



1. The Sociological perspective

What is Sociology?

Sociology is the scientific study of human society & social behavior.



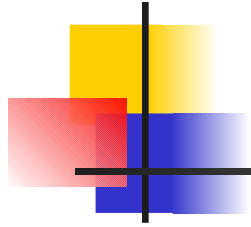
What is Sociology?

- It focuses primarily on the influence of social relationships upon people's attitudes and behavior and on how societies are established and change.
- The ultimate aim of sociology as summed up by **Samuel Koenig** is "*to improve man's adjustment to life by developing objective knowledge concerning social phenomena which can be used to deal effectively with social problems.*"

The Sociological Perspective



1. The sociological perspective is important because it provides a different way of looking at familiar worlds. It allows us to gain a new vision of social life.
2. This perspective stresses the broader social context of behavior by looking at individuals' social location, employment, income, education, gender, age, and race –and by considering external influences –people's experiences –which are internalized and become part of a person's thinking and motivations. (cont...)



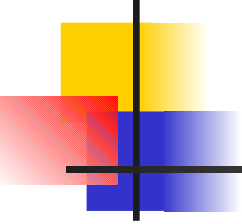
We are able to see the links between what people do and the social settings that shape their behavior.

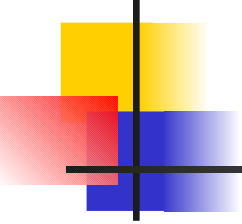
3. The sociological perspective enables us to analyze and understand both the forces that contribute to the emergence and growth of the global village and our unique experiences in our own smaller corners of this village.

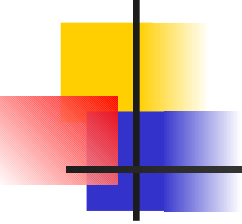


Subject Matter of Sociology

- **Sociological analysis:** An analysis of human society and culture with a sociological perspective. Also to analyze the factors & forces underlying historical transformations of society.
- **Study of primary units of social life:** It is concerned with social acts and social relationships, individual personality, groups, communities, associations, organizations and populations.

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- **Development, structure & function of a wide variety of basic social institutions:** Such as the family & kinship, religion & property, economic, political, legal, educational and scientific, recreational & welfare, aesthetic & expressive institutions.
 - **Fundamental social processes:** Such as cooperation & competition; accommodation & assimilation; social conflict including war & revolution; communication; social differentiation & stratification; socialization & indoctrination; social control & deviance (crime, suicide); social integration & social change.

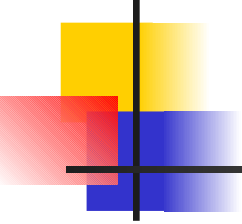
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- **Emphasis on social research:** Contemporary sociology has tended to become more and more rational & empirical rather than philosophical & idealistic.
 - **Formulation of Concepts, Propositions, and Theories:**
 - *Concepts* are abstracted from concrete experience to represent a class of phenomena. Terms such as social stratification, differentiation, conformity, deviance etc. represent concepts.
 - A *Proposition* seeks to reflect a relationship between different categories of data or concepts. For example, 'lower class youths are more likely to commit crimes than middle class youths'. This proposition is debatable. It may prove to be false.

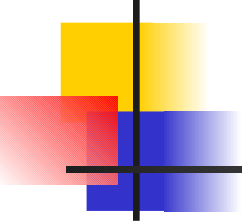
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- *Theories* represent systematically related propositions that explain social phenomena. Sociological theories are mostly rooted in factual than philosophical.
 - **Venturing Specialization:** In the present era, sociologists go for specializations as well. Such as sociology of knowledge; sociology of history; sociology of literature; sociology of culture; sociology of religion; sociology of family etc.

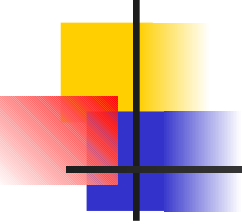
Sociology and the Other Sciences

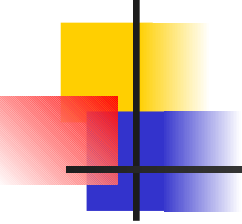


1. Sociology is defined as “the scientific study of society and human behavior.”
2. Science is the systematic methods used to obtain knowledge and the knowledge obtained by those methods.
3. Science can be divided into the Natural Sciences and the Social Sciences.

