

The World of Sociology

In this chapter, you will learn about:

- the sociological approach
- what sociologists do
- the development of sociology
- sociology today

On the children's television show "Sesame Street," Ernie considered what would happen if he hit his sister, who had hit him. "She will cry," he thought. "Mother will come running. I will be blamed for hurting her, and I will be punished." In deciding what to do, Ernie used a sociological approach. He saw himself as part of a larger group, the family. And he used his observations of how different members of that group behave to form a conclusion.

Sociologists focus on patterns of human group behavior. People within a family behave in predictable ways based on their roles in the family. Sociologists look at how sports fans behave, how workers and bosses behave, how criminals behave. They look at the many different groups in a society and examine the interactions of people within them.

Sociology is one of the social sciences. Sociologists conduct research and apply their findings to current social problems. They may make policy recommendations to a government or help group members work effectively. Sociology has developed since the mid-1800s. Today, a variety of perspectives influences how sociologists think.

The Sociological Approach

Sociologists study human interactions in many ways. For example, they might examine interactions among family members historically. What patterns do we see in family interactions today compared to those a century ago? Sociologists might take a cross-cultural approach. How do interactions among family members in India differ from those in the United States?

What Sociology Is

Sociology, a word first used in 1824 by the French philosopher Auguste Comte, means “the study of society.” Sociologists systematically study social behavior in human groups and look for patterns. They focus on the influence of social relationships on people’s behavior and attitudes. They are interested in group behavior; they examine the behavior of individuals in terms of the roles they have in the group.

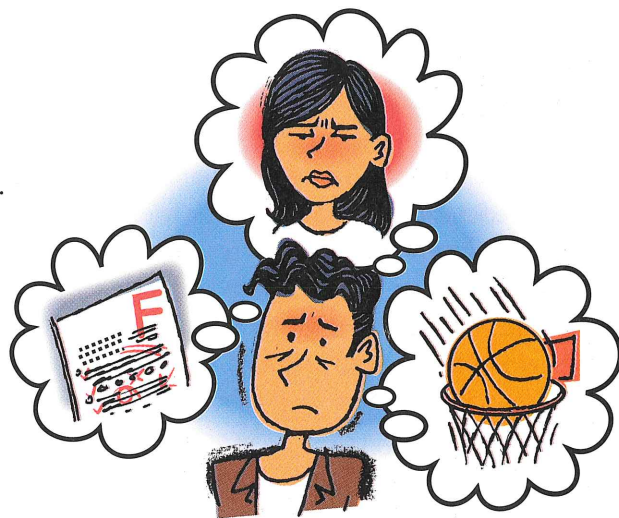
As a field of study, sociology has a very broad scope. The range of topics it examines is almost endless, since human interactions and behavior take place in a wide variety of groups and circumstances. Sociologists might study:

- * Beliefs.
- * Values.
- * Rules.
- * Ways of organizing families.
- * Educational systems.
- * Religions.
- * Political systems.
- * Economic systems.
- * The roles people play.

Patterns in Human Behavior

Most people tend to see events in their lives as intensely personal. You fail a test. You practice hard on a school athletic team. You have a fight with your girlfriend or boyfriend. Each event is yours alone. Yet many other people have similar experiences. Sociologists study such events and look for the things outside the individuals that influence their behavior.

To a sociologist, the personal event of test failure might be part of a larger pattern. Sociologists ask big questions such as, “Do the values encouraged by U.S. high schools support athletic achievement more strongly than academic achievement?” A fight between boyfriend and girlfriend might trigger, “What societal influences make it difficult for young couples to stay together today?”



Social Facts

Sociologists see patterns in people's behavior that relate to things outside of them, such as where they live, what religious and racial group they belong to, and what their income is. They use **social facts** to explain the patterns. A social fact is any social activity or situation that can be observed and measured. Examples of social facts include:

- * Attendance at sporting events.
- * Crime patterns.
- * Patterns of religious affiliation.
- * Marriage rates.
- * Unemployment and underemployment rates.
- * Patterns of educational level reached.

The Sociological Imagination

Why study sociology? C. Wright Mills, a U.S. sociologist, gave a famous answer in 1959. He said that you can enrich your life when you come to possess **sociological imagination** or vision.

