

Social Theory

- Sociology is rooted in questions about social change, social conflict, and social problems brought on by industrialization and urbanization
- Early sociologists continue to influence contemporary sociology
- Theories like Marxism, functionalism, symbolic interaction, etc.

Early Theorists

- Auguste Comte
 - French philosopher who coined the term "sociology"
 - Father of sociology
 - Interested in studying people
 - How do societies overcome chaos? Scientific knowledge can be used to improve people's lives
- Emile Durkheim
 - Used scientific principles and methods to study social facts- the aspects of social life that shape our actions as individuals
 - Examples of social facts: institutions, statuses, roles, laws, beliefs, population distribution, urbanization(people moving from rural to urban centers), etc.
 - **Organic solidarity**- comes from the interdependence of society's different parts and shared values (what holds us together)
 - **Mechanical solidarity**- you join together out of a common interest
 - **organic solidarity**- physical composition of the each part of the body (ex.the heart cannot survive without the brain.) tighter bond than mechanical
 - Study of suicide examined the **anomie**(Norm-lessness, sense of chaos within and individual) that comes when **social constraints** break down during periods of rapid social change
- Karl Marx
 - In his **materialist conception of history**, the driving force for social change and the source of conflict in society is economics
 - Things change in society based on economics
 - Conflict brought on by the exploitation of the poor by the rich under **capitalism** will bring social change
 - Bourgeoisie-the top dog; own the factories
 - proletariat-work in the factories
- Max Weber
 - Values and ideas drive social change(opposite of marx)

Leah Redd
Sociology 205
September 4, 2013

- o Christian beliefs led to capitalism
- o Functionalism (like Durkheim)
- o Conflict theory (like Marx)
- o **Rationalization** of society- social, economic, and cultural life was becoming organized according to principles of efficiency
- o The **bureaucracy**- a new, rational form of social organization
- o "The iron cage"- you come become trapped to where you specialize each task to the point to where you cannot do much at all.
- Harriet Martineau
 - o Translated Comte's writings to English
 - o Abolitionist and women's movements
 - o Expanded scope of sociological research to include neglected institutions
- W.E.B. Du Bois
 - o First African American to graduate from Harvard
 - o Known for "double consciousness"
 - o Argued that "the color line" persisted after slavery
 - o Connected race to social and economic stratification
 - o Advocate of social reform

Major Paradigms

- Paradigm?
 - o Theoretical framework within which social researchers work
 - o Basic stance to view society
 - o Theoretical approach
- 3 MAJOR PARADIGMS
 - o Functionalism
 - o Conflict
 - o Symbolic Interaction
- Functionalism
 - o Sometimes known as "Consensus" perspective
 - o Society is made up of parts that carry out functions that contribute to the whole
 - Views society as a system of interrelated parts
 - o Focuses on the entire system (Macro perspective)
 - o System seeks to maintain balance (change is not impossible, it just requires a lot of effort to balance out)
 - o Durkheim, Parsons, Merton
 - o QUESTIONS??
 - What components compose society?
 - How do components relate to one another?
 - What keeps the system in balance?
 - What are the expected and unexpected consequences of an event?

Leah Redd
Sociology 205
September 4, 2013

- Are the needs of the system being fulfilled?
- Conflict Perspective
 - o Views society as in a constant struggle over limited power, finite, and resources
 - o Individuals and groups use power to promote their interests
 - o **Power** is exerted through force, rules, laws, and **ideologies**
 - o Race, Class, Gender, Age, Religion
 - o Macro approach
 - o Karl Marx & Capitalism
 - o How classes get power, how they keep the power, & how they use the power
 - o QUESTIONS??
 - How are wealth, power, opportunities, and resources divided within society?
 - How do individuals or groups maintain their wealth and power?
 - How do individuals thrive?
 - o Symbolic Interaction
 - Micro Approach - focused on the individual
 - Focuses on how individuals interact and how that impacts behavior
 - Exchange of **symbols** through social interaction
 - Interactions with other teach individuals how to act, what to say, and what to think
 - Example: HOWDY! ← Symbol here that creates an interaction
 - Mead, Goffman, Becker
 - QUESTIONS??
 - What influence do individuals have on creation of a social structure?
 - In what manner does social interaction impact human relationships?
 - Do individuals alter their behavior depending on setting?

September 6, 2013

Other paradigms

- Feminist theory
- Exchange theory
- Rational choice theory
- Demographic theories