

SOCI 101
INTRODUCTION TO
SOCIOLOGY

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A. WHAT
IS
SOCIOLOGY?

"The function of sociology, as of every science, is to reveal that which is hidden." - Pierre Bourdieu

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SOCIOLOGY IS A
PERSPECTIVE

The sociological perspective involves two features:

- Seeing the general in the particular [\[do.it\]](#)
- Seeing the strange in the familiar [\[do.it\]](#)

(Peter Berger, Invitation to Sociology)

The main thinking tools of sociology:
IMAGINATION and **REASON**

"You can't do much carpentry with your bare hands and you can't do much thinking with your bare brain." - D.Dennett

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Self ← → Society

The Sociological Imagination:

"The vivid awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society." - C. Wright Mills, 1959, *The Sociological Imagination*

Self ↔ Society

Biography ↔ History

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Central Sociological Concepts

Social Norms

When people interact, **social norms** develop.

Norms are shared IDEALS for behavior.

A **norm** is a *prescription* for collective action, an agreed upon way of behaving; **a social consensus**.

IDEA = THOUGHT

Norms occur in the "**conscience collective**" of society
(Source: Emile Durkheim, early French sociologist).

Question:

- Describe some basic social norms.
- Are all norms "good"? Give an example of a norm that leads to social problems.

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Central Sociological Concepts

Social Roles

By our nature, we imitate and we learn from our institutional interactions our

social ROLES, or social behaviors ACTUALLY performed by individuals.



BEHAVIOR = ACTION

The word and concept (originally French, *rôle*) borrows from the field of theater, "acting" on the "stage of life," so to speak.

Questions:

- What role are you "playing" now? What are its **expected behaviors**?
- What other roles have you "played" in your life?
- Are you always aware of the roles you are playing?

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Central Sociological Concepts: Social Institutions



Social interaction takes place in the context of *social institutions*.

Social institutions are the purposeful organization of individuals into social groups and categories.

The universal social institutions are:

Family
Religion **Education**
Economy **Politics**

the five institutions ("FREEP")

Institutions define our social lives, and involve nearly every aspect of our personal lives as well. So, big changes in our institutions mean big changes in our personal lives.

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The Origins of Sociology

What socio-historical forces *changed* in Europe in the 1800s to prompt people to think sociologically?

1. **Industrialization**

Agriculture → Manufacturing



2. **Urbanization**

Countryside → City



3. **Political Change**

Monarchy → Democracy



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The Origins of Sociology

Who noticed these historical changes and developed sociology into a science?

Auguste Comte – France, 1798-1857.



He invented the term "sociology."

For Comte, *science represents a stage in history*:

Scientific stage of human understanding

Focus: "Positivism" = a purely *scientific* understanding of the world

- Social Problems stem from **Social Forces**.

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3. The Origins of Sociology

Who developed sociology into a science?

b.2. **Emile Durkheim** (France, 1858-1917)

Durkheim made sociology into a science by studying social facts and forces. Made famous for his studies of anomie and suicide, religion, and the division of labor in society.

Theory: "Structural Functionalism"
Science-Type: Logical Empiricism

Structural-Functional Theory

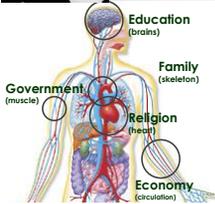
(Durkheim and followers) **Focus: Social Order**

i. **Social structure: any relatively stable pattern of social behavior (like institutions).**

← Metaphor: If society is an organism, like a human body, its structures are the organs.

ii. **Social function: how structure keeps society operating well;** (dysfunction = social problem)

Example: the social structure of education provides knowledge for people to gain skills and get jobs. Also, one educational function is to develop skills of social integration in individuals.



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3. The Origins of Sociology

Who developed sociology into a science?

b3. **Karl Marx** (Germany, 1818-1883) recognized the great inequalities in the new industrial society (the haves and have-nots). For Marx, economic institutions are the basis of society.