Sociological imagination is a way of looking at the world that sees the connections among the seemingly private concerns of individuals and important social issues.

According to Mills, we are bewildered if we don't understand how our personal situations fit in with the "real world." To understand their lives and the human condition, people with sociological imagination ask questions about **three** basic areas:

1. **Society:** What is the particular structure of this society as a whole? What are its



Durkheim's Early Research

The pioneering French sociologist Emile Durkheim introduced the concept of social facts in 1895. In his work *The Rules of Sociological Method*, he argued that observation (not just abstract theory) of social (not psychological) factors was necessary to make the study of sociology a science.

In his famous 1897 work *Suicide*, he demonstrated that one of the most personal of all events was influenced

by outside patterns, and thus the suicide rate was a social fact. Durkheim found that there were higher rates of suicide among divorced, rather than married, people and among Protestants rather than Catholics. He also found that people undergoing changes in economic conditions, whether good or bad, were more likely to commit suicide than those living in stable economic situations, even poverty.

essential components, and how are they related to one another?

2. **History:** Where does this society stand in human history? What came before, and how is the society changing? How is it different from societies of the past?
3. **People:** What kinds of men and women exist in this society today, and how are they changing? In what ways does the society influence them? How are they free, and how are they repressed?

The answers to these questions can help people apply societal patterns to understanding individual events. It doesn't matter whether a person is a scholar, a student, or just a curious observer. Sociological imagination lets individuals "step out of themselves" and understand much more about their worlds.

Sociology and the Other Social Sciences

The **social sciences** are a group of related disciplines that study various aspects of society and human relationships. They include **seven** areas:

1. Anthropology.
2. Economics.
3. Geography.
4. History.
5. Political Science.
6. Psychology.
7. Sociology.

The social sciences overlap. Many social scientists today shift back and forth among the disciplines in order to better understand the forces that help shape human lives. However, each field has a distinctive point of view. (See the chart opposite).

What Sociologists Do

The sociological imagination can be developed by anyone who studies sociology. Simply learning how to put one's self in the position of another person is an aspect of developing sociological imagination. But what do professional sociologists do?

- * **Teach.** Many sociologists become high school teachers or faculty in colleges and universities. They advise students, conduct research, and publish their work. Over 3,000 colleges offer sociology courses.
- * **Advise.** Sociologists work for the business, nonprofit, and government worlds as directors of research, policy analysts (people who develop policy recommendations), consultants, human resource managers, and program managers.
- * **Research.** Practicing sociologists with advanced degrees are involved in research analysis, survey research, urban planning, community development, and criminology (the study of crime).
- * **Counsel.** Some sociologists have specialized training as counselors, therapists, or program directors in social service agencies.

People who do not become professional sociologists study sociology because it offers valuable preparation for careers in journalism, politics, public relations, business, or public administration—fields

The Social Sciences

Discipline	Studies	Focuses on
Anthropology	The origin, behavior, and physical, social, and cultural development of human beings.	Cultures.
Economics	The human production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.	Theory and management of economies or economic systems.
Geography	Earth and its features and the distribution of life, including human life, on the planet.	Patterns of activity as they are distributed on Earth.
History	The record of past human events—civilizations, social activity and interaction of societies, people, ideas, and forces that changed societies.	Change and the past.
Political Science	Government and its processes, principles, and structures; also political institutions and politics.	How governments work.
Psychology	Mental processes and behavior in humans and animals and how they are affected by the individual's physical states, mental states, and the external environment—including other living things.	Individual behavior.
Sociology	Human social behavior and groups.	Groups in society, how they work, and what it means to be a member of a given group.

that require working with diverse groups and an understanding of society. Many students study sociology because they see it as a base for such professions as law, education, medicine, social work, and counseling.

