

Unit Two: Theories of sociology

Theories of Sociology:

Sociology was developed as a way to study and try to understand the changes to society brought on by the Industrial Revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Some of the earliest sociologists thought that societies and individuals' roles in society could be studied using the same scientific methodologies that were used in the natural sciences, while others believed that it was impossible to predict human behavior scientifically, and still others debated the value of such predictions.

Those perspectives continue to be represented within sociology today.

1. Functionalism (Émile Durkheim)

Views society as a system of highly interrelated structures or parts that function or operate together harmoniously.

2. Conflict theories صراع (Karl Marx)

People are basic struggling battling over something. Karl Marx : Who believed that the history of society was one of class struggle صراع.

3. Theoretical Perspectives وجهات النظر

Sociologists develop theories to explain social events, interactions, and patterns. A theory is a proposed explanation of those patterns. **Theories have different scales. Macro-level theories, such as structural functionalism and conflict theory, attempt to explain how societies operate as a whole. Microlevel theories, such as symbolic interactionism, focus on interactions between individuals.**

4. Symbolic interactionism رموز (Herbert Blumer)

A theoretical perspective through which **scholars examine the relationship of individuals within their society by studying their communication (language and symbols).** Which research technique would most likely be used by a symbolic interactionist Participant observation.

- 5. Medical Sociology** Theoretical science consists of a system of hypotheses theories that form the backbone of science such as the theory of social class and disease. What is the relationship between social classes and disease. E.g. the size of the family and its relationship to health and disease family with a large number of children is different from the family with a small number of children in terms of attention and care reflected on health and reduces the likelihood of infection.

The main methods to test theories:

- 1. Surveys:** sometimes referred to public opinion poll, is the widely accepted ways of studying human behavior. Using variables, surveys measure people's attitude towards different matters. Sociology often studies the relationship between a viewpoint and a subject while considering elements like education, age, and gender. Questionnaires are usually given to a controlled group where they will answer either worded or objective type questions. The survey questions also ask about their background and demographic information. Through this method of data gathering, information such as consumer habits, racial discrimination, and other human behavior and activity are provided. In addition, surveys answer issues in the society to have a clear understanding concerning the problems involved.
- 2. Controlled experiments:** some of the experiments are conducted in a laboratory and in small groups. In some cases, a two groups are studied for contrasting and comparing. They want to know the significant difference in the attitudes and behavior of certain groups.

- 3. Filed observation:** information is primarily gathered through observations and talk within the community. During the period of study, the sociologist will participate in societal activities such as political activities, networks, and functions. Field observation gives first-hand information about a group of people, but is least reliable method of testing theories. A fact can be true to community A, but cannot be applied to community B. Additionally, there are also outside factors that may influence the conclusions made.

Sociological research: Sociological research methods may be divided into two broad categories:

- 1. Quantitative designs:** approach social phenomena through quantifiable evidence, and often rely on statistical analysis of many cases (or across intentionally designed treatments in an experiment) to create valid and reliable general claims.
- 2. Qualitative designs:** emphasize understanding of social phenomena through direct observation, communication with participants, or analysis of texts, and may stress contextual and subjective accuracy over generality.

*****Survey tips:**

- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Yields many responses
- Can survey a large sample
- Quantitative data are easy to chart
- Can be time consuming
- Can be difficult to encourage participant response

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- Captures what people think and believe but not necessarily how they behave in real life.

***Field work tips:

- Observation
- Participant observation
- Ethnography
- Case study
- Yields detailed, accurate real-life information
- Time consuming
- Data captures how people behave but not what they think and believe
- Qualitative data is difficult to organize
- Deliberate manipulation of social customs and mores
- Tests cause and effect relationships
- Hawthorne Effect
- Ethical concerns about people's wellbeing