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4. The natural sciences attempt to comprehend, explain, and predict events in our natural environment.
 5. Social sciences attempt to objectively study the social world. Like the natural sciences, the social sciences are divided into specialized fields based on their subject matter.
 6. Political science focuses on politics or government.

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7. Economics analyzes the production, distribution, and allocation of the material goods and services of a society.
 8. Anthropology attempts to understand culture (a people's total way of life) by focusing primarily on preliterate people.
 9. Psychology concentrates on processes that occur within the individual.

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10. Sociology is similar to the other social sciences in some ways but it is distinct because it looks at all social institutions, focuses on industrialized societies, and looks at external factors which influence people.
 11. Scientists are guided by a set of principles as they pursue their goals.

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12. The goals of science are a) to explain why something happens; b) to generalize, going beyond the individual cases and looking for patterns (recurring characteristics or events) and then making statements that apply to a broader group or situation; and c) to predict, specifying what will happen in the future in light of current knowledge.
 13. To attain these goals, scientists rely on systematic studies, moving beyond common sense and often confronting prejudice and attempts to keep things secret.

The Development of Sociology



- Sociology developed in the middle of the 19th century as a result of three factors:
- a) the social upheaval in Europe as a result of the Industrial Revolution and the political revolutions in America and France;
- b) the development of imperialism – as the Europeans conquered other nations, they came in contact with different cultures and began to ask why cultures varied; and
- c) the success of the natural sciences, which created a desire to apply scientific methods in order to find answers for the questions being raised about the social world as well.

Auguste Comte

(1798-1857)



- Auguste Comte coined the term “Sociology” and suggested the *use of positivism* – applying the scientific approach to the social world – but he did not utilize this approach himself. He established two specific problems for sociological investigation: a) Social statics; and b) Social dynamics. ***Social statics*** refers to the problem of order and stability- how & why do societies hold together and endure? ***Social dynamics*** refers to the problem of social change- what makes societies change and what shapes the nature and direction of the changes?



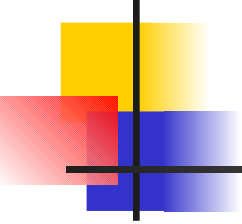
Herbert Spencer ***(1820-1903)***

Herbert Spencer viewed societies as evolutionary, coined the term "*the survival of the fittest*", and became known for social Darwinism. He compared human societies to living organisms. Like internal parts of an animal which are interdependent and contribute to the survival of the organism, the various parts of society, such as economy & the state, are also interdependent and work to ensure the stability & survival of the entire system. He believed that evolution means progress, and he strongly opposed attempts at social reforms on the grounds that they might interfere with a naturally evolutionary process.



Karl Marx (1818-1883)

- ***Karl Marx***, founder of the *conflict Perspective*, believed that class conflict – the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie – was the key to human history. He was the most important of the 19th century thinkers, born in Germany, but after being expelled from various countries for his revolutionary activities, he eventually settled in England. An erratic genius, he wrote brilliantly on subjects as broad & diverse as philosophy, economics, political science, and history. (Cont...)

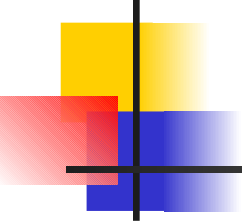
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- He never claimed himself to be a sociologist, but his work is so rich in sociological insights that he is now regarded as one of the most profound and original sociological thinkers. While Spencer saw social harmony and the inevitability of progress, Marx saw social conflict and the inevitability of revolution. This context, Marx claimed, would end only with the overthrow of the ruling exploiters and the establishment of a free, humane, classless society. He placed special emphasis on the economic base of society. His key works included: 1848: *The Communist Manifesto (1848)*; and *Das Kapital (1867)*

Emile Durkheim

(1858-1917)



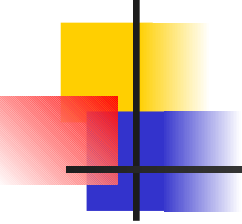
- ***Emile Durkheim*** played an important role in the development of sociology.
 - a) A primary goal of his was to get sociology recognized as a separate academic discipline.
 - b) He was interested in understanding the social factors that influence individual behavior; he studied suicide rates among different groups and concluded that social integration, the degree to which people are tied to their social group, was a key social factor in suicide.
 - c) Durkheim's third concern was that social research be practical; sociologists should not only diagnose the causes of social problems but should also develop solutions for them. (Cont...)