Conduct Research

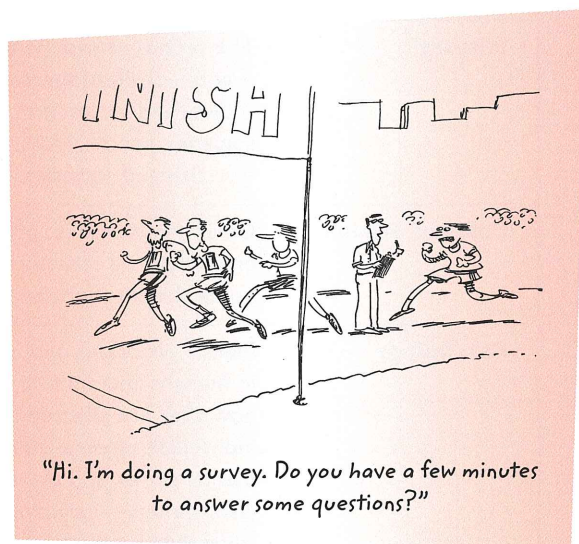
No matter what their job titles are, sociologists rely on systematic, thorough research. They use various techniques, such as experiments, observations, and surveys. Reliable sociological research must meet two types of standards: It must reflect the scientific method and it must be ethical.

The Scientific Method

How do sociologists ensure that their research accurately describes an aspect of society? One standard they follow is the **scientific method**, a systematic, organized series of steps that emphasize objectivity and consistency. There are **five** basic steps in the scientific method:

- 1. Define the Problem.** The first step is to state as clearly and precisely as possible what you hope to investigate. Do you want to know whether crime rates in the United States are rising? If so, what kinds of crime? Over what time period? A thorough sociologist would not just define the problem as “crime,” but would carefully define exactly what information he or she is seeking.
- 2. Review the Literature.** The next step is to review research that has already been done in the area. What patterns concerning crime rates have other sociologists found? When were the studies done? Based on what you find, what is a logical “next step” to take in furthering research on crime rates?
- 3. Formulate a Hypothesis.** The next step is to formulate a hypothesis. A **hypothesis** is a prediction about the relationship between two or more **variables**. Variables are measurable traits that change under different conditions. Researchers often predict that a change in one variable—an **independent variable**—will cause a change in another—a **dependent variable**. You can test a hypothesis by conducting research.

- 4. Design a Research Plan and Collect the Data.** The researcher then designs a plan for collecting data that will either support or disprove the hypothesis. The plan can include such details as what questions to ask, how to gather data, how to measure changes in the variables, and how to organize the data for analysis. Once the plan is set, you follow it to conduct your research and organize the data you acquire.



- 5. Analyze the Data and Develop a Conclusion.** What do the data reveal? Do the data show a relationship between the variables? If so, your hypothesis may be supported. If your hypothesis is not supported, you need to offer reasons or make recommendations for further research.

EXAMPLE: Suppose you realize you've been hearing a lot about theft from video stores—more than you used to—and it seems worst in the big cities. How would you use the scientific method to investigate? See the chart below.



Using the Scientific Method

Step 1: The Problem

“How has the incidence of video store theft changed in the three largest U.S. cities in the last five years? What affects that change?”

Step 2: The Literature

Last year, several sociologists published articles on theft rates in the three largest U.S. cities. You read the articles and decide how your research can build on what they reported.

Step 3: Hypothesis

Based on reviewing the literature, you wonder whether the population density in a city (the independent variable) affects the rate of video store thefts (the dependent variable). Your hypothesis: “Rates of video store theft increase as population density increases.”

Step 4: Research Plan

You list the information you need: crime statistics (arrests? convictions? 911 calls?) and people-per-square-mile data. You devise a procedure for gathering data from city records and decide to organize your data into graphs.

Step 5: Analysis and Conclusion

Do the data show a relationship between increased population density and an increase in the incidence of video store theft? If so, your hypothesis is supported and you say so. If your hypothesis is not supported—for example, if the incidence of video store theft went down as population density increased—you would need to explain why you think the data show this. You might want to suggest the kind of further research that could explain it.

Using the Scientific Method

How many people actually use the scientific method? Even if we never conduct our own research, all of us read or hear about social research. We hear hypotheses about the causes of such social facts as higher crime rates, changing unemployment rates, and political preferences. How can we know if the research is reliable? If you study the research carefully to see how well the researchers used the scientific method, you may form an opinion about the reliability of their conclusions.

Ethical Concerns

Studying human beings is not exactly the same as studying rocks or plants. Whereas rocks can be cut open, scraped, and left on a lab table almost indefinitely, humans can't be treated that way. People have feelings and rights to privacy. Researchers in sociology must consider **ethics**, principles of conduct concerning what is good or moral or right.

