focuses attention on the existing social structure. Structure should guide the organization of the system and define all parts of the system, allowing the function of each part to be understood.

Durkheim's work highlights the importance of structure to functionalism. As society is forced to change due to modernization and industrialization, which leads to the increased need for unique skills and knowledge, the organization of society changes as well. Traditional societies were organized around a **mechanical solidarity** where it could be assumed that most people in that society would live lives similar to one another; they would have attended the same schools, worshipped at the same churches, had similar ethnical backgrounds, and held one of a small number of jobs available in a typical small town (farmer, shop owner, teacher, clergy, etc.). This level of similarity would naturally connect everyone to the social system, and there would be little variation among people's experiences and skills. Society would then work like a simple machine with a few moving parts, each of which could be easily replaced were it to fail.

Later, as patterns of behavior changed, often around industrialization, it was no longer safe to assume that integration would happen due to similarity. As factories were built and jobs became available in those factories, residents of these traditional, small communities now had a new option; they could work in the industrial sector. This would often require moving to an area closer to the factory; suddenly, cities would grow in these areas. The cities were populated by people who were often different in many social ways: religion,

language, ethnicity, food preferences—essentially everything about an individual that could be assumed to be similar in the traditional communities now had the possibility of being different in the city. Individuals began to have different, and very specific, skills because new technology and industry required it. Workers in a steel mill couldn't just work in an auto factory the next day because the skills needed were different. Sometimes even skills in different parts of a single factory were specific to that one area. This change presented a problem to Durkheim; how can we explain solidarity when all parts of the system are specific, unique, and diverse? Durkheim argued that the parts of the system were now connected through this complexity. Each part would develop a specialized function that benefited the whole but completed specific tasks. Durkheim compared modern society to the human body, using the term **organic solidarity**. Just as the brain, lungs, kidneys, and skin are all organs that help keep a human alive by serving specific tasks, the family, religion, economic system, and individuals all serve a unique purpose to help keep the social system alive and healthy. In each of these examples, if the system is working effectively and the structures are being maintained, the system should work well and require little maintenance (Durkheim, 1893/1964). If the system develops too rapidly or changes unexpectedly, the structures can destabilize and leave the system out of order. When the structure fails to work the way it should, individuals are left to make decisions on their own, without feeling the influence of the social structure. As we saw earlier in the discussion of suicide, since we are used to relying on social structure, this feeling of normlessness, or **anomie**, can result in our making inappropriate decisions (Durkheim, 1897/1951).

Later works in functionalism began to focus attention the functions within the system. Robert Merton (1910–2003) drew a distinction between **manifest functions**, which are the obvious or intended purposes of some part of the system, and **latent functions**, which are the unintended consequences of that same part. Merton argued that as the latent functions were far more plentiful than manifest functions, and often went unconsidered, failing to recognize the latent functions could result in a poor understanding of the social system (Merton, 1968). For example, the manifest function of higher education is to provide increased knowledge and specific skill sets to those who attend college. However, if we ignore the networking opportunities, friendships, and personal growth that typically occur while students attend college, we are left with an incomplete picture of the function of college in society. Merton also wrote of the possibility of **dysfunction** arising, which could challenge the existing order and disturb the equilibrium of the system. Within the latent functions of higher education, there is an emergent culture of binge drinking (Durkin, Wolfe, & Clark, 2005) and a growing amount of student debt resulting from college attendance. If students are attending college and, instead of leaving with relevant skills and knowledge, they are leaving with drinking problems and crippling amounts of debt, higher education could become dysfunctional to the social system.

Much of the early work in sociology emerged from the functionalist perspective in order to understand patterns in society and the parameters of sociological analysis. Critiques of the functionalist perspectives began to emerge in two directions; one critiquing the functionalist assumption that the existing system was effective and a second finding fault with the exclusive focus on the structures of society, ignoring the influence of the individual. These critiques led to the development of conflict theories and symbolic interaction theories.

Conflict

Conflict theory emerges from the functionalist assumption that the consistency and stability of the social system are, by definition, positive. Instead of seeing the social system as the home of strong, voluntary moral consensus, conflict theorists argue that society is best understood as a constant struggle over power and scarce resources. Whichever group is able to maximize their resources can use their control to establish structures that will benefit their own group. Interestingly, as both are macro-level perspectives, conflict theorists and functionalists often arrive similar conclusions. However, functionalists believe these outcomes are good for the whole society; conflict theorists tend to see the outcomes as the result of domination by the more powerful group.

