Thoroughly revised and updated, the third edition of an *Introduction to Sociological Theory* offers an in-depth introduction to classical and contemporary theories, and demonstrates their relevance to offer a clear understanding of a broad range of contemporary issues and topics. As with the previous editions, the text continues to combine carefully selected primary quotations from a broad range of theorists with extensive discussion and illustrative examples from a diverse range of countries, helpful timelines of important and thematically relevant events, biographical notes, contemporary topic boxes, analytical photos, and chapter glossaries.

The text addresses topics such as the persistence of economic and social inequality, Brexit, post-truth society, same-sex marriage, digital surveillance and the on-demand gig economy. Written in an engaging style, *Introduction to Sociological Theory* offers a comprehensive introduction to the pluralistic breadth and wide-ranging applicability of sociological theory.

Written for undergraduate courses in contemporary and classical sociological theory, the third edition of an *Introduction to Sociological Theory* continues to provide a comprehensive, in-depth, and empirically engaging, introduction to sociological theory.

MICHELE DILLON, PhD, is Professor of Sociology at the University of New Hampshire, USA and has many years of experience teaching sociological theory to undergraduate and graduate students. She has authored five books on religion and social change, many articles and book chapters and is the editor of a handbook.

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DILLON

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

THIRD EDITION

MICHELE DILLON

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

THEORISTS, CONCEPTS, AND THEIR APPLICABILITY TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

THIRD EDITION

WILEY Blackwell

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

As you read through the individual chapters in this book, you will find the following features designed to help you to develop a clear understanding of sociological theory and to apply it to everyday life.

Key Concepts Each chapter opens with a list of its key concepts, presented in the order in which they appear in the chapter. They are printed in blue when they first appear in the text, and are defined in the glossaries at the end of each chapter and at the end of the book.

Chapter Menu A menu gives you the main headings of the chapter that follows.

Biographical Note These provide background information on the main theorists discussed in the chapter. Their names are given in bold when they first appear in the chapter.

Theorists' Writings Each of the first three chapters has a chronological list of the major writings of the theorists discussed: Marx, Durkheim, and Weber.

Timelines Where a historical framework will aid your understanding of the chapter, timelines list major events with their dates.

Conceptual Boxes These introduce additional theoretical ideas or summarize points relevant to the chapter.

Contemporary Topical Applications These features draw on information reported in the news about an event or issue that has particular salience for the concepts being discussed in the chapter. The stories highlight how particular everyday events can be used to illustrate or probe larger social processes.

Summary The text of the chapter is summarized in a final paragraph or two.

Points to Remember These list in bullet note form the main learning points of the chapter.

Glossary At the end of each chapter its key concepts are listed again, this time in alphabetical order, and defined. The glossary at the end of the book combines the end-of-chapter glossaries to define all the key concepts covered in the book.

Questions for Review At the end of each chapter, questions are listed that prompt you to discuss some of the overarching points of the chapter.

ABOUT THE WEBSITE

The *Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and Their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century* companion website contains a range of resources created by the author for instructors teaching this book in university courses. Features include:

- Instructor's manual for each chapter, including
  - Note to the Instructor
  - News Resources that can be used to stimulate classroom discussion
  - Essay Assignment Questions
  - Exam Short Answer Questions
  - Multiple choice questions (and answers)
- PowerPoint teaching slides with contemporary analytical photographs and video links
- List of complementary primary readings
- Quote Bank

Instructors can access these resources at www.wiley.com/go/dillon

INTRODUCTION

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY: A VIBRANT, LIVING TRADITION

KEY CONCEPTS

sociological theory	classical theory	scientific reasoning
concepts	canon	empiricism
conceptual frameworks	contemporary theory	positivist
pluralistic	Enlightenment	objectivity
macro	democracy	interpretive understanding
social structures	reason	emancipatory knowledge
micro	rationality	double-consciousness
culture	inalienable rights	
culture	utilitarianism	

CHAPTER MENU

Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and Their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century, Third Edition. Michele Dillon.

Companion website: www.wiley.com/go/dillon

Timeline I.1 Major pre-Enlightenment influences, and events from the Enlightenment to the establishment of sociology

500 BC–AD 999 The Classical World 1000–1490 The Feudal Age 1490–1664 The Age of Discovery	
1599	Francis Bacon, *Essays*
1620	English Pilgrims arrive at Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts
1633	Galileo summoned by the Inquisition to defend his theory that the earth moves around the sun
1636	Harvard College founded
1637	René Descartes, "I think, therefore, I am"
1665–1774 The Enlightenment	
1670	Blaise Pascal, "Man is only a reed, the weakest thing in nature; but he is a thinking reed"
1687	Isaac Newton explains laws of motion and theories of gravitation
1689	John Locke, *On Civil Government*
1702	Cambridge University establishes faculty chairs in the sciences
1733	Voltaire praises British liberalism
1752	Benjamin Franklin invents a lightning conductor; demonstrates the identity of lightning and electricity
1762	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*
1771	The right to report parliamentary debates established in Britain
1775–1814 The Age of Revolution	
1775	American War of Independence; battles of Lexington and Concord (Massachusetts)
1776	British troops evacuate Boston; Declaration of Independence
1776	Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*
1788	Bread riots in France

1789	Fall of the Bastille; beginning of the French Revolution; new French Constituent Assembly abolishes feudal rights and privileges
1791	Bill of Rights in America; first 10 amendments to the US Constitution
1792	Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
1796	Freedom of the press established in France
1805	First factory to be lit by gaslight (in Manchester, England)
1807	Air pump developed for use in mines
1813	Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
1823	Jeremy Bentham, utilitarianism
1831	John Stuart Mill, *The Spirit of the Age*
1835–1840	Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
1837	Harriet Martineau, *Society in America*
1839	Comte gives sociology its name
1855	Harriet Martineau translates Comte's *Positive Philosophy*
1859	Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (modern evolutionary theory)
1861–1865	American Civil War, the South (Confederates) versus the North (Union)
1865	US president Abraham Lincoln assassinated
1865	Thirteenth amendment to the US Constitution, abolishing slavery

Welcome to **sociological theory**. Theory, by definition, is abstract. This book illustrates the richness of sociological theory by emphasizing how its breadth of **concepts** or analytical ideas have practical application and explanatory relevance to daily life. It will introduce you to the major theorists whose writings and **conceptual frameworks** inform sociological thinking. It will equip you with the theoretical vocabulary necessary to appreciate the range of perspectives found in sociological theory. It will give you confidence to apply these ideas to the many sociological topics you study (e.g., inequality, crime, medical sociology, race, political sociology, family, gender, sexuality, culture, religion, community, globalization, etc.) and help you to think analytically about the many occurrences in daily life far beyond the classroom.

Topic I.1 Hotel rooms get plusher, adding to maids' injuries

"Some call it the 'amenities arms race,' some 'the battle of the beds.' It is a competition in which the nation's premier hotels are trying to have their accommodations resemble royal bedrooms. Superthick mattresses, plush duvets and decorative bed skirts have been added, and five pillows rather than the pedestrian three now rest on a king-size bed. Hilton markets these rooms as Suite Dreams, while Westin boasts of its heavenly beds. The beds may mean sweet dreams to hotel guests, but they mean pain to many of the nation's 350,000 hotel housekeepers. Several new studies [by unions and health scientists] have found that thousands of housekeepers are suffering arm,

shoulder, and lower-back injuries … it is so strenuous a job that [housekeepers have] a higher risk of back disorders than autoworkers who assemble car doors … The problem, housekeepers say, is not just a heavier mattress, but having to rush because they are assigned the same number of rooms as before while being required to deal with far more per room: more pillows, more sheets, more amenities like bathrobes to hang up and coffee pots to wash. Ms. Reyes [a hotel housekeeper] complained that some days she must make 25 double beds, a task that entails taking off, and putting on, 100 pillowcases … Housekeepers who earn $17,300 a year on average, invariably stoop over to lift mattresses, some of which are only 14 inches off the floor. They frequently twist their backs as they tuck in the sheets, often three of them rather than the two of yesteryear. Since it can take 10 to 12 minutes a bed, a housekeeper who makes 25 beds a day frequently spends four to five hours on the task, lifting mattresses 150 to 200 times … [A Hilton spokesman] said the company had increased training to try to minimize harm to housekeepers … [and to ease] workloads … [and said that the unions are] pushing the injury issue as a smoke screen, largely to pressure hotel companies to agree to procedures making it easier to unionize workers."