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- Another of Durkheim's main interests was the consequences of work in modern societies. In his view, the growing division of labor found in industrial societies as workers became much more specialized in their tasks led to what he called ***anomie***. Anomie refers to a loss of direction that is felt in a society when social control of individual behavior has become ineffective. He felt concerned about the dangers that such alienation, loneliness, and isolation might pose for modern industrial societies.
 - His key works included: *The division of labor in Society* (1883); *Suicide: A study in Sociology* (1897); and *Elementary forms of Religious life* (1912).



Max Weber (1864-1920)

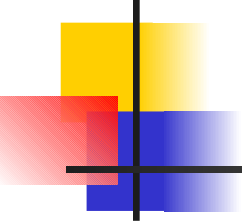
- ***Max Weber*** defined religion as a central force in social change. For example, Protestantism encourages greater economic development and was the central factor in the rise of capitalism in some countries. Born in Germany, he took his early academic training in legal & economic history, but gradually developed an interest in Sociology. He emphasized ***Verstehen*** (German word for 'understanding' or 'insight') among his students in their intellectual work. (Cont...)

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- He pointed out that that much of our social behavior cannot be analyzed by the kinds of objective criteria we use to measure weight or temperature. For comprehending behavior, we must learn the subjective meanings people attach to their actions- how they themselves view and explain their behavior. He is also credited for a key conceptual tool: ***the ideal type***. An *ideal type* is a construct, a model that serves as a measuring rod against which actual cases can be evaluated. His key works included: *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of Capitalism* (1904-5); and *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1922).



Sexual discrimination in Early Sociology

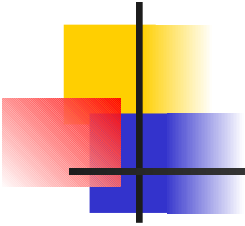
- In the early years of sociology, the field was dominated by men because rigidly defined social roles and the realities of economic life prevented most women from pursuing an education.
- Women in those days were supposed to devote themselves to four K's – *Kirche* (church), *Kuchen* (cooking), *Kinder* (children), und *Kleider* (clothes).

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- Few women from the wealthy families, at the same time, managed to get an education; few even studied sociology although the sexual discrimination in the universities stopped them from earning advanced degrees, becoming professors, or having their research recognized.
 - ***Harriet Martineau*** studied social life in both Great Britain and the United States, publishing *Society in America* decades before Durkheim and Weber were even born. While her original research has been largely ignored by the discipline, she is known for her translations of Comte's ideas into English.

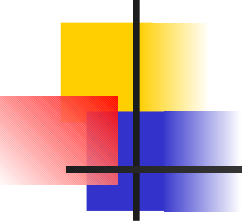
Sociology in North America

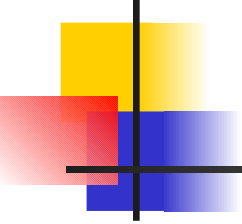


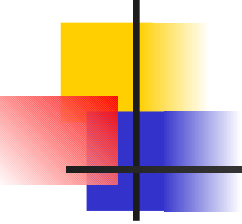
- The first departments of sociology in the U.S. were at the University of Kansas (1889) and at the University of Chicago (1892); the first in Canada was at McGill University (1922).
- Albion Small, founder of the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago, also established the *American Journal of Sociology*.
- Other early sociologists from the University of Chicago were Robert E. Park, Ernest Burgess, and George Herbert Mead.



- The situation of women in North America was similar to that of European women and their contributions to sociology met a similar fate. Denied a role in the universities, many turned to social activism, working with the poor and regarded as social workers.
- ***Jane Adams*** is an example; she founded Hull House, a settlement house for the poor, and worked to bridge the gap between the powerful and the powerless. She is the only sociologist to have won the Nobel Peace prize in 1931.

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- African American professionals also faced problems. **W.E.B. Du Bois** was the first African American to earn a Ph.D from Harvard. He conducted extensive research on race relations in the U.S., publishing a book a year on this subject between 1896 and 1914. Despite his accomplishments he encountered prejudice and discrimination in his professional and personal life, helping to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Until recently, his contributions to sociology were overlooked.

