

# Origins and Development of Sociology

## 1. Introduction to Sociology

Sociology is the study of the complex and dynamic relationships between individual human beings and the larger social structures in which they live. The field of sociology emerged during a period of intense social change in the Western world, when few people had the tools necessary to understand the often tumultuous and almost universally transformative changes being wrought by the industrial revolution. Today, the accumulated wealth of empirical and theoretical knowledge developed by sociologists has come to be seen as so fundamental to an understanding of our social world that there are now programs in sociology at universities throughout the Western world and beyond. An introductory course in sociology can serve many goals. We will necessarily study "the facts" and "the methods." At the same time, we are going to examine some of the more "fuzzy" aspects of sociology (by design and by necessity). For example, we will look at the basic questions that underlie all sociological inquiry. What do sociologists study and what kinds of people become sociologists? And we will examine the question of why sociologists study the world. This is somewhat of a circular question, but one that is worth pursuing nevertheless.

For generations, the sociological perspective has been viewed as a vital way of evolving insights that provide a convincing explanation of social life. Sociologists object to the superficiality of everyday thinking. A primary sociological objective is the articulation of a detailed and comprehensive knowledge of specific social phenomena or groups. This is an important outcome not only in and of itself, but also as the foundation for informed analysis and the practical response to social problems. Sociology provides us with a unique and forward-looking perspective from which to view contemporary societies. This perspective is called the sociological imagination. According to Mills, the sociological imagination enables one to "understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals." This means that the sociological perspective allows us to understand not only the everyday routines of individuals, but also the larger, deeper contexts associated with individuals' inner lives and outer actions. That is, the sociological imagination links ordinary

experiences and personal difficulties with historical precedents and key social issues.

### **1.1. Definition and Scope**

Sociology is the systematic study of society and social behavior, which developed in the mid-nineteenth century in Europe. The social sciences are provided as solutions for society's perceived ills towards the end of the Enlightenment, using science as the best method. Sociology developed to shed light on these initiatives, as well as to search for a proper understanding of the industrial revolution and how society worked in general. Sociology is defined as a general science of society. It explores the issues of humanity, aspects of living together, and has the potential for applying useful knowledge.

Fundamental to any science is a range of definitions. Sociology has been defined in numerous ways, but viewed at the start of the twentieth century, the definition consists of three dimensions. If we understand sociology as merely an empirical, widely based advance of general understanding, it has far less on its side than one sometimes hopes. There is no help for the belated independence of general scientific advances; it produces irremediable chaos. Nevertheless, such advances occur. Thus, we may hope that the subjects that have developed quite self-sufficient sciences, in the little wholeness and wholeness understood in some class of social relations of different types.

## **2. Founding Figures in Sociology**

From its beginnings, the idea of a scientific study of society has been associated with a small number of influential figures. They were the original pioneers who developed distinctive ways of thinking about social life, breaking from the dominant ways of approaching that theme, and from whom certain ideas are still little changed. Quite why these figures are remembered, and why we should give them so much attention, is a subject of this part of the text. For sociology is a developing discipline, and its authoritative view of social life has changed. A reasoned appreciation of what is offered today requires us to delve back into its origins.

The corpus of sociological work built up in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is too wide-ranging to survey in this section or elsewhere. But if we are to grasp in its entirety the sociological answer to the question – how can a better, fairer society be built? – we need to retrace its roots in the work of five of sociology's

earliest leading figures. Sociology, as a discipline, is justly proud of the diverse subject matter and range of loosely related research it has successfully conducted. But the self-understood core of the sociological enterprise retains the form it was given a century ago by leading figures. These early pioneers also bequeathed to sociology its distinctive method. They searched for general or abstract truths about society, and they did so necessarily by combining both empirical research and philosophical thought.