Most conflict analysis revolves around the concept of **power**, which is the ability of a man, or group of men, to make their wishes happen despite the opposition of others (Weber & Maximilian, 1947). Power is an element of any social relationship and always has the potential to be abused by those who hold it. The conflict perspective, perhaps not surprisingly, has a history of conflict within it. Two traditions have developed around two classic theorists to debate how power should be understood.

Marxist conflict theory emerges from the work of Karl Marx, the economist and political activist discussed earlier in this chapter. Marx was unconcerned with a scientific analysis of power and social patterns surrounding it. Instead, his work focused on the almost-certain abuse of economic power in a capitalist economy. For Marx, you either owned the means of production and benefited from the wealth, power, and control that position provided or you *were* the means of production and were consistently taken advantage of within the corrupt system organized by capitalists to protect their wealth. While modern Marxist analysis has strayed from the strictly economic model, it has maintained a simplistic understanding of power; you are either a "have" or a "have-not." Marxists also point to the establishment of **dominant ideologies**, which are shared ideas or beliefs that serve to justify and legitimize the power that the dominant group holds. If our culture believes "you get what you deserve," then we need not question why the rich are rich and the poor are poor: The rich deserve to be wealthy and the poor have some fundamental flaw that prevents them from succeeding. While Marx's work has come under much scrutiny, it does provide an important basis to understand inequality and domination. Marx also provides a solid platform for those who wish to pursue social justice.

Competing with Marx's understanding of power is Max Weber's. Weber was trained as a sociologist and as a result had a desire to understand power as fully as possible. Rather than understanding power only in its most corrupt state, Weber seeks to understand the myriad ways power can be gained and used. Weber argues that power must be seen as multifaceted and available in a wide variety of ways. While power can certainly be economic, it can also be derived from social networks, skills, qualifications, physical strength, cultural traditions, and even personality. What clearly sets Weber's understanding of power apart from Marx is his assertion that, in order to be legitimate, power must involve some degree of compliance from those the power is held over (Weber, 1904/1958). Weber discusses **traditional authority**, which arises from a devotion to a cultural idea that certain people inherit power through their social position or bloodlines (i.e., monarchies, feudal systems). **Legal-rational**

authority distributes power to various positions created in society. Once the powerful positions have been created, any person possessing certain credentials can be placed into that position and be given the power associated with that position (i.e., doctor, judge, chief of police). Finally, one can gain power through the strength of one's personality. **Charismatic authority** is power that emerges not due to any tradition or qualifications but because people see the leader as heroic or magical (Weber, 1904/1958).

Each type of power is important to the Weberian understanding of power for two reasons. First, none of these types is based on, or even requires, money. Charismatic authority, especially, is power that emerges from no previous social arrangement; many famous examples of charismatic people (Bill Clinton, Charles Manson, Martin Luther King, Jr., Adolph Hitler, etc.) have little in common except for humble beginnings and the ability to convince numbers of people to listen to what they have to say. While it is certainly possible, and even likely, that wealthy people can have charismatic authority, it is the one source of power that can arise from any social arrangement. It is potentially a significant source of social change.

Second, the power can be removed by the masses. For example, if the people of Great Britain suddenly decided that they no longer cared about the House of Windsor, then the importance of Prince William, Princess Kate, and their child, Prince George, disappears as their traditional authority is removed. Similarly, if a person were to complete years of education, pass state medical exams, and be licensed by the state as an M.D., but no patients trusted the doctor to practice medicine on them, the power of that legal position would be minimized.

Consider Weber's work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/1958). Here Weber analyzes Protestants' higher rates of academic success in European countries with diverse religious populations. Weber points to several Protestant beliefs that lead members of these religious groups to work hard, spend little, and invest wisely, all with the intended purpose of giving glory to God. Ultimately, these same practices make Protestants ideal capitalists (hard work, extra capital to invest, and a plan of action for success) so they become wealthy. Weber's analysis indicates that the motivation for all the labor and sacrifice undertaken by Protestants and the cause of their success in the economic realm is the desire to be close to God and to fulfill His calling for them. A Marxist analysis of this same data would consider Weber's conclusion to be part of the ideology—simply a story created by the rich to justify their oppressive economic behavior . . . which it may be. The value of Weber's approach is the attempt to understand the drives, desires, emotions, and beliefs of individuals. His call to do such analysis opens the door for microsociology and has repercussions for the methods used in sociology.