EXAMPLE: A 1978 study of fatal car crashes provides an example of ethical concerns in sociological research. Sociologist William Zellner hypothesized that single-occupant fatal car crashes are sometimes suicides disguised as accidents. When Zellner was interviewing family and friends of the victims, he did not reveal his hypothesis because he was afraid that no one would talk to him. Instead, he said that his goal was to reduce the number of future accidents by learning about the emotional characteristics of accident victims.

Zellner concluded that about 12 percent of single-occupant crash victims were actually "autocides." His findings had implications for society. For example, if autocides involve the death of innocent bystanders, it is important to know how they might be prevented. However, you might ask whether Zellner's research method was ethical. Did he deceive his interviewees? What right did he have to invade their privacy?

The ASA Code of Ethics

In order to set uniform ethical standards for social research, the American Sociological Association (ASA) publishes a Code of Ethics. It includes **five** general principles. How do you think Zellner's research measures up against these principles?

- 1. Professional Competence.** Sociologists make a commitment to only conduct research for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience. They consult with other professionals when necessary.
- 2. Integrity.** Sociologists are honest, fair, and respectful of others and do not knowingly make statements that are false, misleading, or deceptive.
- 3. Professional and Scientific Responsibility.** Sociologists follow the highest scientific and professional standards and accept responsibility for their work.

4. Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity. Sociologists respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people. In all work-related activities, sociologists acknowledge the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own.

5. Social Responsibility. Sociologists apply and make public their knowledge in order to contribute to the public good. When undertaking research, they strive to advance the science of sociology.

Apply Sociology

Sociologists often apply sociological knowledge to existing social situations. There are **three** main ways in which sociological research and everyday reality intersect.

- 1. Understanding Issues.** Sociology can help us better understand today's issues, from capital punishment to health care.
- 2. Overcoming Traditional Barriers.** Because sociological research is objective, sociology can speak to all people, not just to the dominant members of a society or group.
- 3. Coming Up with Solutions.** If we better understand today's problems, we have the tools to help solve them.

The Development of Sociology

In the Middle Ages, Europe was changing. For many centuries people's lives had been pretty much the same—lords owned the land, knights fought to protect it, and serfs worked to keep the fields productive.

European Roots

Starting around 1500, Europe joined other parts of the world in a vast global trade exchange. Knowledge from Asia and the Islamic countries sparked a scientific revolution that helped create the technology needed for exploration and worldwide contacts. Economic changes led to changes in political and social thinking.

The new way of thinking was boldly dubbed the **Enlightenment**, an era in which scientific knowledge was applied to human society. Enlightenment thinkers believed that they could solve social, political, and economic problems using human reason. During the late 1700s and early 1800s these beliefs inspired political revolutions in many places, including the United States, France, and almost all of Latin America.

Over the same time period, new knowledge prompted an **Industrial Revolution**. Beginning in England, new machines and factory organizations transformed the lives of ordinary people. Amidst all these dramatic changes, the discipline of sociology was born.

Key Figures

Many philosophers became interested in the changes in human lives that they believed resulted from the revolutions. Among the most influential early sociologists were these **five**:

1. Auguste Comte (1798–1857)

Sociology begins with the French philosopher Auguste Comte.

BACKGROUND: The French Revolution of 1789 had overthrown the government of French kings, who had ruled with absolute power for centuries. It set France into a topsy-turvy spin between old and new styles of government.

Comte observed the rise and fall of the revolutionary general and emperor, Napoleon. Comte wondered what his science could contribute toward understanding what was going on. He asked himself, “How can France



▲ Auguste Comte was the first to use the word *sociology*.

ever regain stability?” and “What patterns exist between order and chaos?” The theory he developed reflects these concerns.

CONTRIBUTION: Comte believed that sociologists should be concerned with **two** basic problems:

- i. **Order.** What forces (such as kings or economic prosperity) bring order to a society?
- ii. **Change.** What forces (such as new Enlightenment ideas) bring change? Comte theorized that any social change could best be understood by this analysis. The social world, he believed, could be studied with the same scientific accuracy as the natural world.

2. Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)

Whereas Comte was influenced by the events following the French Revolution, English philosopher Herbert Spencer wrote in response to conditions caused by the Industrial Revolution.