Steven Greenhouse, "Hotel Rooms Get Plusher, Adding to Maids' Injuries." *New York Times* (April 21, 2006).

ANALYZING EVERYDAY SOCIAL LIFE

This short excerpt (Topic I.1) on housekeepers and hotel mattresses provides a single snapshot of contemporary society, but its elements can be used to highlight the different ways that sociological theorists approach the study of society. Karl Marx (1818–1883), a towering figure in the analysis of modern capitalism (see chapter 1), would focus on the forces of economic inequality and exploitation that underlie hotel maids' injuries. Marx's theory would highlight the extent to which capitalist pursuit of profit structures the service production process: Corporate executives develop efficient work practices that dictate how maids will work, and they also determine the low wage paid for such work. Ultimately, Marx would say, the pursuit of profit consolidates the economic or class inequality that is part and parcel of capitalism (see also Romero 1992; Sherman 2007). You might suggest that if the maids are unhappy, they should leave the hotel. But if they leave, what are their options? Very limited, Marx would respond. Because hotel maids (and other workers) have to live, they need money in order to survive (especially in a "welfare-to-work" society in which there is very little government economic support available to those who are unemployed long term). Therefore, although the maids are free to leave a particular hotel they are not free to withhold labor from every hotel – they must work someplace. Hence wage-workers must sell their labor on the job market, even if what they receive in exchange for their labor will always be significantly less than the profit the capitalist will make from their work. Although hotel owners must pay the many costs associated with the upkeep and running of a hotel, a large gap remains between the hotel maids' minimum wage (and waitresses, etc.; approx. $7 an hour) and the price paid by hotel guests for a one-night stay in the luxury hotel room ($399 and upwards) the maids clean.

Further, the competitive nature of capitalism and the economic competition between hotels mean that the profit-driven working conditions in one luxury hotel will not vary much from those in another. If a hotel company were to lose "the battle of the beds" in the competition for affluent customers, a decline in the hotel's profit may spell its demise. Low wages and occupational injuries, therefore, are what maids can expect, regardless of the particular hotel (whether the Westin or the Hilton). Moreover, if hotel maids aren't able to work as a result of their injuries, there will always be others waiting to take

their place; one of the effects of globalization (a topic discussed in chapter 14) is to increase the competition between low-wage workers whose pool is expanded by the increasing numbers of immigrant and migrant workers available to the low-paying service industries (e.g., Chen 2015; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Sassen 2007).

In focusing on the profit and economic relations within capitalist societies, Marx also alerts us to how ideology, that is, a society's taken-for-granted ideas about work, achievement, freedom, consumption, luxury, etc., determines how we explain and justify all sorts of social phenomena, whether social inequality, the Olympic Games, or the latest consumer fad. Marx – and more recent theorists influenced partly by Marx, such as Critical Theorists (see chapter 5) – would argue that the ideology of freedom – typically used to denote political freedom and democracy – has in today's world become the freedom to shop. We all (more or less) want the plush consumer lifestyle that we associate with luxury hotels, a pursuit promoted by the (globalizing) capitalist class, and especially by advertising, mass media, and pop culture industries. Thus the popularity of, for example, "Louie," a Blood Raw/Young Jeezy song celebrating Louis Vuitton merchandise. Similarly, Kanye West's "Flashing Lights" reminds us that consumption trumps everything else. Indeed, Marx would argue that it is largely because hotel housekeepers (and their families and neighbors) buy into the allure of consumption that they consent to work as hard as they do, despite their injuries, and without fully realizing or acknowledging the inequality of the capitalist system with its ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor.

Max Weber (1864–1920) (his last name is pronounced *vayber*), also offers an analysis of modern capitalism. But unlike Marx, he orients us to the various subjective motivations and meanings that lead social actors – either individually, or collectively as workers, hotel companies, trade unions, religious organizations, states, or transnational alliances (e.g., the European Union [EU]) – to behave as they do (see chapter 3). Weber, like Marx, highlights strategic or instrumental interests among other motivating forces underlying social behavior. In particular, hotel owners and unions pursue their own economic and political interests by making cost–benefit assessments of which courses of action are the most expedient given the respective objectives of each group. Hotel companies, for example, are suspicious of the union's objectives beyond the specific issue of housekeeper injuries: The companies are concerned that their strategic interests (in making money, hiring particular workers, and competing with other hotel chains) will be undermined if their work force is unionized. And union leaders, too, are concerned if they think that workers can garner a good wage deal without the union's intervention. Not surprisingly, as some contemporary theorists highlight (e.g., Ralph Dahrendorf; see chapter 6), intergroup conflict is common in democratic societies as various economic and other interest groups compete for greater recognition of their respective agendas.

Life, however, is not all about economic and strategic interests. One of Weber's theoretical achievements was to demonstrate that values and beliefs also matter. Values orient social action, a point subsequently emphasized by Talcott Parsons, an American theorist who was highly influential from the 1940s to the 1980s in shaping sociological thinking and research (see chapter 4). Individuals, groups, organizations, and whole countries are motivated by values – by commitments to particular understandings of friendship, family, patriotism, environmental sustainability, education, religion, etc. Subjective values, such as commitment to their family and providing for their children, may explain why hotel housekeepers work as hard as they do; indeed many immigrant women leave their children and families in their home country while they work abroad earning money to send home so their children can have a more economically secure life (e.g., England 2005; Sassen 2007). The strong cultural value of individualism in the US, for example, also helps to explain why labor unions have a much harder time gaining members and wielding influence in the US than in Western European countries such as the UK, Ireland, and France. The historical-cultural influence of Protestantism in the US and its emphasis on self-reliance and individual responsibility means that Americans tend to believe that

being poor is largely an individual's own responsibility (and a sign of moral weakness), a belief that impedes the expansion of state-funded social welfare programs.

As recognized by both Marx and Weber, differences in economic resources are a major source of inequality (or of stratification) in society, determining individuals' and groups' rankings relative to one another (e.g., upper-class, middle-class, lower-class strata). Additionally, Weber, unlike Marx, argues that social inequality is not only based on differences in income but also associated with differences in lifestyle or social status. Weber and contemporary theorists influenced by his conceptualization of the multiple sources of inequality – such as Pierre Bourdieu (see chapter 13) – argue that individuals and groups acquire particular habits that demonstrate and solidify social class differences. Such differences are evident not only between the upper and lower classes but also between those who are closely aligned economically. This helps to explain why affluent people stay in premier rather than economy hotels and why some affluent people prefer the Ritz Carlton to the Westin. For similar status reasons, some women will spend hundreds of dollars on a Louis Vuitton handbag rather than buy a cheaper, though equally functional one by Coach.

The cultural goals (e.g., consumption, economic success) affirmed in society are not always readily attainable. Children who grow up in poor neighborhoods with underfunded schools are disadvantaged by their limited access to the social institutions (e.g., school) that provide the culturally approved means or pathways to academic, occupational, and economic success (e.g., MacLeod 2008). Thus, as the American sociologist Robert Merton (see chapter 4) shows, society creates deviance (e.g., stealing) as a result of the mismatch between cultural goals (e.g., consumer lifestyle) and blocked access to the acceptable institutional means to attain those goals.

Deviance is a social fact and is "normal" – as classical theorist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) emphasizes, that is, normal because it comes from society and exists in all societies as indicated by crime rates. Yet "too much" deviance (or crime) may threaten the social order. Social order and cohesion are Durkheim's core theoretical preoccupation (see chapter 2). He is basically interested in what knits society together, that is, what binds and ties individuals into society. Therefore, rather than focusing on what Marx, for example, would see as exploitation, Durkheim would highlight the social interdependence suggested in our story of the hotel maids. For Durkheim, hotel owners, workers, guests, unions, and occupational health scientists are all part of the social collectivity, a collectivity whose effective functioning is dependent on all doing their part in the social order. In like manner, Talcott Parsons sees social institutions such as the economy, the family, and the political and legal systems as working separately but also interdependently to produce an effectively functioning society (see chapter 4).

Social interdependence for Durkheim is underscored by the fact that without guests, for example, there would be no hotel maids and no hotel owners. This is well understood by people living in seaside towns; business is seasonal and when hotels/restaurants close for the winter, there are fewer work opportunities. Durkheim is not interested in analyzing (unequal) economic relations in the hotel industry or the historical origins of tourism. Rather, what is relevant is how collective social forces (e.g., occupations, hotels, tourism, consumption patterns, and all other social things) shape, constrain, and regulate individual, group, and institutional behavior. In the process, these social forces tie individuals, groups, and institutions into interdependent social relationships.

