

Sociology; A conceptual paradigm

- **Sociology is the study of society**
- A social science involving the study of the social lives of people, groups, and societies.
- **Sociology is the scientific study of social behavior**, including its origins, development, organization, and institutions. It is a social science that uses various methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to **develop a body of knowledge** about social order, social disorder and social change.
- **Sociology is the study of human social relationships and institutions**. Sociology's subject matter is diverse, ranging from crime to religion, from the family to the state, from the divisions of race and social class to the shared beliefs of a common culture, and from social stability to radical change in whole societies.
- *Unifying the study of these diverse subjects of study is sociology's purpose of understanding how human action and consciousness both shape and are shaped by surrounding cultural and social structures.*
- Sociology is an exciting and illuminating field of study that analyzes and explains important matters in our personal lives, our communities, and the world.
 - ❖ **At the personal level, sociology investigates the social causes and consequences of such things as romantic love, racial and gender identity, family conflict, deviant behavior, aging, and religious faith.**
 - ❖ *At the societal level, sociology examines and explains matters like crime and law, poverty and wealth, prejudice and discrimination, schools and education, business firms, urban community, and social movements.*
 - ❖ **At the global level, sociology studies such phenomena as population growth and migration, war and peace, and economic development.**
- Sociologists emphasize the careful gathering and analysis of evidence about social life to **develop and enrich our understanding of key social processes**. The research methods sociologists use are varied. *Sociologists observe the everyday life of groups, conduct large-scale surveys, interpret historical documents, analyze census data, study video-taped interactions, interview participants of groups, and conduct laboratory experiments.*
- **Students who have been well trained in sociology know how to think critically about human social life, and how to ask important research questions**. They know how to design good social research projects, carefully collect and analyze empirical data, and formulate and present their research findings. Students trained in sociology also know how to help others understand the way the social world works and how it might be changed for the better. Most generally, they have learned how to think, evaluate, and communicate clearly, creatively, and effectively. These are all abilities of tremendous value in a wide variety of vocational callings and professions.

Origins

- Social analysis has origins in the common stock of Western knowledge and philosophy, and has been carried out from as far back as the time of ancient Greek philosopher Plato, if not before. The origin of the survey, i.e., the collection of information from a sample of individuals, can be traced back to at least the Domesday Book in 1086, while ancient philosophers such as Confucius wrote on the importance of social roles. There is evidence of early sociology in medieval Islam. Some consider Ibn Khaldun, a 14th-century Arab Islamic scholar from North Africa (Tunisia), to have been the first sociologist and father of sociology (see Early Islamic philosophy#Branches); his *Muqaddimah* was perhaps the first work to advance social-scientific reasoning on social cohesion and social conflict.
- The word *sociology* (or "*sociologie*") is derived from both Latin and Greek origins. The Latin word: *socius*, "companion"; the suffix *-logy*, "the study of" from Greek-λογία from λόγος, *lógos*, "word", "knowledge".
- It was first coined in 1780 by the French essayist Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836) in an unpublished manuscript.
- Sociology was later defined independently by the French philosopher of science, Auguste Comte (1798–1857), in 1838. Comte used this term to describe a new way of looking at society. Comte had earlier used the term "social physics", but that had subsequently been appropriated by others, most notably the Belgian statistician Adolphe Quetelet.

Foundations of the academic discipline

Formal academic sociology was established by Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), who developed positivism as a foundation to practical social research. While Durkheim rejected much of the detail of Comte's philosophy, he retained and refined its method, maintaining that the social sciences are a logical continuation of the natural ones into the realm of human activity, and insisting that they may retain the same objectivity, rationalism, and approach to causality. Durkheim set up the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895, publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method* (1895). For Durkheim, sociology could be described as the "science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning". Durkheim's monograph, *Suicide* (1897) is considered a seminal work in statistical analysis by contemporary sociologists.

Scope

Culture

While, cultural sociology sees all social phenomena as inherently cultural. Sociology of culture often attempts to explain certain cultural phenomena as a product of social processes, while cultural sociology sees culture as a potential explanation of social phenomena.