The conflict perspective, whether Marxist or Weberian, focuses attention on the unequal distribution of power and the result of this inequality in the structures of society. However, since the power inequality ends up being built into the structures of society, the inequality is unlikely to be resolved. It must be understood as a defining factor in the system.

Sociology in Action: Veblen's Conspicuous Consumption

Thorsten Veblen is an American sociologist of the late 1800s best known for his work *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Veblen & Almy, 1899). Veblen points out that in modern capitalism the most common way to indicate status is through a variety of conspicuous displays: taking long vacations (termed "conspicuous leisure"), going on big-game hunting trips in which the animal is killed only as a trophy and the rest of the meat and usable parts are simply discarded (termed "conspicuous waste"), purchasing multiple or expensive cars for the purpose of displaying to others your disposable income (termed "conspicuous consumption"). These actions all serve to indicate to others your relative status.

Veblen's concepts are particularly interesting in that he made his observations over 100 years ago, and they seem to be even more valuable today than they were then. Veblen's ideas tend to read very differently, depending on which of the main theoretical perspectives is being applied. For example, when analyzing conspicuous consumption, Merton's manifest and latent functions are useful concepts. Simply recognizing a classic Rolls Royce or a new edition sports car as "transportation," its manifest function, misses a key element. While the car is a mode of transportation, so is a used Chevy pickup truck, or a golf cart, or a Segway scooter. The expensive car is intended to display status, not just to move you from place to place. In this way, the latent function of the car is far more important to its owner than is the manifest.

In Max Weber's discussions of status he indicated that those in a status group live similar lifestyles and engage in similar patterns of behavior as others in that same group (Coser, 1977). Under Weber's version of conflict, people should make purchases appropriate to their given status groups. If someone's lifestyle indicates they should drive a high performance sports car (or a pickup truck, or an environmentally friendly hybrid), they likely will acquire that type of vehicle to show they belong to the group with whom they regularly interact. A young man living in a rural community and driving a small, economy car would have trouble going camping and hunting with his peers who are driving trucks.

Colin Sinclair/age fotostock/ Superstock

This Bentley, parked on Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles, California, is an example of what sociologists call conspicuous consumption.

In addition, people may use their purchases to indicate a level of status they do not actually have. Using Erving Goffman's dramaturgy (described in this chapter's text), all people are actors, playing various roles and using props to make their performances more believable. Because of the availability of credit, people are now able to live above their means, make elaborate purchases that they cannot afford, and in this way display a higher level of status or social class than their incomes warrant. As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, during the housing boom in the early 2000s many people purchased expensive houses on which they could not afford the mortgage payments. This was a costly mistake in the long run, but while they were playing the role of an upper-middle-class homeowner, those around them likely accepted their performances and treated them like other members of that group. In short, they gave a believable performance using conspicuous consumption and manipulated others' views of them . . . exactly as Goffman argues we all do every day.

Symbolic Interaction

Microsociology grew out of the critique that both functionalism and conflict theory ignore the impact of the individual on social behavior. **Symbolic interaction** is a micro-theoretical perspective that argues that society is best understood as being created by individuals constructing their social world and then communicating their constructed meanings to others. Herbert Blumer (1969b) outlined the three principles of symbolic interaction:

1. Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things.
2. The meanings of these things are derived from, or arise out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society.
3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, the interpretative process one uses to deal with the things encountered.

The key elements of this perspective are contained in its title. Individuals make sense of their world and then share their interpretations through *interaction*, which increases the chance that many individuals will understand the world in a similar way. However, since all communication is *symbolic* and open to interpretation, interactions can be misunderstood, leading to variation. Interactions should result in patterned behavior and shared meanings. Yet because the perspective attempts to account for the ability of an individual to act independently and control his or her own environment, a concept known as **agency**, the structure is much less influential than in either macro perspective.

The framework of symbolic interaction was created by George Herbert Mead (1934) and is highlighted in his work on the genesis of the self, which is covered in Chapter 4. Mead and several of his colleagues laid the groundwork for what would become the core works of microsociology. Charles Horton Cooley developed the concept of the **looking-glass self** (Cooley, 1902), which contends that our self-concept is created by our mental image of how we appear to others and others' likely reactions to our appearance. Cooley's work is a precursor to Mead's concept of reflexivity. **Reflexivity** is the ability to place yourself in the position of another, or group of others, and view yourself through their eyes (Mead, 1934). These two terms lead to the same conclusion; we develop an idea of who we are based on our perception of our interactions with others. If you believe others see you as overweight, you are likely to view yourself that way, regardless of your actual body weight.