(Theory Connection: "Social-Conflict"
Science-Type: Historical Materialism)

Social-Conflict Theory

(Marx and followers) **Focus: Social Power**

Society is an arena for group conflict which generates inequality, but also creates change.

Inequalities of this kind include rich v. poor, men v. women, racial conflicts, religious conflicts, etc. But they always involve large categories, or **classes**, of people.



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3. The Origins of Sociology

Who developed sociology into a science?

b4. **Max Weber** (Germany, 1864-1920) is known for his groundbreaking research on religion and capitalism, the social classes, and bureaucracy.

(Theory Connection: "Symbolic-Interactionist"
Science-Type: Interpretive/Pragmatic)

Symbolic-Interaction Theory

(Weber and followers) **Focus: Social Meaning**

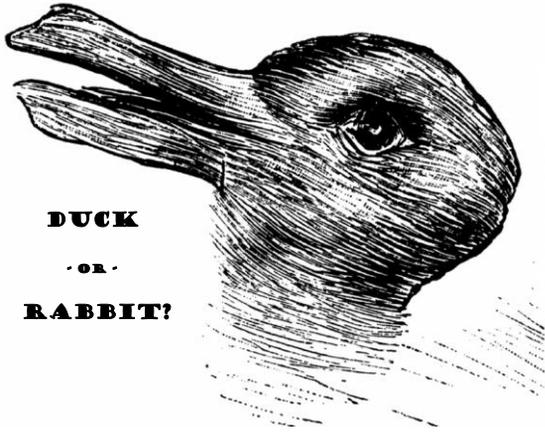
Society is a product of everyday interactions of individuals, or "micro-level interaction" (vs. the "macro-level" big picture perspective of the previous theories).

How people interpret social life and norms is equally as important as the intentions of the norm's creators.



"There can be no peace until they renounce their Rabbit God and accept our Duck God."

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DUCK
 · OR ·
RABBIT?

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B. Doing Social Science

What are the NORMS of science?

We can use the acronym **NOTTUS** to identify them:

- N = Natural (vs. Supernatural)** – science seeks to explain natural phenomena
- O = Observable (vs. Invisible)** – uses senses and tools to enhance the senses
- T = Testable (vs. Untestable)** – can make predictions; results must be consistent
- T = Tentative (vs. Omniscient)** – science is not all-knowing; hypotheses and theories must always be open to disconfirmation
- U = Uncertain (vs. Certain)** – science has a degree of improbability; there is no such thing as “perfect knowledge”
- S = Social (vs. Isolated)** – science is social; it requires replication of testing by different people and an openness to sharing results (peer review)

Now, DO THE WORKSHEET

ROBERT K. MERTON
 ON SOCIAL STRUCTURE
 AND SCIENCE



FRANK R. LUTWIG
 THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN
 SOCIOLOGY

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Doing Social Science

What is NOT science?

- a. Non-science:** events or phenomena that simply do not meet the NOTTUS criteria
- b. Protoscience:** science that is emerging
- c. Pseudoscience:** appears to be scientific, but the claims do not meet the strict standards of NOTTUS; for example, astrology or Dianetics (scientology).

7 Ways to Identify Pseudoscience

1. It is unreplicable, unless you believe in the "Power Words."
2. It is not falsifiable.
3. It is not based on empirical evidence.
4. It is not based on a theory.
5. It is not based on a model.
6. It is not based on a method.
7. It is not based on a process.

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Doing Social Science

On Testing and Evidence: In science, what is crucial in establishing a truth claim are the **types of evidence**

- a. **Anecdotal and expert evidence** (stories)
- b. **Experimental evidence** (puts people in "unnatural" situations)
- c. **Surveys and Questionnaires** (can collect vast amounts of information; typically reliable but not always valid)
- d. **Case Studies/Observation over time** (very widely used in sociology; can be **participant** or **non-participant**; typically valid but not always reliable)

Weak
↑
↓
Strong