Art, music and literature

Sociology of literature, film, and art is a subset of the sociology of culture. This field studies the social production of artistic objects and its social implications. None of the founding fathers of sociology produced a detailed study of art, but they did develop ideas that were subsequently applied to literature by others.

Criminality, deviance, law and punishment

Criminologists analyse the nature, causes, and control of criminal activity, drawing upon methods across sociology, psychology, and the behavioural sciences. The sociology of deviance focuses on actions or behaviours that violate norms, including both formally enacted rules (e.g., crime) and informal violations of cultural norms.

X Sociology of law

The study of law played a significant role in the formation of classical sociology. Durkheim famously described law as the "visible symbol" of social solidarity. The sociology of law refers to both a sub-discipline of sociology and an approach within the field of legal studies. Sociology of law is a diverse field of study that examines the interaction of law with other aspects of society, such as the development of legal institutions and the effect of laws on social change and vice versa. For example, an influential recent work in the field relies on statistical analyses to argue that the increase in incarceration in the US over the last 30 years is due to changes in law and policing and not to an increase in crime; and that this increase significantly contributes to maintaining racial stratification.

Communications and information technologies

The sociology of communications and information technologies includes "the social aspects of computing, the Internet, new media, computer networks, and other communication and information technologies".

X Media

As with cultural studies, media study is a distinct discipline that owes to the convergence of sociology and other social sciences and humanities, in particular, literary criticism and critical theory. Though the production process or the critique of aesthetic forms is not in the remit of sociologists, analyses of socializing factors, such as ideological effects and audience reception, stem from sociological theory and method. Thus the 'sociology of the media' is not a sub discipline, but the media is a common and often-indispensable topic.

Economic sociology

Economic sociology arose as a new approach to the analysis of economic phenomena, emphasising class relations and modernity as a philosophical concept. The relationship between capitalism and modernity is a salient issue, perhaps best demonstrated in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) and Simmel's *The Philosophy of Money* (1900). The contemporary period of economic sociology, also known as *new economic sociology*, was consolidated by the 1985 work of Mark Granovetter titled "Economic Action and Social Structure".

Work, employment, and industry

The sociology of work, or industrial sociology, examines "the direction and implications of trends in technological change, globalisation, labour markets, work organisation, managerial practices and employment relations to the extent to which these trends are intimately related to changing patterns of inequality in modern societies and to the changing experiences of individuals and families the ways in which workers challenge, resist and make their own contributions to the patterning of work and shaping of work institutions."

Education

The sociology of education is the study of how educational institutions determine social structures, experiences, and other outcomes. It is particularly concerned with the schooling systems of modern industrial societies. A classic 1966 study in this field by James Coleman, known as the "Coleman Report", analysed the performance of over 150,000 students and found that student background and socioeconomic status are much more important in determining educational outcomes than are measured differences in school resources (*i.e.* per pupil spending).

Environment

Environmental sociology is the study of human interactions with the natural environment, typically emphasizing human dimensions of environmental problems, social impacts of those problems, and efforts to resolve them. As with other sub-fields of sociology, scholarship in environmental sociology may be at one or multiple levels of analysis, from global (e.g. world-systems) to local, societal to individual. Attention is paid also to the processes by which environmental problems become *defined* and *known* to humans. As argued by notable environmental sociologist John Bellamy Foster, the predecessor to modern environmental sociology is Marx's analysis of the metabolic rift, which influenced contemporary thought on sustainability. Environmental sociology is often interdisciplinary and overlaps with the sociology of risk, rural sociology and the sociology of disaster.

Human ecology

Human ecology deals with interdisciplinary study of the relationship between humans and their natural, social, and built environments. In addition to Environmental sociology, this field overlaps with architectural sociology, urban sociology, and to some extent visual sociology. In turn, visual sociology—which is concerned with all visual dimensions of social life—overlaps with media studies in that it utilizes photography, film and other technologies of media.

Family, gender, and sexuality

Family, gender and sexuality form a broad area of inquiry studied in many sub-fields of sociology. The sociology of the family examines the family, as an institution and unit of socialisation, with special concern for the comparatively modern historical emergence of the nuclear family and its distinct gender roles. The notion of "childhood" is also significant. As one of the more basic institutions to which one may apply sociological perspectives, the sociology of the family is a common component on introductory academic curricula. Feminist sociology, on the other hand, is a normative sub-field that observes and critiques the cultural categories of gender and sexuality, particularly with respect to power and inequality.