BACKGROUND: As he watched industrialization take hold in England, Germany, and the United States, Spencer pondered the nature of social change. He asked, “How can sociologists explain who will become rich and powerful in this new age and who will be left behind?”

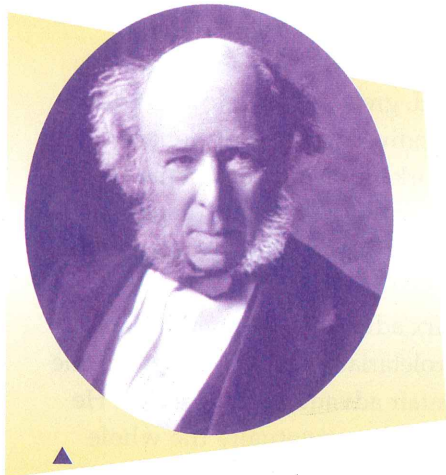
CONTRIBUTION: Spencer found answers in the work of Charles Darwin, who developed the theory of natural selection. According to Darwin, the evolution of any species is a natural process: The individuals least suited



Harriet Martineau's Work

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) was largely responsible for translating Comte's work into English and spreading it to many nations outside France. She also published studies of early 19th-century U.S. society in her book *Society in America*. She differed from many scholars of her day in that she promoted active involvement in solutions to social issues. She believed that intellec-

tuals and scholars should advocate change to solve social problems. She spoke out in favor of women's rights, the emancipation of slaves, and religious tolerance.



▲ Herbert Spencer developed the theory known as Social Darwinism.

to their environments are weak and die out, while the individuals best suited to their environments survive, thrive, and reproduce.

Spencer believed that this concept of "survival of the fittest" could explain social change as well. He believed the Industrial Revolution led to progress, and that through natural competition, the best aspects of society would survive over time. Spencer's theory is known as **Social Darwinism**. His ideas support the view that government should not interfere in the economic and business activities of a society. In the United States, libertarians and laissez-faire economists have been influenced by Spencer.

Did You Know?



An Uncluttered Mind

Both Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer refused to read any works by other social thinkers, including each other. Comte called this practice “cerebral hygiene,” believing that others’ work would pollute his own mind. Spencer’s refusal to read the work of others came at a high price, since he often declared his own hypotheses as the “truth” without knowing that others had proved him false.

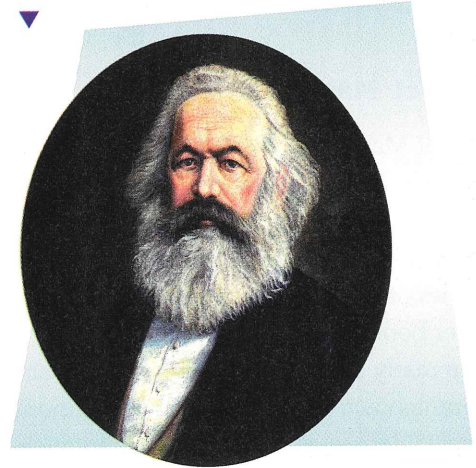
3. Karl Marx (1818–1883)

The German Karl Marx also reacted to the social conditions created by the Industrial Revolution. However, he saw exploitation and misery where Spencer saw order and positive change.

BACKGROUND: Marx saw people working for low pay in filthy, unsafe factories, who at night went home to miserable, crowded slums that had been built up around the places where they worked. He attributed these conditions to some historical economic facts.

CONTRIBUTION: Marx believed that the organization of the economy is basic to society, and that political, social,

Karl Marx viewed societies in terms of their economies.



and religious beliefs grow out of the economic structure.

He viewed society as divided into two groups—those who control the economy and those who don’t. In capitalism, where free competition is allowed, greed and self-interest drive some individuals to seize control. The worker becomes the victim of the factory owner. It is to the owner’s advantage to pay the worker as little as possible.

Marx advocated a “revolution of the proletariat [workers]” to overcome the unfair advantages of the rich. He believed that eventually the whole capitalistic system would disappear and a new “communist” system would take its place—one in which the inequalities among members of society would be removed.

4. Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)

At the turn of the 20th century, most students of society learned sociology from people who called themselves “philosophers.” One hugely influential “philosopher” was Emile Durkheim, a professor at the University of Bordeaux in France.