Tipping hotel maids and restaurant servers is not required by law. But we are nudged into doing so – even though no one other than the maid can tell whether or not you left money for her in the hotel room – by the strong collective force of social custom. As Durkheim would stress, all social customs (and laws) both come from society and function to affirm and bolster the interdependence of social relations. Moreover, as contemporary network theorists demonstrate, even *weak* ties among individuals, among acquaintances who occasionally share information either on Facebook or when they run into each other on the street, are socially beneficial to individuals (in finding a good restaurant, or a

job, etc.) and to enhancing community well-being (e.g., in mobilizing people to participate in neighborhood projects; see chapter 7).

In contrast to Durkheim, exchange theorists such as George Homans and Peter Blau (see chapter 7) emphasize the use value of social exchange. We tip and give gifts and invite friends to dinner with the expectation that this will yield some specific return to us. Therefore, when I tip the hotel maid even though I don't expect to return to that hotel (and with the tip-related expectation of better service), I must be getting something in return, such as the validation of my own status relative to the maid – perhaps found in the slight nod of the head or smile when passing the maid and her cart in the corridor. For exchange theorists, exchange relationships are not just those based on money (as for Marx). They are also based on the exchange of status (see also Bourdieu, chapter 13), information, friendship, advice, housework, political influence, etc., and the power imbalances in relationships (e.g., between friends, spouses, governments, etc.) that they reflect and perpetuate. In all relationships, rational choice theorists contend, we assess what we get and what to give on the basis of its probable use value to us as individuals (i.e., resource maximization; see chapter 7).

So far I have not commented on the fact that the hotel worker quoted in our excerpt is a woman. Indeed, "maid" is a gendered word, that is, used to denote a woman and "women's work." Male domestic servants, by contrast, are referred to in more elegant language as "butlers." They, as depicted in *Downton Abbey*, have a higher status and more independence even as they are, nonetheless, at the beck and call of their masters/superiors. Today, despite advances in women's equality, women comprise a disproportionate share of low-wage service workers. Feminist standpoint theorists such as Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins draw attention women's inequality (see chapter 10). In particular, they highlight the day-in/day-out routines and experiences of women who make 25 beds a day, and who, after the paid workday ends, make the beds and cook dinner and do many other chores for their families. Feminist theorists also underscore that women's chores, experiences, and opportunities are typically different from men's, and when similar, women's work is rewarded very differently than men's work (at work and at home); women continue, for example, to remain on the margins of the decision-making power elites in society (see C. Wright Mills; see chapter 6).

The phenomenological tradition (see chapter 9) emphasizes the significance of ordinary everyday knowledge in defining individuals' concrete "here-and-now" social realities. Partly influenced by phenomenology, feminist standpoint theorists (e.g., Smith) underscore how the knowledge deriving from women's everyday experiences is very different from the knowledge that is recognized as the legitimate, objective knowledge in society. Whether in politics, in corporate offices, in law courts, or even among sociologists, the knowledge that comes from women's experiences – as mothers, homemakers, and in the "man-made" world of work and public life – tends to be demeaned. It does not fit well with the male-centered (see chapter 10) and indeed heterosexist bias (see chapter 11) that characterizes sociology and other established sources of knowledge.

Feminist theorists (e.g., Collins), along with race theorists (see chapter 12) and globalization scholars (see chapter 14), would also highlight that it is not just women but particular types of women who tend to be employed in the low-wage service sector, namely, women of minority racial and ethnic background, many of whom are immigrants. Many feminist scholars, therefore (e.g., Collins), focus on exploring how the multiple intersecting experiences of inequality – of gender, race, class, immigration, sexuality, etc. – shape the life chances and experiences of women. Feminist and postcolonial theorists (e.g., Paul Gilroy; see chapter 12) further attend to how advertising and mass media promote particular cultures of femininity and masculinity conveying gender- and race-based messages that perpetuate social inequality.

Feminist scholars also draw attention to the fact that a lot of women's work is not just physical body work (e.g., lifting heavy mattresses) but emotion work, whether in mothering (e.g., Chodorow 1978), or as work for pay (e.g., Arlie Hochschild; see chapter 10). Hotel housekeepers do mostly "backstage"

work (as elaborated by Erving Goffman; see chapter 8) – that is, cleaning toilets, making beds, etc. – preparing bedrooms whose presentation will impress guests and their supervisors. Hotel housekeepers have fewer opportunities than receptionists and waitresses to smile at guests. But it is women far more than men who are expected to smile – at home, at work, and *as* work – irrespective of body pain or of how they are actually feeling (e.g., Hochschild; see chapter 10). This is what is entailed in "doing gender," as ethnomethodologists would argue (see chapter 9) – the everyday procedures or methods that women use on an ongoing basis to establish their credibility as women (as mothers, wives, teachers, colleagues, friends, etc.) in a society where women are still unequal relative to men. Women in Western society have achieved great advances in equality. Yet gender-specific roles and role expectations (see Parsons; chapter 4), are still powerful forces, a point underscored by controversies over gender inequities and stereotyping at Google and other high-tech companies (see chapter 4, Topic 4.3); and more generally by the fact that in 2016 women earned 80.5 percent of the wages of men for comparable work (Leubsdorf 2017). Moreover, as Paula England's research shows women predominate in caregiving occupations (England 2005) and working wives do more housework than their husbands (Bittman et al. 2003). And there are gender-subordinated ways of self-presentation; in advertisements, for example, women still smile up at men, and men smile down at women, thus reaffirming the gender-role hierarchy (see Goffman; chapter 8). This is a social order that, when disrupted by a successful woman business executive or politician, for example, may provoke negative comments that seek to put them in their (gendered) place; a response that helps illustrate the relative fragility of the collectively produced order that underlies all social life (see Harold Garfinkel; chapter 9).

Although the self-presentation of bodies is a core part of everyday social behavior (underscored by the rising prevalence of cosmetic surgery and dermatology; see Chapter 8), Michel Foucault sees the body more generally as a targeted object of social control. For Foucault, all social institutions – the church, the prison, the school, the clinic, the government – have made control of the body, what bodies do, and what bodies are allowed to do with other bodies (e.g., sexual practices) a primary objective, the results of which inform what we regard as "normal" sexuality (see chapter 11). Just think, for example, of the public controversies about shared gender-neutral bathrooms; these debates convey assumptions about the nature of gender, sexuality, bodies, and what particular bodies do and can (or should) do.

Finally, the hotel excerpt (see Topic I.1) also points to something that many sociologists emphasize: facts (i.e., the data) do not speak for themselves. Regardless of whether the facts are presented by Twitter users, media reporters, business leaders, unions, scientists, or academics, their presentation and interpretation will depend on the purpose for which they are being used. Thus, the occupational injury data referenced in our hotel excerpt are contested by those (unions and hotel companies) who have a particular interest in the meaning and implications of those facts. Whereas some see the maids' annual income of $17,300 as clear evidence of exploitation (e.g., Marx), others construe it as a sign of great job opportunities in the US compared, let's say, to Guatemala, where an average woman's wage might be $2,000 a year. Yet other researchers might consider the issue of wages less relevant given that it is not money but an individual's social ties and community support, for example, that buffer against despair and suicide (e.g., Durkheim; chapter 2).

The same objective facts, therefore, may be interpreted differently depending on the political context in which they are being discussed. Importantly too, the interpretation of facts depends on the theoretical lens used. Different theorists make different assumptions and prompt us to focus on some things and not others, and they may therefore interpret the same apparent reality quite differently. Thus theorists such as Jean Baudrillard, for example, would argue that luxury hotels comprise not an authentic reality but an artificial and glossy "hyperreality" in which ordinary, everyday routines (e.g., eating a hot dog) are made into lavish, Disney-like fantasies and spectacles (see chapter 15). Other

theorists emphasize a "risk society" confronting individuals and society as a whole with insecurities and dilemmas that are not easily resolved (e.g., Beck; Giddens, see chapter 15).

IMMERSION IN THEORY

By getting to know the array of theorists and ideas that comprises sociological theory, you will develop the competence to thoughtfully analyze the complexity of social life. Theoretical immersion will enable you to adopt an analytical attitude – to see beyond your own experiences and impressions in ways that help you recognize how social patterns and forces shape the phenomena characterizing our world. One of the advantages of knowing sociological theory is that it allows us to try to make sense of virtually any aspect of social behavior we might be interested in. Although different theorists tend to emphasize different aspects of society and social behavior, there is conceptual overlap in their ideas and in the subject matter they address (e.g., economic inequality). Overall, as a body of interrelated analytical ideas, sociological theory provides a **pluralistic** and varied though comprehensive resource by which we can understand and explain social life.