Health, illness, and the body

The sociology of health and illness focuses on the social effects of, and public attitudes toward, illnesses, diseases, mental health and disabilities. This sub-field also overlaps with gerontology and the study of the ageing process. Medical sociology, by contrast, focuses on the inner-workings of medical organisations and clinical institutions. In Britain, sociology was introduced into the medical curriculum following the Goodenough Report (1944).

Death, dying, bereavement

A subfield of the sociology of health and illness that overlaps with cultural sociology is the study of death, dying and bereavement, sometimes referred to broadly as the sociology of death. This topic is exemplified by the work of Douglas Davies and Michael C. Kearl.

Knowledge and science

The sociology of knowledge is the study of the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises, and of the effects prevailing ideas have on societies. The term first came into widespread use in the 1920s, when a number of German-speaking theorists, most notably Max Scheler, and Karl Mannheim, wrote

extensively on it. With the dominance of functionalism through the middle years of the 20th century, the sociology of knowledge tended to remain on the periphery of mainstream sociological thought.

Peace, war, and conflict

This subfield of sociology studies, broadly, the dynamics of war, conflict resolution, peace movements, war refugees, conflict resolution and military institutions. As a subset of this subfield, military sociology aims toward the systematic study of the military as a social group rather than as an organisation. It is a highly specialized sub-field which examines issues related to service personnel as a distinct group with coerced collective action based on shared interests linked to survival in vocation and combat, with purposes and values that are more defined and narrow than within civil society. Military sociology also concerns civilian-military relations and interactions between other groups or governmental agencies. Topics include the dominant assumptions held by those in the military, changes in military members' willingness to fight, military unionization, military professionalism, the increased utilization of women, the military industrial-academic complex, the military's dependence on research, and the institutional and organizational structure of military.

Political sociology

Historically political sociology concerned the relations between political organisation and society. A typical research question in this area might be: "Why do so few American citizens choose to vote?" In this respect questions of political opinion formation brought about some of the pioneering uses of statistical survey research by Paul Lazarsfeld. A major subfield of political sociology developed in relation to such questions, which draws on comparative history to analyse socio-political trends.

Population and demography

Demographers or sociologists of population study the size, composition and change over time of a given population. Demographers study how these characteristics impact, or are impacted by, various social, economic or political systems. The study of population is also closely related to human ecology and environmental sociology, which studies a population's relationship with the surrounding environment and often overlaps with urban or rural sociology. Researchers in this field may study the movement of populations: transportation, migrations, diaspora, etc., which falls into the subfield known as Mobilities studies and is closely related to human geography. Demographers may also study spread of disease within a given population or epidemiology.

Race and ethnic relations

The sociology of race and of ethnic relations is the area of the discipline that studies the social, political, and economic relations between races and ethnicities at all levels of society. This area encompasses the study of racism, residential segregation, and other complex social processes between different racial and ethnic groups. This research frequently interacts with other areas of sociology such as stratification and social psychology, as well as with postcolonial theory. At the level of political policy, ethnic relations are discussed in terms of either assimilationism or multiculturalism. Anti-racism forms another style of policy, particularly popular in the 1960s and 70s.

Religion

The sociology of religion concerns the practices, historical backgrounds, developments, universal themes and roles of religion in society. There is particular emphasis on the recurring role of religion in all societies and throughout recorded history. The sociology of religion is distinguished from the philosophy of religion in that sociologists do not set out to assess the validity of religious truth-claims, instead assuming what Peter L. Berger has described as a position of "methodological atheism". It may be said that the modern formal discipline of sociology *began* with the analysis of religion in Durkheim's 1897 study of suicide rates among Roman Catholic and Protestant populations.

Social change and development

The sociology of change and development attempts to understand how societies develop and how they can be changed. Within this field, sociologists often use macro-sociological methods or historical-comparative methods. In contemporary studies of social change, there is overlaps with international development or community development. However, most of the founders of sociology had theories of social change based on their study of history.

20) Sociology of development & Underdevelopment.