In this way, symbolic interaction argues that perception is more important than factual reality. W. I. Thomas developed what we now know as the **Thomas theorem**. According to this theorem, if an individual believes something to be real, then for them, that thing is real in its consequences (Thomas & Thomas, 1928). Therefore, the fear felt by a child who believes there to be a monster in his or her closet is the same fear he would feel if there were, in fact, a monster in the closet. The perception is just as important as the reality.

Drawing from symbolic interaction, Erving Goffman developed the idea of dramaturgy. **Dramaturgy** encourages the analysis of social behavior as acts performed by actors on a stage (Goffman, 1959). Goffman believed that humans are constantly working to give a believable performance to whichever audience happens to be observing the act. The actors reflexively imagine what performance their audience wants and then work to align their actions, wardrobes, and props toward that performance. A student in a college classroom gives a

performance as a "good student" to her professor by listening attentively and taking notes. That same student could also spend most of her time in a drunken stupor and be known to her friends as a "party girl." Yet, as long as both performances are adequately played, and she is never forced to give both performances at the same time, she can be known as both a good student and a party girl by the separate audiences. For Goffman, the actor's perception of the situation and of the audience drives the performance—which harkens back to the Thomas theorem.

Symbolic interaction provides a fluid and changeable version of society. Rather than the existing cultural norms and structural patterns of society demanding consistent behavior, symbolic interaction allows for modification and interpretation of society. Later versions of symbolic interaction (see Sheldon Stryker's work in Chapter 3) have reintroduced elements of social structure, specifically using roles and identity, to create a "meso" (or middle) level perspective that recognizes the structural expectations of macrosociology while maintaining the creativity and agency of microsociology.

Modern Perspectives

As will be shown throughout this text, society has, and will continue to, evolve and change. As a result, we our explanations of human societies evolve and change as well. While there are still many sociologists who consider themselves Marxists, Weberians, Functionalists, and Symbolic Interactionists, there are several perspectives that have emerged, primarily because of perceived errors in previous work or because of changes in society that have rendered the classical theories obsolete.

Feminism

Feminism has developed as a modern theoretical perspective in sociology because the early works of the discipline lacked attention to gender. Feminist theory approaches sociological inquiry from the vantage point of women while assuming that gender is the central element in understanding society.

Sociological feminism can be approached from a broad range of perspectives, but all share a desire to explain gender and gender inequalities. Because of its traditional focus on power difference, feminism is often linked strongly with Marxist conflict theory. Since gender is typically defined along the lines of "male" and "female," the Marxist approach to understanding power as being delineated by the groups of "haves" and "have-nots" seems a likely match. However, there is a strong tradition of microsociological work that has analyzed the differences between men and women in their understanding of meaning, interaction rules, and daily life.

In recent years, third wave feminism has called attention to differences among women based on other socially important variables, such as race, class, and sexuality, that were often overlooked in earlier feminist work. Third wave feminists (1990–present) point out that the first wave of feminism (late 1800s–1950s) had to call attention to the existence of gender inequality, and the second wave (1960s–1980s) attempted to motivate people to work to change gender inequalities. It is only now that we are able to contemplate relative differences among

women and recognize that no one categorical variable is able to capture the experience of that entire group. Therefore, all the socially important, ascribed variables must be seen as cross-cutting and affecting the lives of women (Collins, 2000). Later in this text, the work of sociological feminists Patricia Hill Collins, Arlie Russell-Hochschild, and Dorothy Smith will refocus the attention of sociologists on the lives of women, which have often been overlooked, under-studied, and often simply ignored in the history of the discipline.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism is less a cohesive theory and more a critique of modernist assumptions of fact, objectivity, and knowledge appearing the same to any observer. Postmodernists argue that scientific knowledge was a narrative that we assumed was superior to all other stories. However, today information is readily available through a variety of sources, which leaves us free to create our own stories, or have them created for us, through the media. In short, postmodernists argue that primarily because of technology, our lives are fundamentally different than they were just a few decades ago. Therefore, it is a mistake to assume that all the "old" theories and assumptions are still valid.