Sociological theory focuses on how **macro**, or large-scale, **social structures** such as capitalism (e.g., the economic structure of the hotel industry); bureaucracies; occupational, gender, political, and racial structures; and migration shape the organization of the social environment; how these structures constrain the choices and opportunities available to any individual, family, or larger collectivity (e.g., a particular social class or gender or geographically located group); and thus how they shape the patterns of social action and interaction that occur. Theorists also pay attention to the **microdynamics** of individual experience (e.g., of particular hotel workers in particular hotels) and interpersonal interaction in and across the diverse contexts of everyday life. Sociological theorists emphasize the constraining force exerted by social structures on individual, group, organizational, and collective behavior, as well as on the **culture**(s) – the strategies of action and the ways of thinking and feeling – in any particular society (or among any particular group, region, or class in society). At the same time, they are attentive to the impact of culture (e.g., ideas, habits, customs, and beliefs) in shaping social structures and institutions (e.g., the economy, law, education, government, religion, family, mass media). Sociological theorists affirm, moreover, the **agency** that individuals exert personally (e.g., voting, choosing an occupation or a spouse) and collectively (e.g., through social movements) in responding to, reworking, creatively resisting, and transforming (highly stable) social structures and social processes (e.g., the gendered character of inequality); though as sociologists we are also highly cognizant of the tension that invariably exists between individual agency and structural and cultural constraints.

CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY THEORY

It is customary in sociology to talk about classical theory and contemporary theory. The term **classical theory** refers primarily to the writings of Karl Marx (1818–1883), Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), and Max Weber (1864–1920). Their writings produced what sociologists acknowledge as the classic or foundational texts in sociology; their ideas constitute the **canon** or body of conceptual knowledge that all sociologists are expected to know. Hence, this book begins with Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, and I give their individual ideas greater elaboration than contemporary successors. Other early sociologists include **Harriet Martineau** (1802–1876) and Georg Simmel (1858–1918) whose important contributions I acknowledge throughout the book. Previously overlooked early theorists, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935), and the black sociologist William E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963), are also recognized for their groundbreaking sociological analyses, especially of gender (see chapter 10) and racial inequality (see chapter 12).

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) was born in England into a relatively prosperous Unitarian family, which suffered a great economic loss upon the death of her father. Under pressure to support herself, but constrained by her own weak health – she was deaf by age 20 – Harriet worked as a dressmaker before succeeding as a writer. As well as translating Comte and writing sociology she also wrote nonfiction. Martineau was popular in London's intellectual and literary circles; she was close, for example, to Charles Darwin (founder of biological evolutionism) and his brother (see Hoecker-Drysdale 1992).

What comprises **contemporary theory** is more open ended. Although called *contemporary*, the theorists who are customarily referred to in this way include sociologists such as Talcott Parsons, Max Horkheimer, C. Wright Mills, George Homans, and Erving Goffman, who wrote in the decades around the mid-twentieth century (1940s–1970s), as well as those whose ideas came to prominence during and after the 1980s such as Dorothy Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, Arlie Hochschild, James Coleman, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Immanuel Wallerstein. Many of these theorists are dead, but like the classical theorists, their ideas are still relevant in helping us understand contemporary society. A survey of current sociology professors asking whom they would categorize and how they would rank the importance of contemporary theorists would undoubtedly produce some variation. Nonetheless, there would be a fairly strong consensus that sociology students should have familiarity with the ideas of all or at least almost all of the theorists included in this book, though depending on a given sociologist's particular areas of interest, some might give greater prominence to the ideas of some theorists over others.

The relevance of particular theorists or of a particular concept will necessarily vary depending on the specific issue you are interested in understanding/explaining. This book aims to provide you with sufficient grounding in sociological theory so that you will be confident in evaluating and applying the theorists/constructs that offer the strongest explanatory framework for the specific questions of interest to you.

SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE ORIGINS OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology is a relatively recent discipline. Unlike philosophy, theology, astronomy, and mathematics, for example, all of which have their origins in medieval times, sociology had its birth in the nineteenth century. Why is this the case? For a scientific discipline to emerge as an independent field of study, certain conditions have to be present. If you think for a moment about what sociology does, you will begin to see that it could not really have emerged any earlier than it did. Sociology is about analyzing (and evaluating and critiquing) social structures. For this to happen, social structures have to be seen as having a *social* existence – they have to be seen as human-social creations and thus amenable to criticism and change – rather than being seen as natural or divinely ordained structures. This may seem like an obvious point, but from a historical perspective it is not so obvious. For many centuries, in both the East and the West, monarchs and emperors were seen as deriving their authority from divine sources. Can you contemplate an imaginary sociologist in the twelfth century trying to analyze the legitimacy or the foundation of such authority?

Just think of the current situation in North Korea or in Syria: political leaders go to great lengths to suppress any challenge to their authority, even refusing entry to foreign aid workers trying to distribute food supplies to famine-threatened or displaced people. Or think of China. Although a major

player in the global economy, it routinely represses individuals' basic rights, including the freedom of speech. In some societies today, the freedom to probe social reality, and to identify the social forces that underlie economic and social inequalities, is severely constrained. You can imagine, then, how even more preposterous it would have seemed in earlier historical eras, when the divine right of kings was accepted as a natural and obvious truth, to suggest that it is social rather than divine or natural forces that structure the order and organization of social life. Thus it is not accidental that the seeds allowing sociology to emerge as a discipline were sown during the eighteenth century, the era of the **Enlightenment** and democratic revolutions in France and America.

Though the eighteenth century was still characterized by a power structure consolidated among relatively few wealthy landowners and members of the nobility, the nineteenth century witnessed a radical shift of power associated with the Industrial Revolution. The rise of large factories and the rapid expansion of trade meant an increase in the middle class and a large migration of people from the rural countryside to the city. These shifts in socioeconomic arrangements accelerated democracy and the power struggles regarding voting rights and the status of the monarchy that dominated the late eighteenth century.

The French Revolution and the storming of the Bastille (July 14, 1789) marked the revolt of the nonprivileged masses of ordinary people against the feudal privileges and rights long enjoyed by the monarchy and the aristocracy in France. It overturned the inherited privileges of the few in favor of equality and freedom for all. It rejected the long-standing practice whereby what family you were born into determined your lifelong status, whether among the monarchy, nobles, and aristocrats or among the peasants. The French Revolution also marked the beginning of the decline of the power of the established Catholic Church in France and its alliance with the monarchy and ushered in the political ethos so important in French and American law, that church and state are separate spheres.

The American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) was motivated by a similar rejection of the inherited authority of kings and queens; indeed, by boldly proclaiming independence from Britain with the Declaration of Independence in 1776 (July 4), the Americans affirmed political equality. These were radical political events. Up until the American and French revolutions, individuals were accustomed to thinking that it was normal and right that they should be subject to a ruling power that was not of their choosing. And for most people, this ruling power was represented by kings and queens. Instead, the revolutionaries argued, the authority of government leaders should derive from the will of the people; hence the opening line in the US Constitution: "We the People …"

THE ENLIGHTENMENT: THE ELEVATION OF REASON, DEMOCRACY, AND SCIENCE

The ideas that American and French revolutionaries had about the will of the people, and the authority of **democracy** over monarchy, came from Enlightenment thought (e.g., Ham 1999, p. 856). Although Enlightenment thinkers (e.g., Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Thomas Jefferson) came from different countries and different family backgrounds and wrote about different things, they all emphasized the importance of **reason** *and* **rationality**. Enlightenment writers argued that reason was the individual's naturally endowed gift; that each of us, by virtue of being human, possesses the innate ability to think or to reason about things and about ourselves. Reason gives the individual **inalienable rights** (human rights) that no external authority (e.g., a monarch, the church, the state) can strip away. In the Enlightenment view, therefore, individuals should use reason to determine their destiny and to achieve the political freedom and social progress worthy of their humanity. For Enlightenment philosophers, reason not only allows but *requires* humankind to "see the light" and thus to move away from reliance on the nonrational explanations represented by religion, myth, and tradition.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Given the innate human ability to reflect on and reason about things, Enlightenment thinkers argued that humans should be able to use reason to govern themselves as individuals and in their relations with others. In this view, collective life (i.e., society and its governance) should be based on principles of reason rather than deference to nonrational forces such as those exemplified by the traditional power of the monarchy. This principle may seem obvious – it is, after all, the core principle of democratic societies. It is not self-evident, however, how society ought to protect and support individual freedom while simultaneously bolstering the well-being of society as a whole. The complex relation of the individual to society is an underlying theme of both classical and contemporary sociology. Sociologists examine the autonomy of the individual in relation to social institutions (e.g., the economy, education, law, marriage, etc.), social relationships, and other social forces (e.g., sexism, immigration, racism, globalization, heteronormativity, etc.).