BACKGROUND: Like Comte and Spencer, Durkheim was interested in questions of order, such as “What forces keep a society together?” and “What influences pull society apart?”

CONTRIBUTION: Durkheim thought of answers to these questions in terms of **function**. If an element of society fulfills a true function, or purpose, it must be important in keeping things orderly. Likewise, its removal would cause disorder.

EXAMPLE: The problems that followed the French Revolution came about because kings served a purpose—they organized wars and trade and their armies kept peace within the country. When the king was removed, these functions were interrupted. Over time, French citizens found a way to meet these functions in other ways (today they have a very strong president), but until they did, the society was in disorder.

To Durkheim, the best way to analyze society was by examining the functions different institutions serve. He was particularly interested in the function of religion in society, because he believed that shared beliefs and values hold society together.

5. Max Weber (1864–1920)

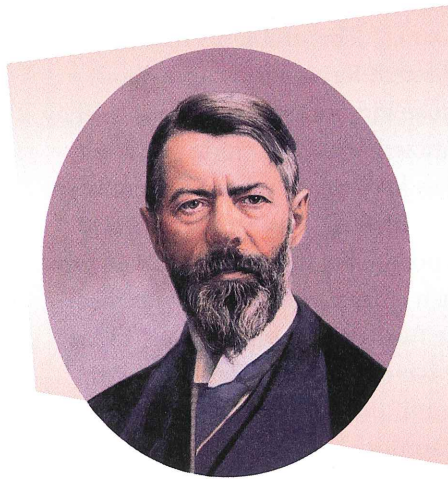
German philosophers also made major contributions to the early development of sociology. One of the most famous, Max Weber, was interested in the interactions of society and the individual.

BACKGROUND: Weber examined the role individual beliefs and feelings played in society. He argued that society could not be understood by *objective* measurement. That might work for determining accurate weights and heights, but not for people and societies.

CONTRIBUTION: To fully understand behavior, Weber believed sociologists must learn the *subjective* meanings people attach to actions.

Emile Durkheim studied the functions served by social institutions.





Max Weber focused on individuals and their interactions.

EXAMPLE: You cannot objectively measure a handshake. Instead, you must understand its subjective meaning. Does it signify friendship? Formality? Aggression? Until you can answer these kinds of questions, you cannot understand a society. Weber called this type of understanding *verstehen*, the German word for “understanding.”

Weber also developed the concept of the **ideal type**, a model that can be used to measure reality. In using an ideal type, a researcher examines many examples of an aspect of a society and identifies what he or she believes to be its essential features.

EXAMPLE: Suppose that you are studying marriage. You would look at many marriages and come up with a list of typical characteristics. You might start your model of marriage with some-

thing like this: A man and a woman commit to sharing a life together, and many marriages produce children. (The characteristics in the model may vary according to the society.) Your list becomes the ideal type. Using the ideal type, you can examine “real” marriages and better understand their variations.

The Development of Sociology in the United States

American professors who studied Comte, Spencer, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber soon joined the ranks of prominent European sociologists and made their own contributions, many of which we will discuss in this book.

Major U.S. Sociologists

Some of the most famous U.S. sociologists include:

- * George Herbert Mead.
- * Charles Horton Cooley.
- * Talcott Parsons.
- * C. Wright Mills.
- * Robert Merton.

The Chicago School

One distinctive characteristic of U.S. sociology has been its emphasis on practical solutions to social problems. This attitude reflects an American belief that ideas are important only if they are accompanied by actions. The “Chicago School” of sociology has long been associated with the development of solutions to social problems through social reform.

EXAMPLE: Sociologist Jane Addams established *settlement houses* in poor areas of Chicago in the early 1900s. Their purpose was to assist underprivileged people and, at the same time, develop a society with more equal opportunities for all. Addams, along with black journalist and educator Ida B. Wells, prevented the implementation of a racial segregation policy in the Chicago schools.

In more recent years, the University of Chicago has been a center of urban study that focuses on studying its own city.