### **2.1. Auguste Comte**

Throughout the history of sociology, Auguste Comte has often been cited as the "father of sociology" or even the "father of positivism." Comte first utilized the term "sociology" in 1838. His understanding of sociology was "the science of the phenomena of the social world," and he thoroughly elaborated on the need to observe empirical evidence in order to study social interactions. Comte's desire was to fit the positive science of society into the range of existing positive sciences. He thus identified the laws that would link the phenomena of society and emphasize social stability, making it a tool to predict and suggest constructive changes. The concerns of Comte can be divided into two major areas: social dynamics and social order. Both topics laid the groundwork for the development of an orderly and progressive method for understanding and regulating society. Moreover, Comte stressed the significance of social cohesiveness for social integration. Without social cohesion or social consensus, there is no possibility of societal life. In essence, societies face social disintegration, leading to chaos due to a lack of comprehension of reality and social principles. Furthermore, Comte dominated the tenet of social integration or social order and articulated a clear and coherent expectation foundation facing social disorganization, which is how to reinforce solidarity in society. In their application, structural-functional sociologists have offered Comte's thoughts concerning consensus and integration, social theory, and social order. Comte has influenced the development of salient sociological paradigms. In retrospect, implementing his ideas pronounces an organization's interest in social dynamics and transformation.

## **3. Major Sociological Theories**

Sociological theory is the primary lens through which we understand and study societies. Theoretical frameworks are paradigms of thought that have a distinct perspective on social behavior, societies, and societal change. The major theoretical

frameworks in sociology include functionalism, conflict theory, Marxism, and symbolic interactionism. These theories of sociology use various metatheories and assumptions about how societies evolve, progress, and develop. Theories of such a nature have grown, changed, and evolved to attempt to explain social behavior and interaction.

Functionalist theory emphasizes the importance of macro-level functions for social stability and implies that a system of relations linked with the human brain's mechanisms is the main condition of any given state as long as it is not found necessary to revise the basic working propositions. Conflict theory is the idea that struggles and conflicts between individuals, employers and employees, and the ruling and working classes, for example, are the main points of social action and change. Symbolic interactionism is the idea that the way meaning is constructed facilitates and enhances human interactions, as we interpret the everyday behavior and lifestyles of people through the assumptions and beliefs formed by those interpretations. Each of these theories has its strengths and weaknesses, and different ways of using theory to understand the world. These theories can be used by sociologists to make sense of our world by conducting research that can be used to fix and stop problems. All three of these theories are widely used today in sociology, psychology, social work, education, medicine, politics, and religion.

### **3.1. Functionalism**

Functionalism is a social theory that views society as an interconnected system of parts, with each part working together to maintain the stability of the entire system. Its primary assumption is that everything within the structure of society has a specific purpose. Social institutions such as the family, education, politics, and the economy are connected and serve as a basis for society to function. Within the functionalist model, sociologists see contributors to society through various parts of the social structure and expect that each individual will play their role. As such, functionalism is often linked to the concept of norms as well as regular patterns of behavior within society. As society connects in various parts – at the micro, meso, and macro levels – social integration becomes a priority in maintaining equilibrium.

Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, and Herbert Spencer are primary contributors to developing functionalism from the mid-18th to 20th centuries. It is also considered a significant influence in the sociology of order. Central to Durkheim's contribution to functionalism is the concept of anomie, which maintains

steadiness in times of strain or while going through drastic changes. According to Durkheim, social bonds are paramount in maintaining social order and in preventing occurrences between people. Robert Merton also contributes to the functionalist perspective through the exploration of social and individual purposes. The emphasis is placed on the distinction between manifest functions and latent functions. Manifest functions refer to consequences that are clear in purpose, while latent functions refer to consequences that are not obvious to the actors in the system. Both of these can be characterized as either social or individual; however, all remain integrating mechanisms for overall social need. In general, functionalism serves as a guide to uncover the role of every social structure, thus showing how those structures contribute to the stability and continuity within society. Overall analysis of functionalism by its supporters demonstrates that the theory can help define and classify the structures of social life. Functionalism paves the way for those within the discipline to address the importance that each role within institutions plays. Seeing those roles informs social order and stability. Although a starting point for many sociologists, the theory faces several critiques, such as its inability to address widespread conflict or change within society. Further, particular understandings of micro-level analysis and individual agency are other key concerns. Nonetheless, functionalism continues to shape empirical efforts in contemporary sociology.