Individual rights

Prior to the establishment of sociology, early political theorists debated the issue of individual rights vis-à-vis the state and society.[1] The seventeenth-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) believed that individuals are necessarily selfish and, if left to their own devices, would produce social chaos and disorder. The Hobbesian view is well depicted in William Golding's novel *The Lord of the Flies*, where a group of adolescents, shipwrecked on a desert island, create a society full of viciousness and mayhem. Hobbes used his view of human nature as brutish to argue in favor of a strong monarch who would have very few limits on his power to control individuals; this view sat well with monarchical feudal Europe.

Hobbes's view contrasts with that of John Locke (1632–1704), another English philosopher, writing less than 100 years after Hobbes. According to Locke, humans are born basically good and, therefore, they should not have to surrender their rights to a strong monarch in order to survive. Rather, Locke argued, individuals yield certain rights to, or make a contract with, a government that is responsible to them and that performs functions that maintain social order (e.g., regulating crimes against private property). This view of the protective role of the state fitted well with the growing wealth and power of the English middle classes resulting from the Industrial Revolution (see Smelser 1959).

Utilitarianism

Another important strand in Locke's philosophy was **utilitarianism**. This thesis argues that rational, self-determining individuals act on their own rational self-interests and by doing so, they simultaneously ensure their own individual well-being and that of society as a whole. If individuals can be trusted to make decisions that are useful to advancing their own self-interests, then by extension, the government does not need to intervene and regulate human-social behavior. These ideas, often referred to as liberal enlightenment thought, were also expressed by Adam Smith (1723–1790), the eighteenth-century Scottish economist who emphasized the self-interested nature of individual economic exchange. Similarly, too, English philosophers John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) and Harriet Taylor Mill (1807–1858) advocated an understanding of society based on self-interested action. Both

Mills believed that women should have the right to vote not only as a way to maximize their own particular self-interests but also to constrain men's self-interests. (Self-interest is a prominent theme in many political and economic debates today, and in sociological theorizing emphasizing exchange and resource maximization behavior; see chapter 7.)

Figure I.1 With social progress comes a preoccupation with social order. Source: Author.

Social contract

The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) focused on the larger community rather than individual self-interests. He argued that the best way to regulate individuals' different interests was through the voluntary coming together of individuals as citizens committed to the common good. He envisioned individuals adhering to a social contract – principles about the collective political life of society as a civic community – that gave priority to the good of the whole community rather than to advancing particular self-interests. Of course, what constitutes the common good is itself something that is highly contested today. On any issue, questions regarding what rights and whose rights to favor are necessarily complicated. Reasonable solutions tend to be those that aim for some sort of balance among competing interests and that work in practice toward producing social consensus.

Socially situating the individual

Sociological theory fully affirms the Enlightenment view of individual rationality and the related belief that political and social structures emerge from society rather than being divinely prescribed. At the same time, sociologists depart from the Enlightenment emphasis that the self-determining, rational individual alone is largely responsible for his or her destiny. Sociologists emphasize that although individuals have free will, their behavior in society is not freely determined by them alone. Rather, it is shaped and constrained by social structures and by how particular norms and ideas get structured into everyday ways of thinking about and doing things. In other words, the sociological lens frames the individual within their social context, that is, the social environment that always and necessarily surrounds, envelops, and is acted on by the individual. Sociologists thus examine how particular social circumstances and forms of social organization produce particular social outcomes.

SCIENTIFIC REASONING

Enlightenment thinking, as I have highlighted, brought recognition to the human-social origins of political structures. Another corollary of its emphasis on human rationality was the elevation of science – **scientific reasoning** – as the canon of truth, that is, as the only valid explanatory logic in a

modern society. Like the idea of democracy, the Enlightenment affirmation of scientific reason was also grounded in the work of earlier philosophers. One particularly important influence was the emphasis placed on **empiricism** by Francis Bacon (1561–1626) and other British philosophers (including Locke and David Hume, 1711–1776). Empiricism gives primacy to observation and experience rather than abstract reasoning. It maintains that knowledge based on scientific data-gathering methods is the only knowledge that matters. In this view, scientific principles and scientific explanations have a necessary superiority over the use of any other type of argument including appeals, for example, to nonrational arguments based on tradition, religious faith, or some superstition. Scientific reasoning requires visible, demonstrated evidence or positive proof that something exists or happened and that *x* causes *y*, or that *x* offers a reasonable explanation as to why *y* occurred or is likely to happen.

These principles of scientific reasoning are at the core of modernity, and they may seem somewhat obvious. But only 400 years ago Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), an Italian priest and philosopher, was sentenced to death, in part for advocating that the sun (rather than the earth) is the center of our planetary system. Copernicus (1473–1543) and Galileo (1564–1642) had to recant similar views in order to escape censure by the Catholic Church. It was not that Galileo was led astray by being a bad scientist or a poor empiricist. He was, after all, the inventor of the telescope, and by pointing it at the moon and showing the moon's craters, he was able to disprove the erroneous belief – held since the time of Socrates and the ancient Greeks – that heavenly bodies (planets, moons) were simply well-polished crystal balls (Feyerabend 1979). Galileo got into trouble because he dared to challenge beliefs that were held as core truths grounded in a religiously based worldview that was accepted as being beyond empirical refutation. The conflict between religion and science did not end with the Enlightenment, as highlighted by public debates over evolution and creationism in the US, for example, and in Turkey (where the government in 2017 prohibited the teaching of evolution in high school). In any event, our contemporary view of science as being able to refute nonempirically grounded beliefs is a relatively new development (and not without controversy, even today; see Topic I.2).

In sum, the Enlightenment was of critical importance for sociology. Its emphasis on reason meant that reason could be applied not only to reflect about the self but also to reflect about and study the self in society, and the social structures that characterize any given society. Further, by emphasizing the acquisition of knowledge through scientific empirical reasoning, it opened up a unique place for what would come to be defined as sociology. Sociology was envisioned as a discipline that would provide a reasoned, scientific analysis of social life: it would illuminate the impact of social forces on societal processes, thus displacing the pre-Enlightenment view that society was divinely ordained.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AS SCIENCE: AUGUSTE COMTE AND HARRIET MARTINEAU

The Enlightenment's affirmation of scientific rationality, and the notion of social authority derived from a social contract among individuals, paved the way for the emergence of sociology as an intellectual discipline. **Auguste Comte** (1798–1857), the figure most associated with the initial establishment of sociology, embraced the Enlightenment's scientific approach and adapted it to the study of human society. Comte was a French philosopher and truly a child of the Enlightenment. He believed that a science of society was not only possible but necessary to social progress.

Topic I.2 "Post-truth" society, and what to call untruths

The process of gathering and analyzing data, and inferences about what the data mean and how they should be understood, are open to different approaches. But the truth uncovered – what the facts or the data show – is accepted as impartial, evidence-based truth. Evidence-based truth is accepted unless subsequently proven false by a changing social reality and/or a new scientific discovery that may temper the known facts; we thus say that science, including social research, is an inductive, empirically grounded process.

For years before he himself ran for political office, Donald Trump frequently asserted that Barack Obama was not born in America (though he was: in Hawaii on August 4, 1961). Obama was dogged by this false accusation, one that was not denounced as false by other leading Republicans, and it continued even though he released his birth certificate demonstrating proof of his US birth. Trump's penchant for "uttering untruths" was a routine part of his own presidential campaign and pervaded his presidency from his inauguration onwards, so much so that amid the whirls of misinformation, the notion of **post-truth society** gained currency. Among other falsehoods, Trump and his senior staff repeatedly overstated the size of the crowd at his inauguration even though various official figures contradicted these assertions. One of his senior aides in a television interview defended these assertions as "alternative facts." The interviewer Chuck Todd responded that "alternative facts are not facts. They are falsehoods." How to deal with the issue of "provable falsehoods" has become controversial among reputable journalists and news organizations. Concerns about how to distinguish between "truth" and "lies" intensified due to the Trump administration's attacks on the "fake journalism" of reputable mainstream media and its denial of the scientific consensus on climate change as well as its more general attack on science as "fake science." These attacks prompted a broad array of scientists (including sociologists) to participate in an unprecedented March for Science, in Washington, D.C., and in similar rallies in several other cities on Earth Day, April 22, 2017. Fact-checker columns (used for many years by the *New York Times*) comparing Trump's assertions and objective data became more pervasive as various news outlets as well as scientific organizations, including the American Sociological Association, emphasized that "now more than ever" we need evidence-based analysis and policymaking.