The postmodernist critique could be seen as dangerous for sociology because it calls into question the patterns we study and the scientific approach we use to study them. However, if postmodernity is used as a form of critical analysis, it can hold great value in understanding today's media-saturated world. Jean Baudrillard (1929–present) coined the term **hyperreality** to refer to a situation in which a symbol or model has become "more real" than the thing the symbol was supposed to represent (Baudrillard, 1994). So a child who has been raised playing football games on an Xbox® may find a live football game boring because it only provides one view of the field, no ability to control the players, and no instant replay to relive the action. Chapter 12 will discuss postmodernism in some detail.

Social Construction

Social constructionism has become a generic term for a variety of microsociological approaches, most of which share their roots with symbolic interactionism. Constructionists argue that all meaning is socially created and therefore should be questioned to understand its source and intention. Peter Berger (1929–present) and Thomas Luckmann (1927–present) wrote the Social *Construction of Reality* in 1966, outlining a three-stage model through which any "reality" could be created. Basically, through interaction and sharing of information, any idea could be spread, separated from its source, and come to be seen as commonly accepted fact. The key element to this process is the separation of the idea from its source. A person or a media outlet can be identified as having a point of view or motivation to make a point. The source can be then be considered or attacked when considering the relative truth of a statement. However, if the information is seen as part of common knowledge ("you know what they say . . .") or if the source of the information is omitted ("guess what I heard . . .") then the information is more believable. Some scholars argue that the idea of race is a social construction that has been used to assure the continuation of the existing power structure. Regardless of whether or not there are biological differences among groups of people, race has been constructed to be an important variable in many societies and will remain so until the meaning surrounding race changes (Omi & Winant, 1986).

Modern constructionist works are often centered on the idea of claims-making and the framing of various issues as social problems. Only a few years ago, concussions among athletes would not have been listed among important social problems facing our culture. However, because of the work of several neurobiologists and the activism of one Harvard-educated former football player and professional wrestler (Chris Nowinski of the Sports Legacy Institute [http://www.sportslegacy.org/]), concussions are now viewed as a public health issue and have led to a rethinking of the safety of popular sports such as football, soccer, and hockey at all levels of participation (from youth leagues to professional). Constructionists would point out that the danger of these sports did not change, nor did the level of knowledge about the danger. What changed is that some compelling figures made a strong argument about the dangers of head injuries, captured the attention of the public, and caused a reconsideration of the sports that have the most risk of concussions. Today the dangers of concussions are widely accepted and are understood as risk factors in any sport, especially those like football, hockey, and soccer, where the head may be involved in collisions.

Summary & Resources

Chapter Summary

Sociology is the scientific study of society and the various aspects of social life. It provides a unique and important perspective on human behavior by examining the role that broader social forces play in shaping human behavior. The influential sociologist C. Wright Mills spoke of the sociological imagination, which he defined as the ability to see the relationship between a person's experiences and the society in which they live. Sociologists view an individual's biography as largely a product of history and social structure. Sociology seeks to uncover the underlying relationships among events and to place them in an understandable framework.

The academic discipline of sociology has its roots in 18th- and 19th-century Western Europe and was influenced by the social change of the Industrial Revolution as well as the adoption of the scientific method during the Enlightenment. French scholar Auguste Comte is considered the founder of sociology. Comte advocated the application of the scientific method to the study of society and social problems. Emile Durkheim was a pioneering French sociologist who demonstrated the importance of social forces in shaping individual behavior. This was illustrated by his famous study of suicide, where he demonstrated that this seemingly individualistic act is actually profoundly impacted by social forces. The early German scholar Max Weber was responsible for groundbreaking work on topics such as religion, the nature of power, and social organizations. Lastly, the work of Karl Marx, especially in the area of power and domination, had a significant impact on early sociology.

Traditionally, there have been three major perspectives in sociology. Functionalism views society as a system of interrelated parts, much like the human body. Functionalism is particularly interested in factors that hold society together and the interrelationships between the various structures of society. Conflict theory asserts that society is in a state of constant struggle over things such as power and scarce resources. It considers the importance of belief systems in the establishment and maintenance of power. Symbolic interaction is a perspective that argues that society is best understood as being created by individuals

constructing their social world and then communicating their constructed meanings to others. New perspectives in modern sociology include feminism, postmodernism, and social construction.

Web Resources

The American Sociological Association

www.asanet.org

The American Sociological Association is the main professional organization for the field of sociology.

SocioWeb

http://www.socioweb.com/

A general sociology resource.

Facts on Jobs and Careers

http://www.asanet.org/employment/factsoncareers.cfm

Information in careers in sociology provided by the ASA.