## **4. Key Concepts in Sociology**

### **Order and Conflict**

The potential for order and conflict is related to the many-sided nature of social life. Activities must be organized to be effective; people must act toward one another as though they are concerned about the welfare of others. This is order. But individuals also compete for power and prestige. In some ways, order and conflict are opposite poles of social life. Yet they are dependent upon each other. Order, or consensual activity, is society's steady state or what society constantly re-creates; conflict, or its dissensual activity, is society's change, its dynamism. Social order refers to the regularity and predictability of behavior, and the patterns of interaction that ensure overall societal coherence. Social conflict is the struggle over values and competition for scarce resources.

### **Change and Stability**

Societies change and develop, while their structures, processes, and functions of behavior continually alter. For a social system to endure over time, it must have the capacity to adapt to and accommodate change. Varying points of view represent an ongoing effort in the building of society. Some political structures may be stable for generations despite rapid social change. Structures of the nonmaterial culture are generally more permanent than those of the material culture. The nonmaterial culture of society is learned and is then transmitted. While it is not immutable, it is very cohesive and therefore quite resistant to change. On the other hand, the material culture is subject to change as a result of discovery and invention. Impermanence of the nonmaterial culture gives society the capacity to develop and change over time.

#### **4.1. Culture**

Culture refers to the ways of life of the members of a society, or any group within a society. Culture is not a characteristic of societies but is the fundamental way in which societies learn. Not only is the human mind the result of a specific type of learning, but culture motivates and structures human thought and action. This is what propels people to build cities and to explore the entire planet, and from a sociological point of view, it is what enables a society to survive for hundreds or even thousands of years. A basic question is whether humans are capable of cutting themselves off from the influence of their cultural surroundings, from the structure of their social institutions, and from their motivations. In other words, are they free of the determinants of human behavior?

Culture is often thought of as the behaviors and beliefs, and the material objects that are associated with these behaviors and beliefs, that characterize a group. For the most part, culture changes only slightly when changes occur slowly in the fundamentals of a society or in the social characteristics of their people. Ultimately, to understand society, we must understand its culture, which is the basis for the texture of human life. In doing so, we also understand how it can be that people who live in the same physical environment have such varying ways of life. Understanding the deeper implications of culture is why sociologists define culture as the socially learned and transmitted things that people create as well as the process of creation and their possible use.

## 5. Methodology in Sociology

A key point of this section is to explain that the methodology is the cornerstone of social research. The approach is a clear way to investigate society and arrive at opinions based on evidence, grounded in sound methodological and empirical foundations. Some researchers may use library materials for their research questions, but they reach their conclusions by looking at the established positions and theories of previous researchers. In comparison, social researchers will attempt to gather fresh data to verify their own hypotheses and assumptions. In all studies, societies are profoundly varied, and it is critical to take a methodological approach to guarantee that findings pertinent to one population or subset may not be generalized to the population as a whole. Although there are strong cases for qualitative methods, other evidence suggests that mixing the two methods can lead to the best sociological understanding of the truth.

There are many different types of research, but the two most popular methods are quantitative and qualitative research. Both methods have strengths as well as limitations. A survey, which is frequently used in quantitative research, may, for example, eliminate issues of influence and subjectivity to a certain degree, but the findings may not capture the richness of what individuals think and feel. Qualitative methods like interviews and participant observation are often employed when a topic has not previously been investigated in order to allow the researcher to thoroughly explore the subject matter. During interviews or observations, the researcher hears about the interviewee's experiences, keenness, and beliefs. At the same time, the qualitative approach affords the ability to incorporate the respondents' own words about their situation for a more accurate analysis. In any study style, it is critical to gather evidence with the greatest accuracy and honesty. Data gathering and analysis must be thorough in order to result in a noteworthy amendment. Ethical concerns must also be taken into consideration when conducting research. When dealing with issues that are deeply personal, it is important to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