Sociology Today

The great theorists who helped develop the field of sociology illustrate the wide variety of possible ways to view society. Comte looked at order and change. Spencer compared change in societies to evolutionary change in living organisms. Marx viewed social change as full of conflict and inequality, but Durkheim saw orderly, functional transitions. Weber concentrated on the relationship between society and the individual. The ideas of these men, as well those of many 20th-century thinkers, have shaped sociological theory today.

Theoretical Perspectives

A perspective is a way of seeing things. In everyday life, some people seem to be eternally optimistic. Others seem to see trouble even when none exists. We all have different points of view, and sociologists are no exception. Today, **three** major

theoretical perspectives illustrate different ways to approach the study of society:

I. The Functionalist Perspective.

People who view society from the **functionalist perspective** like to compare societies to organisms. Every part has a function, and, overall, a society tends to operate smoothly. If something doesn't fit in, the functionalist believes that it will be eliminated naturally, or just won't be passed on to the next generation. Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim heavily influenced this perspective.

How does a functionalist explain why crimes such as murder and robbery exist? Functionalists know that at any given time, some parts of the system don't work well. Crime is a **dysfunction**. Something is a dysfunction if it inhibits or disrupts the working of the system as a whole. It can be a negative result of an activity. A dysfunction threatens the stability of a society. Societies must develop ways to contain dysfunctions so that normal health and stability may be maintained.

Functionalists also compare **manifest functions**, which are apparent and conscious, to **latent functions**, which are often unconscious, unintended, or hidden.

EXAMPLE: A school system has the manifest function of teaching the basic knowledge and skills needed to be successful in our society. It has the latent function of passing on mainstream culture and uniting people to core values.

Which are more important—manifest functions or latent functions? A functionalist would explain that institutions exist in harmony with the rest of society when they fulfill many functions, both manifest and latent.

2. The Conflict Perspective. Sociologists using the **conflict perspective** concentrate on aspects of society that encourage competition and change. They don't necessarily emphasize violent conflict. They are also interested in peaceful



U.S. Culture Connection

The McDonaldization of Society

In his book *The McDonaldization of Society*, sociologist George Ritzer claims that “the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world.” Ritzer believes that this industry’s goals affect far more than hamburgers. They have shaped the human environment, from airports to education.

According to Ritzer, **four** goals of “McDonaldization” are:

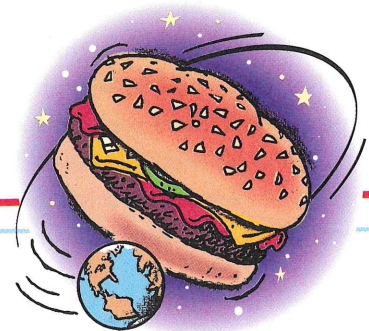
1. Efficiency. Rational calculation of the most cost-effective method of production (for example, determining the smallest number of kitchen crew members needed to meet the demand for food).

2. Calculability. Measurement of outcomes based on quantity rather than quality focusing on how many hamburgers are sold, not on customer satisfaction.

3. Predictability. Organization of the production process to guarantee uniformity of product and standardized outcomes (your hamburger tastes the same wherever you buy it).

4. Control. Substitution of more predictable nonhuman labor for human labor (cash registers that display what was ordered and calculate change due).

Do you think McDonaldization exists? What could be some examples?





negotiations between groups. Conflict theorists may identify groups that have different interests, such as various political groups or people from different parts of an organization, and study how they work out their differences. They see the potential for conflict in the different points of view of groups that naturally compete with each other.

According to conflict theorists, social conflict arises from competition over limited resources. Once a group gains control of wealth or power, it sets rules that benefit its members and denies benefits to other groups. You may recognize the influence of Karl Marx on this perspective. Most conflict theorists today,

however, are not Marxists. They simply see conflict as a part of everyday life in all societies.

3. The Interactionist Perspective.

Both functionalists and conflict theorists look at the parts of society as they relate to other parts. In contrast, sociologists who adopt the **interactionist perspective** study the ways individuals respond to each other. Interactionists view society as a collection of small interactions; they are much more interested in the small parts than in society overall. They observe and record the intentions and meanings conveyed by individual actions. They

pay attention to what people say, but they focus just as much on nonverbal communication. Their intellectual forebear is Max Weber.