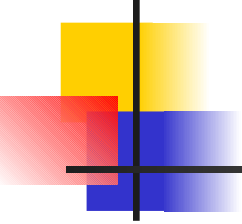
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- Many early North American sociologists combined the role of sociologist with that of social reformer. For example, University of Chicago sociologists ***Park and Burgess***, studied many urban problems and offered suggestions on how to alleviate them.
 - In the 1940s, as sociologists became more concerned with establishing sociology as an academic discipline, the emphasis shifted from social reform to social theory.

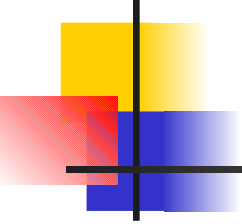
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- **Talcott Parsons** developed abstract models of society to show how the parts of society harmoniously work together.
 - **Robert K. Merton** stressed the development of middle-range theories – explanations of human behavior that go beyond the particular observation or research but avoid sweeping generalizations that attempt to explain everything.
 - Countering this development was **C. Wright Mills**, who urged sociologists to get back to social reform.

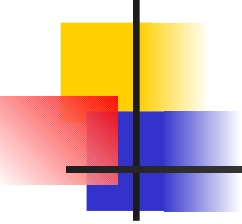
Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

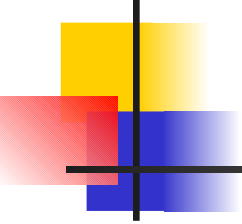


- Sociologists use three different theoretical perspectives to understand social behavior.
- ***Symbolic interactionism*** views symbols, things to which we attach meaning, as the basis of social life. a) Through the use of symbols people are able to define relationships to others, to coordinate actions with others, making social life possible, and to develop a sense of themselves. b) A symbolic interactionist studying divorce would focus on the changing meaning of marriage; family and divorce have all contributed to the increase in the rate of divorce in U.S. society.

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- The central idea of ***Functional analysis*** is that society is a whole unit, made up of interrelated parts that work together. a) To understand society, we must look at both structure, how the parts of society fit together to make up the whole, the function, how each part contributes to society. b) Robert Merton used the term function to refer to the beneficial consequences of people's actions to keep society stable and dysfunctions to refer to consequences that undermine stability. Functions can be either manifest (actions that are intended) or latent (unintended consequences). c) In trying to explain divorce, functionalist would look at how industrialization and urbanization both contributed to the changing function of marriage and the family.

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- According to ***Conflict theory***, society is viewed as composed of groups competing for scarce resources. a) Karl Marx focused on struggles between the bourgeoisie, the small group of capitalists who own the means of production, and the proletariat, the masses of workers exploited by the capitalists. b) Contemporary conflict theorists have expanded this perspective to include conflict in all relations of power and authority. c) Divorce is seen as the outcome of the shifting balance of power within a family; as women have gained power and try to address inequalities in their relationships, men resist.

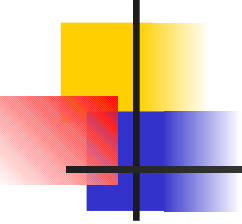
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- The perspectives differ in their level of analysis. Functionalists and conflict theorists provide macro-level analysis because they examine the large-scale patterns of society. Symbolic interactionists carry out micro-level analysis because they focus on the small scale patterns of social life.
 - Each of these perspectives focuses on a different aspect of reality: i) *Functionalism*, primarily on social order and stability; ii) *Conflict theory*, primarily on tension and change, and iii) Interactionist, primarily on ordinary experiences of everyday life. Each of the perspectives has a part to play in the analysis of society.

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- All these perspectives could be applied. For example, *to the study of Education: a) A functionalist approach would emphasize the functions that education plays in maintaining the social system as a whole. b) A conflict approach would emphasize that education is believed to be an important avenue to social and financial success in life. It stresses on the social class background of the pupil affecting his academic achievement. c) An interactionist approach would emphasize the daily activities within school, forms of interaction between teachers and students, the influence of student peer group over its members.*

Applied and Clinical Sociology



- Sociologists Paul Lazarsfeld and Jeffrey Reitz divide sociology in the United States into three phases. a) In the first phase the primary concern of sociologists was making the world a better place. b) During the second phase sociologists sought to establish sociology as a respected field of knowledge. c) In the third (current) phase there has been an attempt to merge sociological knowledge and practical work.

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- Applied sociology is the attempt to blend sociological knowledge and practical results. It refers to the use of sociology to solve problems. A) Applied sociologists recommend practical changes to solve problems. B) Clinical sociologists become directly involved in bringing about social change through work in various social settings.