### 5.1. Quantitative Research Methods

Quantitative research methods form part of nearly every social science methodology. They emphasize the analysis of numerical data that is generated through a wide variety of methods, such as self-completion questionnaires, structured interviews, experiments, or the analysis of large sets of administrative



data. This type of data allows the researcher to conduct statistical analyses on it because the data has a numerical character. The use of statistical techniques allows the researcher to summarize observations made among a possibly large number of empirical cases by deriving generalizations from the data. Surveys and experiments are the most used techniques to gather quantitative data for preferences, opinions, or behavior. Experiments are a tight quantitative research design. While surveys basically ask respondents about their behavior, attitudes, or preferences, experiments are designed to have maximum control and to be able to establish causality on one variable between at least two groups in a population. Large-scale quantitative research enables sociologists to establish how widespread a phenomenon or a particular outcome is, as in relation to a disease, experiencing a traffic accident, degree of consumer satisfaction with healthcare, or behavior that is hazardous to health. However, the findings have to be considered in context, be it their wider cultural, social, economic, political, geographical, or individual context. This also brings up the limits of a statistical approach because the immediate insights into the personal context or background of the individuals cannot be gained. Finally, quantitative research won't tell us about complex motivations for why people behave as they do. The role of quantitative methods is in the preparation of the interpretation of empirical findings. Statistical understanding is also necessary when deciding about sample size; it is also a means of data reduction. Tables and graphic presentations are also part of using statistical procedures. An example of quantitative research methods in sociology is the log-linear models. Socio-metric analysis and analysis using statistical software is also an example of using quantitative approaches in sociology to examine social issues. The quantitative research approach is used to test theories and/or hypotheses that are formulated in order to measure variables.

## **6. Sociology of Different Societal Institutions**

Institutions play a defining role in social life. Theories of society examine numerous societal institutions, such as education, religion, and the family, and these institutions' social functions, the principles of their order, and their development over time. Institutions assume a certain structure, perform various functions, and influence social life in general and individual behaviors directly. Conversely, institutions can also encompass social practices. Research in the sociology of education calls into question institutional norms surrounding sex, gender, and even race. This undercuts one of the central logics behind the sociology of institutions:



the notion that our institutions, in an effort to retain or create order in a context of social change, actively perform a cut of various social practices that actually express the mores of a society.

Institutions have both a static and a dynamic dimension. Certain dynamics can give rise to mechanisms of adaptation. Schools find that increasing extracurricular activities contributes to a means of conscription and publishing individuals' quantifiable rankings in hopes of making selection fairer. This way, institutions can be thought of in terms of a dialectic between the outside and the inside. Each institution, in every society, will reflect the power relations between those living in the society. Some—family, school, clinic, church—will tell those being brought up within them the 'way things are,' whereas the others—political party, army, corporate enterprise—will tell those wishing to join them what skills and behaviors they need.

### **6.1. Family and Marriage**

Humans, like all primates, are social animals. They organize themselves into groups regardless of their size. This social organization of individuals into a domestic group involves, in part, the institution of the family and marriage. The family forms an integral part of the structural system of societies. It provides an important traditional influence on the emotional support a person needs, those who are members of the individual's primary group, the already married, and children, and superiors within the nation as a whole. However, in order to understand current patterns of perspective, many other types of family groupings, kinship bonds, socialization, and society in general, as well as the patterns of conflict, must be considered. In the following part, we explore the family and marriage system. We will look at different perspectives on the meaning of family and marriage terms, the presence of social group bounds, and the benefits and costs of marriage for individuals.

First, sociologists study the family. The family, in its structural form, may be defined as a domestic union consisting of one or more adults and one or more children. It might include individuals related by blood, marriage, or some other bond or adoption. Families, on the one hand, are universal, and on the other hand, they vary in form and dynamics according to the culture in which they are rooted. In traditional China, for example, the husband's interest in sex and reproduction is central to his reasons for marriage, while in North America, the romantic

attractiveness of a marriage partner is given high priority. In the West, marriage is often romantically based as well. Marriage is also viewed as an individual autonomous decision rather than a group-determined relationship. Marriage is universal, with an estimated 90 percent of contemporary societies having an institution like marriage. Even within societies that do not marry, there are usually some that decide to do so. Furthermore, even in societies that go against the institution, in one form or another, distinctions still show. Both adults over the age of fifty are married in many contemporary industrialized countries. In most situations, a long-term sexual and emotional relationship clearly separates marriage from other more general forms of union.