Reputable journalists and editors struggle, however, over whether and how to draw a line between "falsehoods" and "lies." Unlike the *New York Times* and CNN, for example, who use both words, *The Wall Street Journal*'s editor in chief Gerard Baker (2017, p. A15) explained why he would "be careful about using the word 'lie.' Lie implies much more than just saying that something is false. It implies a deliberate intent to mislead….It's not because I don't believe that Mr. Trump has said things that are untrue. And nor is it because I believe that when he says things that are untrue we should refrain from pointing them out. This is exactly what the Journal has done. Mr. Trump has a record of saying things that are, as far as the available evidence tells us, untruthful…[and] it's reasonable to infer that Mr. Trump should know that these statements are untrue….[but] The word 'lie" conveys a moral as well as a factual judgment….If we are to use the term "lie" in our reporting, then we have to be confident about the subject's state of knowledge and his moral intent….What matters is that we report the story and find the truth… and to point out when [people] say things that are untrue. But I'm content for the most part to leave the judgment about motive – and mendacity – to our readers who are more than capable

of making up their own minds about what constitutes a lie." *The Economist* (2017, p. 71) similarly pointed out that although Mr. Trump says things that are "nakedly false" and nonsense – and may actually be deluded in believing them as true because of his grandiosity and attachment to conspiracy theories – there is a difference between a false statement and a lie (intent to deceive). Citing the Oxford English Dictionary, it noted that "Falsehood is…the wider word" because it "covers lying and 'uttered untruth in general.'"

EVOLUTIONARY PROGRESS AND AUGUSTE COMTE'S VISION OF SOCIOLOGY

Comte had a highly ambitious vision for sociology. In this he was influenced by his intellectual collaborator, Claude Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825). Though a French aristocrat, Saint-Simon renounced his privileges during the French Revolution and fought as a soldier with the French army against the British in the American War of Independence (Taylor 1975: 14–15). He was driven by "the desire to do what is of most use to the progress of the *science of man*" (Saint-Simon 1813 in Taylor 1975: 111, italics in original). Toward this end, he praised the superiority of science and empiricism – positive science, that is, "a doctrine based on observation" (1810 in Taylor 1975: 107), and argued for a science of society, one whose knowledge would provide a blueprint, a map, for implementing progressive forms of social organization.

Building on Saint-Simon's trust in the power of science to produce calculated results to advance social progress, Comte believed that sociology could be the science of humanity. He envisioned a **positivist** sociology – paralleling Saint-Simon's emphasis on the superiority of an observation-based "positive science." In Comte's view, sociology would focus only on *observable* data; it would approach its subject matter with the same **objectivity** and impartiality of physical scientists, with the same systematic attention to processes and causes, just like biologists studying plants. We don't expect biologists' empirical observations of plant life to be affected by their values or social background. And so too, Comte believed that social life could be similarly studied, that is, objectively, by sociologists who would approach their subject matter with the same detachment a biologist or a physicist brings to laboratory experiments. Sociology would be what Comte called the "Positive Philosophy" – a field whose knowledge of humanity would be determined by empirical findings, not speculation, and by the affirmation only of that which is discoverable and objectively evident in society. Comte explained:

> All good intellects have repeated, since Bacon's time, that there can be no real knowledge but that which is based on observed facts. This is incontestable, in our present advanced age … the first characteristic of the Positive Philosophy is that it regards all phenomena as subjected to invariable natural *Laws*. Our business

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) was born into an aristocratic Catholic family in France; he studied science and for many years was the private secretary and collaborator of Claude Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), who emphasized an observation-based, positivist social scientific method. Comte elaborated a "Positive Philosophy" for the study of humanity, and won renown for coining the term "sociology," a word designed to capture his belief that a "social physics," a science that would emulate the natural sciences, could discover laws explaining society (see Blumberg 1974).

> is … to pursue an accurate discovery of these Laws, with a view to reducing them to the smallest possible number … Our real business is to analyze accurately the circumstances of phenomena, and to connect them by the natural relations of succession and resemblance … Theologians and metaphysicians may imagine and refine about such questions [about the nature of life]; but positive philosophy rejects them … Now that the human mind has grasped celestial [astronomy] and terrestrial physics [physics, chemistry, and physiology] … there remains one science, to fill up the series of sciences of observation – Social physics. This is what men have now most need of. (Comte 1855/1974: 28–30)

In Comte's view, sociology – what he calls "social physics" in the quotation – would represent a progressive advance on all other disciplines. Just as each new generation tends to think of themselves as being more advanced, more liberated, more sophisticated than their parents' generation, this view of a constantly evolving progress was very much a part of how Enlightenment thinkers thought about humanity. It was also present (in different ways) in how Marx and Durkheim thought about society and its forms of social organization. There is thus a deep-seated presumption in intellectual and scientific thought (across all disciplines) that progress invariably occurs along with the march of time. This perspective is often referred to as an evolutionary view of progressive social change: in this understanding, changes that occur in society are not simply changes, but are changes that are better than what existed previously.

Comte championed an evolutionary-progressive view of science, and indeed, he embraced sociology as a superior science precisely because of its newcomer status on the scientific scene. Sociology would develop more quickly as a discipline because it could mimic existing scientific observational methods—then improve upon them. Comte also emphasized sociology's focus on observable data across *all* aspects of society, a feature that further bolsters its superiority. Physicists, chemists, and biologists, for example, are confined to specialized domains of *physical-biological activity*, whereas sociology is not. Similarly, economists, political scientists, anthropologists, and psychologists are confined to studying *compartmentalized social activity*, but sociologists suffer no such restrictions. Comte believed, therefore, that sociology could offer a highly elaborated synthesis of the human-social condition. In short, sociology would be *the* science of humanity, *the* science of society. It would outline "the most systematic theory of the human order" (Comte 1891/1973: 1).

Thus Comte saw himself as "the founder of the religion of humanity" (1891/1973: 26), of a scientific sociology whose knowledge would guide society. He believed that once sociology discovered the scientific laws of humanity/society and thus demonstrated how society works or how it functions, humans could then move society progressively forward and impose some order on its organization and development. Humans could then rightfully, in his view, turn their backs on all the inferior and speculative knowledge that had preceded their era.

Comte's positivism was, and still is, a hotly debated issue. This is the case because most social phenomena cannot be observed in the way that scientists observe phenomena in biology, physics, or chemistry. You can see bacteria grow in a biology experiment, but you cannot actually see social cohesion no matter how hard you try. Consequently, in order to study social phenomena you have to first operationalize them – you have to devise a working definition of the indicators representing the particular social thing you will observe and measure, that is, count. The positivist tradition is exemplified in the work of one of sociology's founding theorists, Emile Durkheim (see chapter 2). It is most apparent today in the quantitative methodology of sociologists who use surveys and other large data sets and sophisticated statistical techniques to study particular topics (e.g., education, migration, and income inequality) and

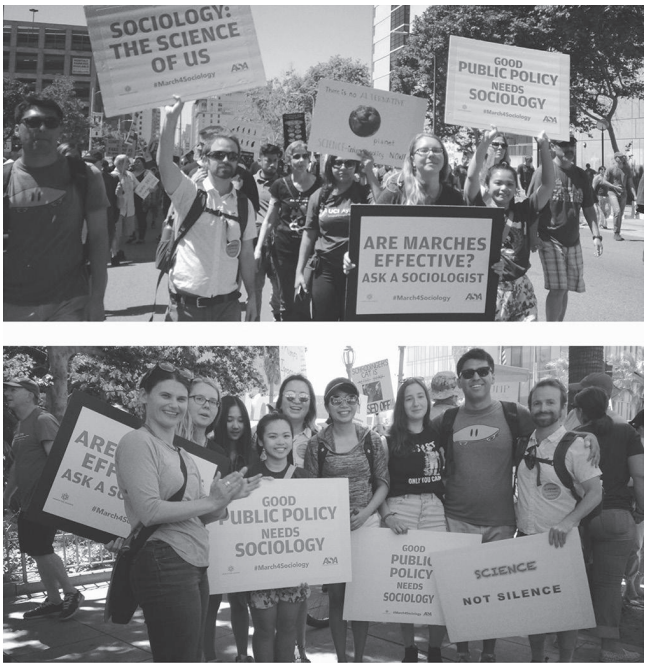

Figure I.2 Sociology is, and for, science. Source: Courtesy of Nina Bandelj and Megan Brooker.

the relations between them. One way sociologists measure social cohesion is by simply counting the number of friends individuals see during the week. We devise similar indicators of other things; for example, one index of gender inequality is to measure the difference in women's and men's wages in a particular occupation. As we will see, however, many theorists (e.g., Max Weber, chapter 3; Dorothy Smith, chapter 10) have misgivings about this approach; their concern is that we miss out on the lived context in which – and how – such things occur and the various meanings given by individual and groups to their experiences.

