

Introduction to Sociology

Ninth Edition

Chapter 1

The Sociological Perspective

Chapter Outline

- Sociology as a Point of View
- The Development of Sociology
- Theoretical Perspectives

Sociology

- The scientific study of human society and social interactions.
- Goal is to understand social situations and look for repeating patterns in society.
- Focus is on the group, not the individual.

The Sociological Imagination

- Focuses on every aspect of society and every relationship among individuals:
 - Behavior of crowds at ball games and racetracks.
 - Shifts in styles of dress and popular music.
 - Changing patterns of courtship and marriage.
 - Distribution of income and access to resources and services.

Question

- The main focus or unit of analysis for sociologists is:
 - A. groups.
 - B. strange people.
 - C. individuals.
 - D. unusual occurrences.

Answer: A

- The main focus or unit of analysis for sociologists is **groups**.

Applied Sociology

- Applying sociology to solving real-world problems:
 - How does building a dam affect the residents of the area?
 - How does jury makeup affect the outcome of a case?
 - How do relationships among administrators, doctors, nurses, and patients affect hospital care?

Sociology As a Social Science

- The social sciences apply scientific methods to the study of human behavior:
 - Sociology
 - Cultural Anthropology
 - Psychology
 - Economics
 - History
 - Political Science
 - Social Work

Social Sciences

- Cultural anthropology - goal is to learn as much as possible about a society and its people.
- Psychology - the study of individual behavior and mental processes.
- Economics - the study of the creation, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

Social Sciences

- History - looks at the past to learn what happened, when it happened and why it happened.
- Political science - the study of political theory, the operation of government, and political behavior.
- Social work – goal is to help people solve their problems.

The Development of Sociology

- Emerged as a separate field of study in Europe during the 19th century.
- During this period the social order was shaken by the industrial revolution and by the American and French revolutions.

Auguste Comte (1798–1857)

Identified two major areas for sociology:

- Social statics - study of how social institutions are interrelated, focusing on order, stability, and harmony.
- Social dynamics - study of how societies develop and change over time.

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876)

- Published *Theory and Practice of Society in America*, in 1837.
- The book analyzed the customs and lifestyles of the 19th century United States.
- Her travels through the United States observing prisons, mental hospitals, factories and family gatherings formed the basis for the book.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)

- Believed society was similar to a living organism.
- Just as organs of the body make specialized contributions, the various segments of society are interdependent.
- A proponent of Social Darwinism.

Social Darwinism

- Applied Charles Darwin's notion of "survival of the fittest" to society.
- Lack of success was viewed as an individual failing unrelated to barriers created by society.
- To help the poor and needy was to intervene in a natural evolutionary process.

Sociology in the 19th Century

- Three scholars shaped sociology into a relatively coherent discipline:
 - Karl Marx
 - Émile Durkheim
 - Max Weber

Karl Marx (1818–1883)

- Believed the history of human societies could be seen as the history of class conflict between:
 - The bourgeoisie, who own and control the means of production.
 - The proletariat, who make up the mass of workers.

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917)

- Believed individuals were the products of their social environment.
- Society shapes people in every possible way.
- Showed how a personal act, suicide, is patterned by social factors.

Durkheim's Three Types of Suicide

- **Egoistic suicide** - derives from loneliness and a commitment to personal beliefs over group values.
- **Altruistic suicide** - the individual is willing to die for the sake of the community.
- **Anomic suicide** - results from feeling disconnected from society's values.

Suicide in the United States

- Social factors:
 - Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for 15- to 24-year-olds.
 - Older adults account for 20% of suicide deaths, but only 13% of the U.S. population.
 - Suicide rates for Native Americans are 1.5 times the national rates.

Robert K. Merton

Two forms of social functions:

- Manifest functions are the intended consequences of social processes.
- Latent functions are the unintended consequences of social processes.

Question

- Which American sociologist portrayed society as a stable system of well-ordered, inter-related parts?
 - A. Jane Addams
 - B. W.E.B. DuBois
 - C. Talcott Parsons
 - D. Robert Merton

Answer: C

- Sociologist **Talcott Parsons** portrayed society as a stable system of well-ordered, inter-related parts.

Question

- Which sociological perspective do you feel explains the most to you about our society?
 - A. Structural-functional
 - B. Conflict
 - c. Symbolic interactionist

Question

- Which sociological perspective do you think is generally the weakest in explaining things in our society?
 - A. Structural-functional
 - B. Conflict
 - c. Symbolic

Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

Perspective	Point of View
Structural-Functional	The parts of society are interdependent and functionally related.
Social-Conflict	Social life involves conflict because of differing goals.
Interactionist	Most of what people do has meaning beyond the concrete act.

1. The sociological imagination according to C. Wright Mills refers to:

- A. the efforts on the part of sociologist to try to solve problems.
- B. the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society that shape our behavior.
- c. abstract explanations for imagination in sociology.
- D. relationship that we create through our imagination.

Answer:B

- The sociological imagination according to C. Wright Mills refers to **the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society that shape our behavior.**

2. Which early sociologist is associated with Social Darwinism?

- A. Auguste Comte
- B. Karl Marx
- C. W.E.B. DuBois
- D. Herbert Spencer

Answer: D

- Sociologist **Herbert Spencer** is associated with Social Darwinism?

3. The theoretical perspective that views society as a system of highly interrelated structures or parts that function or operate together harmoniously is known as:

- A. conflict theory.
- B. interactionism.
- C. functionalism.
- D. exchange theory.

Answer : C

- The theoretical perspective that views society as a system of highly interrelated structures or parts that function or operate together harmoniously is known as **functionalism**.

4. Viewing society as constantly changing in response to social inequality is the central idea of which theoretical perspective?

- A. functionalism
- B. interactionism
- C. exchange
- D. conflict

Answer: D

- Viewing society as constantly changing in response to social inequality is the central idea of **conflict theory**.

5. The interactionist perspective focuses on:
- A. how people make sense of the world in which they participate.
 - B. how social inequalities produce conflict.
 - C. the dysfunctional aspects of society.
 - D. who benefits from particular social arrangements.

Answer: A

- The interactionist perspective focuses on: **how people make sense of the world in which they participate.**