Second, the making of an ideal husband or wife is also of interest. Humans are learning how to become an ideal wife or husband with a value system that adores and profoundly characterizes marriage. It's sexual, of course. Some analysts contend that the marital taboo is a direct result of biology, as sex outside marriage is considered to be a form of disease by most societies. Any item indeed shows the best social climate for rearing children—adults form couples with parents of different backgrounds and children in close parent-child contacts, with shared resources, making it easier to interact. A large body of evidence suggests that couples with more similar genes are less likely to marry, for example, leading to classical societal issues where children died. Given the importance assured by biologically specified individual interests, it follows that marriage itself should have inherent physiological desirability as one of the highest common values. Feminist researchers, on the other hand, address problems associated with reproductive and relational changes. They stifle women in becoming their own embodiment of gender. They also discuss how much women's sexuality has been suppressed by lack of unrestricted access to biological experimentation.

## **7. Sociology of Social Movements**

On the eve of the fourth and final wave, students of social movements have gained a much broader understanding of this kind of challenge and changed the discipline in the course of this search as well. While still eclectic, contemporary research on social movements shares an underlying commitment to understanding the world as men and women make it. The search for freedom and justice, the struggle against constraints and against suffering, lies at the heart of the sociological enterprise. A fascinating and diverse range of research during the last 30 years from people with different theoretical, methodological, and political outlooks has expanded our

knowledge of this sphere in the social world, improved our conceptual tools, and integrated explicitly normative concerns with the search for understanding that is at the heart of the liberal arts.

Although we do not have an integrated, systematic account of the world of social movements, one of the most influential pieces of research on this subject contributes to our understanding of the world of social movements in an essential way. The major academic research about social movements relied on the superb effort made by Scandinavian sociologists who produced significant work. Because they had to search for correlations among a large number of interacting variables in a relatively small group of engaged mobiles to explain banditry as an aspect of political action.

### **7.1. Civil Rights Movements**

Explications of the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act

Many of the readings for this lesson are first-hand accounts by individuals involved in various fights for civil rights. In some cases, the works may be a little long, but all of them provide valuable insights into the development of civil rights laws in Colorado.

Maurice Sandusky Testimony, February 7, 1955 Statement by Governor Dan Thornton, February 16, 1955 Senator Joseph L. Ward, Jr., SB 92-134 Draft, n.d. Senator Joseph L. Ward, Jr., "Civil Rights Bill," April 15, 1957 Representative Roy Stockham, Sponsor's Statement, February 11, 1959 Memorandum to All Senators by Senator Joseph L. Ward, Jr., March 16, 1963 Numerous documents from the 1980s are also available. These are mostly from the Legislative Council and provide a great deal of useful information on the history of the Act up to that time, as well as some of the major changes to the Act made during the 1980s.

## **8. Sociology of Globalization**

The sociology of globalization concerns the deep changes in societies and the world economy that result from dramatically increased levels of interaction and connectedness between cultures, economies, and societies. Globalization is driven by a combination of technological, economic, social, and communication factors. While electronic technology is at the heart of what we usually call globalization, it represents only one of the many dimensions of this profound and multi-faceted

phenomenon. Most sociologists would argue that the process of integration that we call globalization operates on a number of interconnected dimensions. The economic dimension of the globalization process fundamentally shapes all of our other analyses of globalization. The economic dimension is, however, driven by and, in turn, is driving cultural, technological, political, and social change.

Globalization certainly presents many opportunities for more mobility, greater flexibility, higher living standards, valuable new knowledge, societies and economies, and indeed, potentially leaves us with a world full of mutual understanding, peace, and security. Nevertheless, very few international sociologists or historians today would be optimistic about the social or political possibilities of modern globalization. The political globalization that has accompanied the economic and technological transformation of the world system has been marked by regional and international insecurity, general and manifest 'othering', indifference, and even hostility between culturally made 'us-es' and 'thems', and above all, an increased global hierarchy of wealth and influence. There has been an active effort to promote sociological analyses of the impact of these dimensions. Above all, there has been a focus on assessing the impact of globalization on poverty and well-being and the role of social protection and security in enabling communities, social groups, and societies to cope with its effects.