HARRIET MARTINEAU: SOCIOLOGY AS THE SCIENCE OF MORALS AND MANNERS

Comte's vision of scientific sociology was translated into English by the prolific English writer and feminist Harriet Martineau, the "first woman sociologist" (Hoecker-Drysdale 1992). Martineau regarded Comte's *Positive Philosophy* as "one of the chief honors of the [nineteenth] century" (1855/1974: 3), and considered its dissemination crucial to the march of social progress. She wrote: "The law of progress is conspicuously at work throughout human history. The only field of progress is now that of Positive Philosophy … whose repression would be incompatible with progress" (p. 11).

In addition to translating Comte, Martineau also wrote a detailed instructional booklet explaining the systematic way in which "morals and manners" – her definition of sociology's subject matter – should be scientifically observed. In *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (1838), she emphasized that "The powers of observation must be trained, and habits of method in arranging the materials presented to the eye must be acquired before the student possesses the requisites for understanding what he contemplates" (p. 13). Paralleling the scientific methodology of the natural scientist, Martineau advised:

> The traveler must not generalize on the spot … Natural [scientists] do not dream of generalizing with any such speed as that used by the observers of men … The geologist and the chemist make a large collection of particular appearances before they commit themselves to propound a principle drawn from them though their subject matter is far less diversified than the human subject, and nothing of so much importance as human emotions, – love and dislike, reverence and contempt, depends upon their judgment. (Martineau 1838: 18–19)

Martineau's perception of the breadth of sociology's subject matter was underscored by the range of topics in her research manual (and in her other writings). She included social class, religion, suicide,

health, family, crime, newspapers, popular idols, and the arts. Moreover, long before it was fashionable for sociologists to discuss the relevance of the researcher's own social context and personal biases for the research conducted (see chapter 10), Martineau warned researchers not to be judgmental regarding people's habits and not to evaluate the observed behavior in terms of their own or their society's values (1838). She cautioned that "every prejudice, every moral perversion dims or distorts whatever the eye looks upon" (p. 51).

Martineau was committed to sociology as an observation-based science. At the same time, however, she recognized, unlike Comte, that the subject matter of sociology is different from what is studied by natural scientists. Because it includes the study of human emotions and values, it presents different challenges than those encountered by biologists and physicists. Given the relevance of the human-emotional element in the study of social life, Martineau thus emphasized the need for sociologists to adopt an attitude of empathy and understanding toward those they were observing. She stated:

> The observer must have sympathy; and his sympathy must be untrammeled and unreserved. If a traveler be a geological inquirer he may have a heart as hard as the rocks he shivers, and yet succeed in his immediate objects … if he be a statistical investigator he may be as abstract as a column of figures, and yet learn what he wants to know: but an observer of morals and manners will be liable to deception at every turn, if he does not find his way to hearts and minds. (Martineau 1838: 52)

INTERPRETIVE UNDERSTANDING

With this empathic approach, Martineau articulated the second strand of research methodology in sociology: the emphasis on **interpretive understanding** (or hermeneutics) elaborated by the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911). Unlike Comte, who argued for the unity of all sciences, namely, the idea that sociology is a science methodologically similar to the natural sciences, Dilthey maintained that there is a distinction between the natural and the human sciences (Outhwaite 1975). In his view, sociology as a human science is different from physics (and other natural sciences) as a result not of its logic but of its *content* – its concern with social life and the lived experiences of individuals. Unlike atoms, humans engage in mental activity; they experience everyday reality, and mentally and emotionally internalize this reality.

Therefore, Dilthey argued, the study of social life requires a different methodology than that applied to the study of natural phenomena; it requires a method of empathic understanding (or *Verstehen*, the German word for understanding). This requires us to enter with empathy into the lived experiences of those whom we are studying and to seek to understand those individuals' interpretation of their reality (Outhwaite 1975). This interpretive methodological tradition was consolidated in sociology by Dilthey's fellow German, Max Weber who emphasized the importance of tracing and understanding the meanings underlying individual, group, and institutional behavior (see chapter 3). It is the method embraced by sociologists when they conduct historically grounded research (using diaries, letters, sermons, archival materials, etc.), or when they conduct ethnographic studies and in-depth interviews, an influence richly apparent today across several sociological topics and subfields.

Sociology, therefore, is characterized by two dominant methodological approaches to the study of society: (1) a positivist tradition that focuses on the explanation of social reality using various

measures as indicators of particular social phenomena and demonstrating the statistical relations between them (e.g., education and income); and (2) an interpretive tradition that focuses on explaining social phenomena through understanding the everyday contextualized reality of individuals/groups and organizational cultures. Although there is some tension between these two research traditions, they are not mutually exclusive, and both are necessary to studying social life. Moreover, whether using statistical (positivist) or interpretive methods, sociologists frequently pursue research topics that have the additional purpose of contributing to the empowerment of individuals and groups. Sociological inquiry can be used to advance **emancipatory knowledge** – research findings that can help liberate people from the various historical and social structural barriers that hinder their full acceptance or participation in society (Habermas 1968/1971). Emancipatory research (such as documenting the overrepresentation of migrant women in low-wage service jobs; for example, Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002) provides knowledge that in turn can be used by workers, activists, and policymakers to change some of the conditions underlying particular patterns of inequality. It can also be used by individuals such as gay and lesbian Catholics (e.g., Dillon 1999) to understand that their particular realities are far more normal than might sometimes be conveyed by various stigmatizing discourses and practices. Whatever the research topics we pursue, all sociological theorizing prompts us to ask questions, though the questions asked and the assumptions informing them vary. The very act of asking questions about the social and cultural forces that structure individual behavior, social relations, and the organization of society invariably prompts us to rethink our existing assumptions about the world and how it works. As such, sociological theory provides intellectual and analytical resources for critical thinking. It directs us to ask questions and to look for patterns and variation in a given societal context. At the same time, the data sociologists gather and the empirical patterns they find help to challenge and refine sociological theory. There is thus an ongoing conversation between theory and data. And, as I noted at the beginning, good sociological theory offers constructs that help us make sense of social reality.

SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND CONTEXTUAL STANDPOINTS: DU BOIS, DE TOCQUEVILLE, AND MARTINEAU

Inequality is a central focus in sociology today, and it has long preoccupied sociologists. A pioneer in articulating its variously intersecting contours was William E.B. Du Bois. In this final section, I highlight some of his important insights and then consider how two other perceptive early observers of America life, Harriet Martineau and Alexis de Tocqueville, construed social inequality. The different lenses of these scholars alert us to how an observer's social identity and background prompt attentiveness to different dimensions of a given reality and/or to a different framing or interpretation of it.

WILLIAM E. B. DU BOIS: SLAVERY AND RACIAL INEQUALITY

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 1868. Though he was admitted to Harvard University, he could not afford to go and, instead, with funding from local white community leaders in Great Barrington, went to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, for his undergraduate

education. During the summers at Fisk, he traveled through rural Tennessee teaching summer school and getting to know the everyday details of life for rural black southerners. He subsequently studied at Harvard, where he received a second BA and an MA and a PhD in history. While there, he was awarded a fellowship to study in Berlin, Germany, for two years. After completing his PhD, Du Bois spent the bulk of his academic career as professor of sociology at Atlanta University. He was a prolific book writer and magazine editor. Among his many political activities, he was a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and highly involved in it and in other race-based groups. In 1945, Du Bois was a consultant to the US delegation at the founding of the United Nations. An avowed socialist, he made frequent visits to the Soviet Union and to other countries. He died in Ghana in 1963, at the age of 95 (Marable 1986). His biographer, the sociologist Manning Marable, states: "Few intellectuals have done more to shape the twentieth century than W.E.B. Du Bois. Only Frederick Douglas and Martin Luther King, Jr., equaled Du Bois's role in the social movement for civil rights in the United States" (1986: viii).