Discussion Questions

1. Define sociology. Explain the concepts of "social structure" and "agency" and tell why both are necessary to fully understand the workings of society.
2. What is the sociological imagination? Name and explain at least three (3) examples of social issues leading to personal troubles. In one of your examples, explain what the Great Recession was, why it happened, and what individual life events it precipitated.
3. Define reflexivity. Explain how reflexivity is necessary to understand Goffman's idea of dramaturgy.
4. What are the three waves of feminism? Tell what happened during each wave. Explain why some argue feminism is simply a version of conflict theory. Then explain why many feminists would disagree with the contention.
5. What is anomie? How does it relate to Durkheim's discussion of suicide? What does anomie have to do with social integration? Explain why Durkheim's work on suicide is considered to be functionalist.
6. Explain both Karl Marx's and Max Weber's versions of power. How are they similar? How are they different? How would each theorist view religion? Explain your answer.
7. Define manifest and latent functions. Explain how Veblen's "conspicuous consumption" shows the importance of a latent function.

Key Terms

agency The ability of an individual to act independently and control his or her own environment.

anomie A feeling of normlessness or moral confusion.

charismatic authority Power that emerges because people see a leader as heroic or magical.

collective consciousness A set of moral attitudes and shared beliefs that give direction and purpose to the life of the individual and assure interconnection to all in society.

conflict theory Argues that society is best understood as a constant struggle over power and scarce resources. Whichever group is able to maximize its resources can use them to establish structures that will benefit its members.

dominant ideologies Shared ideas or beliefs that serve to justify and legitimize the power that the dominant group holds.

double consciousness The experience of a person in a minority group who must follow one script that is typical of anyone in a given culture and a second script, specific to the minority group, that must take into account the external opinions of others.

dramaturgy The analysis of social behavior using the analogies of actors performing on a stage.

dysfunction Things that challenge the existing order and disturb the equilibrium of the system.

functionalism Argues that society is best understood as an ordered, stable, interconnected system of parts that helps meet the needs of the system. The system itself will be 1) organized to maintain stability and consistency, which should 2) prevent radical or unexpected change and 3) allow all parts of the system to serve some purpose.

hyperreality A situation where a symbol or model has become more real than the thing the symbol was supposed to represent.

latent functions The unintended consequences of a part of a system.

legal-rational authority Distributes power to various positions created in society.

looking-glass self Theory that contends that our self-concept is created by our mental image of how we appear to others and others' likely reactions to our appearance.

macrosociology Focuses on broader social forces, patterns, and trends.

manifest functions The obvious or intended purposes of some part of a system.

mechanical solidarity Durkheim's theory that in traditional societies it was assumed that people in that society would live lives similar to one another; they would have attended the same schools, worshipped at the same churches, had similar ethnic backgrounds, and held one of a small number of jobs available in a typical small town.

microsociology Examines the smaller-scale aspects of the social world, the individual, and groups.

organic solidarity Durkheim's theory that all parts of a society (such as family, religion, economic system, and individuals) each serve a unique role in keeping the social system alive and healthy. While each part differs from other parts, all work to keep the organism alive, much like the organs of a human body.

paradigm Taken-for-granted ideas and assumptions not debated by members of a scientific discipline.

power The ability of a person or a group of people to make their wishes happen despite the opposition of others.

reflexivity The ability to place yourself in the position of another (or a group of others) and view yourself through their eyes.

social facts Social forces and cultural factors that are outside of and coercive to the individual.

social integration The process by which an individual becomes connected to a group and the group's values become part of the individual.

social structure The preexisting patterns of expected behavior that organize society into predictable relationships.

sociological imagination The ability to see the relationship between a person's experiences and the society in which that person lives.

sociology The scientific study of society and the various aspects of social life.

symbolic interaction perspective A micro-theoretical perspective that argues that society is best understood as being created by individuals constructing their social world and then communicating their constructed meanings to others. The three principles of symbolic interaction are:
1) Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things.
2) The meanings of these things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society.
3) These meanings are handled in, and modified through, the person's interpretative process in dealing with the things he or she encounters.

theory The framework for analysis that outlines what to focus on and provides predictions about logical outcomes within the framework.

Thomas theorem If an individual believes something to be real, then for them, that thing is real in its consequences.

traditional authority Arises from a devotion to a cultural idea that certain people inherit power through their social position or bloodlines (i.e., monarchies, feudal systems).