### **8.1. Economic Globalization**

The word "globalization" has been used in a variety of social science theories to describe an increasing connectedness between societies and regarding basic drivers of change regardless of the analytical levels, disciplines, concepts, or arguments from which they start. However, currently, there is some breadth of consensus at the levels of the general public, professional analysts, and policymakers that implies a greater connectedness of people and progress in economics, politics, culture, and so forth. Economic globalization is the most well-known form of globalization. It refers to the growing integration of the national economies of the world through rapid increases in cross-border exchanges of goods, services, funds, technology, and labor, as well as rapid integration of the world's financial systems and the falling of trade barriers between nations. Some causal factors for this new economic globalization include aggressive trade liberalizations at the global, regional, and bilateral fronts and the revolutionary developments in information and communication technologies, as well as in international air and ocean transportation.

To better appreciate the topic, we can divide the part of economic globalization into the following subsections: drivers, impact, and responses. This subsection focuses on all major factors and sources driving the process of economic globalization and their level of impacts. It is pertinent to note that globalization trends are disproportionately dominated by the activities of multinational corporations and the functioning of global financial systems. The world operates through global markets regulating the activities of local, regional, and national business organizations. In all parts of the globe, there are some groups, societies, and countries that are forced to carry out the disciplines of the concepts of globalization about which they have hardly been consulted. Executives, political leaders, social movements, union leaders, and ordinary citizens the world over feel helplessly buffeted by suddenly emerging developments originating from economic globalization against which they think they are helpless. They have, thus, globally come to the belief that the world is being globalized out of "control." Control of economic globalization is potentially important for dealing with a large number of urgent problems facing human society. Control of globalization is a multifaceted and multi-level affair within which the inter- and intrasocietal roles and inter-societal regimes of various global institutions are crucial.

## **9. Contemporary Issues in Sociology**

Today, social research is centered on society's most pressing issues. Areas of special interest include demographic issues, such as overpopulation and the implications of phenomena like an older population, and various kinds of deviant behavior. Policy research and social indicators research are greatly needed. There is a need for data upon which social policies and programs may be based and then evaluated. Although funding for such research continues to be individual and piecemeal, various government agencies and private foundations contribute to the development of new knowledge in these areas. International sociology has grown in importance in the last twenty years. Because social change in many parts of the world is often more dramatic than in the more developed countries, sociologists now find the study of non-Western societies no longer optional but necessary.

Globalization, the process of integration and interaction among the world's people, is a controversial term. Although the significance of national boundaries cannot be ignored, new electronic and space-age technology has facilitated easy, almost instantaneous communication and transportation, and these, in turn, contribute to a process that is considered by some to be a revolutionary force in the international

system. Would a new world government that responded in a more equal way to the divergences of wealth and power serve society better? Only further scientific enterprise will tell, but world society has become one of the enduring questions of contemporary sociology.

### **9.1. Technology and Society**

In the nineteenth century, the growth of cities, the increased specialization of labor, and the eventual spread of the Industrial Revolution to many parts of the world rapidly accelerated all phases of human activity. In particular, technological changes involved shifts in methods of manufacture, a transition from agricultural to manufacturing pursuits, swift and methodical labor for large numbers of workers combined with close supervision, and an extensive use of capital. As societies throughout the world underwent these changes, traditional social institutions appeared unable to combat their ill effects. This development contributed to the emergence of sociology as a distinct and unified social science. Major currents of sociological thought are fashioned from the historical events of various social groups and societies. In the main, they result from fundamental changes within the social structure, profound strains experienced by it, or from a combination of both these social processes. In sum, sociological concepts and theories are essentially generalizations drawn from the empirical data of society's overall social structure and the particularities of its sample components. (Lederer, 2020)(Papastefanaki & Potamianos, 2020)(Grinin2022)(Goldman, 2022)(MacMillen, 2021)(Louckx, 2023)(Ehmer, 2021)(Prendergast, 2020)(Brockliss & Smith, 2024)(Miller)

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