The interactionist perspective emphasizes the role played by **symbols** in

daily life. Members of a group or a society understand the social meanings of the symbols they share. For example, a team mascot may be used as a symbol of your school, and all the students know what the mascot means.

Comparing Perspectives			
	Functionalist	Conflict	Interactionist
Nature of Society	It is stable, made up of interrelated social structures that work in harmony.	It is made up of competing interests, each seeking to meet its own goals.	It is made up of interacting individuals and groups, all sharing common symbols.
Level of Analysis	Analyzes the entire society.	Analyzes the entire society.	Analyzes interacting individuals and groups.
View of the Individual	Sees individuals socialized to perform functions in society.	Sees individuals as shaped by power, conflict, and authority.	Sees individuals shaping their own social worlds through interaction.
View of Social Change	Predicts that change will be in a direction that reinforces the health of the society.	Sees change as constant, often forced, sometimes with positive consequences.	Sees change reflected in symbols and social interactions.
Possible View of a U.S. School	Observes manifest functions such as teaching, latent functions, such as social and athletic opportunities.	Observes inequalities among schools based on different resources; sees problems within schools based on the interactions of groups.	Observes common symbols and finds verbal and nonverbal communications most interesting.
Forebears	Emile Durkheim Herbert Spencer	Karl Marx	Max Weber

The Power of Sociology

Sociology welcomes the study of many topics, and it encourages its students to examine their social worlds with fresh eyes. Sociologists look at society through

different lenses, all of which are useful. The kind of understanding gained from a study of sociology can help people solve problems as personal as a brother's relationship with his sister or as broad and intricate as world hunger.

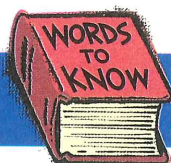
Chapter 1 Wrap-up

THE WORLD OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology is the study of society. Sociologists use social facts and employ the sociological imagination. These tools help them design and conduct research; they also help them apply the results of research in society.

Sociology began as a branch of philosophy. European thinkers such as Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber proposed different theories about how society could be studied and understood. In the United States, early sociologists combined research with a strong interest in working to solve social problems such as poverty.

Today sociologists employ one or more broad approaches to the nature of society. The three main approaches are the functional, conflict, and interactionist perspectives.



Sociology

conflict perspective—point of view in sociology that emphasizes competing interests, power, and inequality. *p. 16*

dependent variable—in research the trait or behavior that changes in response to an independent variable. *p. 6*

dysfunction—activity that threatens the stability of a society. *p. 15*

Enlightenment—18th-century philosophical movement that emphasized the use of reason to examine doctrines and traditions. It led to a scientific approach to social, political, and economic problems and inspired revolutions in the United States, France, and Latin America. *p. 9*

ethics—principles of conduct concerning what is good, moral, or right. *p. 8*

more Sociology Words to Know

function—work or purpose of an aspect of society that meets a social need. *p. 13*

functionalist perspective—point of view in sociology that emphasizes stable, inter-related social structures, each meeting a social need. *p. 15*

hypothesis—prediction about the relationship between two or more variables. *p. 6*

ideal type—model that can be used to measure reality. *p. 14*

independent variable—in research, the factor on which dependent variables depend. An independent variable is not affected by the activity being investigated. *p. 6*

Industrial Revolution—from about 1750 to 1850, the dramatic change from an agricultural to an industrial society that came about from increased use of machines. *p. 9*

interactionist perspective—point of view in sociology that emphasizes interacting individuals and groups. *p. 17*

latent function—unconscious, unintended, or hidden work or purpose (of an aspect of society). *p. 15*

manifest function—open, intended, and conscious work or purpose (of an aspect of society). *p. 15*

scientific method—systematic, organized series of research steps that emphasize objectivity and consistency. *p. 6*

Social Darwinism—Herbert Spencer's theory that society will evolve through a process of natural selection, and those aspects that best serve society will survive. *p. 11*

social fact—social activity or situation that can be observed and measured. *p. 3*

social sciences—related disciplines that study human behavior: anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, and sociology. *p. 4*

sociological imagination—way of looking at the world that sees connections among the private concerns of individuals and social issues. *p. 3*

sociology—science that studies social behavior in human groups. *p. 2*

symbol—something that stands for or represents something else. *p. 18*

variable—measurable trait that is subject to change under different conditions. *p. 6*