

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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1. SOCIOLOGY IS
A PERSPECTIVE

The sociological perspective involves two features:

- Seeing the general in the particular
- Seeing the strange in the familiar

The main thinking tools of sociology:
REASON and IMAGINATION

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

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1. SOCIOLOGY IS...

1a. Sociology is the *science* of *society*...

1b. *Science* is the art of "reality testing" through the study of "pattern association" using thinking tools.



"Things are not what they seem." - Peter Berger



(society) is illusory.

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1. SOCIOLOGY IS...

a. Sociology is the science of *society*

b. Science is the art of "reality testing"...

1c. *Society* is a network of significant others in relation to the *self*...



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1. SOCIOLOGY IS...

a. Sociology is the science of society...

b. Science is art of "reality testing"...

c. Society is a network of significant others in relation to the *self*...

1d. The *Self* is a *conscious organism* that can contemplate its own existence among many significant others. The *self* is reflexive and aware of its own being.

We *T-H-I-N-K* about ourselves and our relations to others consciously, and plan mutual behavior to the benefit of all.

The *SELF* is the basic *unit of analysis* (the smallest part) of the scientific observation of society (sociology)...

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1e. The "Unit of Analysis" in Sociology is the SELF

An ANALOGY:

Self is to Society as...

 Atom is to Physics

 Molecule is to Chemistry

 Cell is to Biology

BUT

Human beings ("selves") are **not** as **predictable** as molecules, atoms and cells! **Why not?**

With consciousness comes choice and **free will** – but **how much?** Where does the **fate** of society and culture meet your own free will? **ARE WE TRULY FREE?**

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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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2. Self ↔ Society

a. 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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2. Self ↔ Society

b. **S.O.C.I.**

- an **acronym** – a word formed from the initial letters of a name (e.g. LOL)

- also, a **mnemonic** – a memorization trick for learning

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S.O.C.I.

S = Self-Awareness is gained through self-teaching which involves contemplation of yourself in terms of the:

- **O** = Occupancy in your mind of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, and Social Norms that are learned from significant others;
- **C** = Copying in your own words and actions of those ideas & values in as you participate in Social Roles;

Reflection upon and understanding of this process leads to an awareness of your:

I = Identity, or a sense of meaning about the norms and roles you choose to accept and fill during your life within groups of significant others, or social institutions, to which you belong.

(Ed Powell, Univ. at Buffalo sociologist)

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2. Self ↔ Society

c. IDENTITY = deciding on and pursuing ROLES that satisfy YOU (not others, or "society").
But, this is not an individual experience. It is a collective one.

Interaction within a network of significant others guides the decisions you make throughout life and helps you gain Self-Awareness.

How do you "self-teach" to find your Identity?
Do what you love doing.

"The aim of life is to know thyself." - Socrates
"The unexamined life is not worth living." - Aristotle

In order to understand your self, you must make the connection between your biography and the history of the social era from which you get the ideas that make up your mind. This is also relates to personal and social problems.

Self ↔ Society
Biography ↔ History

(C.Wright Mills, 1959, The Sociological Imagination)

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SOCIOLOGY FOR THOUGHT

WHAT IS ANOTHER PERSONAL TROUBLE THAT HAS SOCIAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE?

HOW DO SOCIAL STRUCTURES CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS?

HOW DOES USING THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION HELP US EXAMINE HUMAN BEHAVIOR?

SARTRE: "FREEDOM IS WHAT YOU DO WITH WHAT'S BEEN DONE TO YOU."

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3. The Origins of Sociology

a. 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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3. The Origins of Sociology

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



1. **Auguste Comte – France, 1798-1857.**

He invented the term “sociology.”

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

i. Theological stage

Focus: Religious belief explained *everything*

ii. Metaphysical stage

Focus: Philosophy applies reason (*logos*)

iii. Scientific stage

Focus: “Positivism” = a purely *scientific* understanding of the world - Social Problems stem from **Social Forces**.

1851–1854, *Système de politique positive, ou traité de sociologie instituant la religion de l'Humanité* (4 vols.), Paris, Cerilian-Coeury. (≠ *System of Positive Polity, or Treaty Establishing Sociology as a Religion of Humanity* ≠)

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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

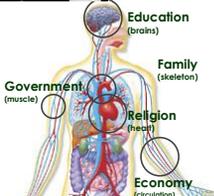
(Durkheim and followers) Focus: Social Order

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: Interpretative/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.



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