William Du Bois (1868–1963), a Harvard-trained black sociologist, writer, and political activist, is widely recognized as "the prime inspirer, philosopher, and father of the Negro protest movement" (Marable 1986: 214–215). He is among the most influential pioneers in black sociology, though he was marginalized within sociology for many decades (Marable 1986; Morris 2015). A prolific ethnographic researcher and writer, he devoted much attention to slavery's legacy on black racial inequality and identity. Du Bois argued that slavery (which ended in the 1860s) produced a black **double-consciousness**, meaning that blacks as ex-slaves must invariably see themselves through the eyes of the white master. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, one of his most renowned books, he elaborated:

> The Negro is … born with a veil … [one that] only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, – an American, a Negro; two souls … two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body … The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, – this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (Du Bois 1903/1969: 45–46)

Black men, Du Bois argues, were emasculated by slavery, by the violence of the Civil War conflict over its resolution, and by the economic terms and context of their freedom during Reconstruction (Du Bois 1903/1969). As freed ex-slaves *some* blacks were able to take advantage of the relatively cheap parcels of land made available by the US War Department's Freedmen's Bureau (established in 1865) and the Southern Homestead Act (1866) and were able to acquire "40 acres and a mule" (e.g., Oubre 1978). These early resources were critical to the long-term economic success of some black families. Overall, however, as Du Bois argues, the legal emancipation of slaves did not ensure their economic and social emancipation. Emancipation, though welcomed by some in the South who felt "that the nightmare was at last over" (Du Bois 1934/2007: 549), was followed by the economic and political enslavement of the freed slaves, whose new-found legal freedoms competed with the economic goals of white landowners, white laborers, and white small farmers.

Du Bois thus gives particular emphasis to the economic sources and consequences of racial inequality and elaborates on the significance of slavery in the creation of capitalist profit through the exploitation of blacks (Du Bois 1934/2007). He states:

> It must be remembered and never forgotten that the civil war in the South … was a determined effort to reduce black labor as nearly as possible to a condition of unlimited exploitation and build a new class of capitalists on this foundation. The wage of the Negro worker despite the war amendments, was to be reduced to the level of bare subsistence by taxation, peonage, caste, and every method of discrimination. This program had to be carried out in open defiance of the clear letter of the law. (Du Bois 1934/2007: 549; see also 1903/1969: 54–78)

Consequently, Du Bois argues, the economic exploitation of the freed slaves underscored the deep racial wedge of division between ex-slaves and their white ex-masters. Further, racial divisions were used by white capitalists to drive a competitive wedge between black and white laborers; white landowners encouraged white laborers to regard black laborers as obstacles impeding their chances for economic advancement – the white workers' "chance to become capitalists" (e.g., Du Bois 1934/2007: 14–15). White racism, and the mechanisms in place to suppress ex-slaves' economic advancement (e.g., through low, subsistence wages), converged not only to undermine blacks' social and economic progress but, symbolically, to consolidate for whites the idea that blacks are racially inferior (Du Bois 1903/1969).

Although preoccupied with the slavery/postslavery economic and social conditions of blacks, Du Bois's vision of social equality was not confined to the plight of blacks alone. He contended: "The emancipation of man is the emancipation of labor" (Du Bois 1934/2007: 11), and he envisioned a democracy in which "all labor, blacks as well as white, became free" (p. 9), free of capitalist exploitation. He argued that this vision was best realized through the creation of a socialist society, which, despite its many shortcomings, offered a more just alternative for blacks and for society in general, irrespective of race (Marable 1986). Therefore, although Du Bois was intellectually and emotionally engrossed in the problem of race, he believed that the inequalities produced by the color line were exacerbated by capitalism, that is, the use of racial differences to divide the working class and to suppress their realization that under capitalism, all wage-workers, regardless of race, are exploited and disposable (as Karl Marx elaborates, see chapter 1).

Du Bois was critical of all forms of racism – in economic and labor relations, education, religion, culture, and the arts, but he was especially critical of the labor movement (Du Bois 1935/1996). He argued that the American labor movement's own racism prevented it from recognizing capitalist exploitation of labor as a whole. Its racism, he maintained, made it side with the "captains of industry who spend large sums of money to make laborers think that the most worthless white man is better than any colored man" (p. 434). In short, emphasizing the intersecting effects of both economic and racial inequality, he concluded that, "To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships" (Du Bois 1903/1969: 49–50).

RACIAL AND GENDER EQUALITY

Prophetic for his time, Du Bois also emphasized the ways in which social class, race, and gender intersect in the reproduction of inequality (on intersectionality, see also chapter 10). As early as 1915, when the issue of women's suffrage was gaining momentum in the US, he argued:

> The statement that woman is weaker than men is sheer rot. It is the same sort of thing that we hear about "darker races" and "lower classes." Difference, either physical or spiritual, does not argue weakness or inferiority. That the average woman is spiritually different from the average man is undoubtedly just as true

> as the fact that the average white man differs from the average Negro; but this is no reason for disenfranchising the Negro or lynching him. It is inconceivable that any person looking upon the accomplishments of women today in every field of endeavor … could for a moment talk about a "weaker" sex … To say that men protect women with their votes is to overlook the testimony of the facts. In the first place, there are millions of women who have no natural men protectors: the unmarried, the widowed, the deserted and those who have married failures. To put this whole army out of court and leave them unprotected is more than unjust, it is a crime … [Moreover] a woman is just as much a thinking, feeling, acting person after marriage as before. (Du Bois 1915/1996: 378)

Du Bois is clear that women are not a subspecies, dependent on and inferior to men. He was also emphatic that democracy required equality for all discriminated groups, and hence the project of claiming equality for blacks entailed not just equality for black men, but for black and white women too. Thus: "The meaning of the twentieth century is the freeing of the individual soul; the soul longest in slavery and still in the most disgusting and indefensible slavery is the soul of womanhood" (Du Bois 1915/1996: 379).

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE: CULTURE AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Alexis De Tocqueville (1805–1859), a French aristocrat, was among the first observers to highlight the dynamic relation between cultural ideas and individual and institutional practices. Traveling across the eastern part of America in the 1830s, he made extensive notes in his journals based on what he observed about everyday habits and learned from conversations with ordinary Americans. His account resulted in his two-volume work, *Democracy in America* (1835–1840/2004). Coming from a country with a long history of nondemocratic, hierarchical power (e.g., the monarchy and the church), de Tocqueville was especially interested in the way in which democracy, and its ideals of freedom, took hold and were expressed in American society.

De Tocqueville's account has become highly influential among successive generations of sociologists because it shows how individuals engage in the life of their community/society while simultaneously realizing their own individual aspirations (e.g., Bellah et al. 1985). De Tocqueville showed that family, religion, and politics – the social institutions to which he gave most attention – are strong in America. He argued that these institutions provide the backbone of American community-civic activities precisely because they allow individuals a great deal of freedom and autonomy; and individuals use this freedom not to abandon but to participate in community. He was impressed, for example, with the way in which religious institutions and individual freedom intertwined in American society rather than, as was the French experience, being opposed to one another. The classical French idea is that in a modern (Enlightened) democratic society, freedom should mean freedom *from* the controlling power of religion. But in America, de Tocqueville found, individual freedom and church participation went hand in hand.

Unlike post-Revolutionary France (and its antireligious ethos), the everyday habits and norms that American democracy established provided opportunities for religious as well as political and economic fulfillment. De Tocqueville argued that these freedoms and opportunities produced an order in America that simultaneously allowed for both individual fulfillment and strong institutions amidst the turmoil of economic transformation and social change. In this view, Americans could realize their new political and economic ambitions while also maintaining their (traditional) religious and family commitments.

HARRIET MARTINEAU: CULTURAL VALUES AND SOCIAL CONTRADICTIONS

Harriet Martineau visited America around the same time as de Tocqueville, 1834–1836. She similarly traveled through the eastern, southern and midwestern states (Martineau 1837/1981), and with a similar intent: a "strong curiosity to witness the actual working of republican institutions … [and] with a strong disposition to admire democratic institutions" (p. 50). Martineau marveled at the hospitality she received from a broad array of Americans, including the president, members of Congress and the Supreme Court, and slave owners, clergy, lawyers, merchants, and farmers. She was also impressed with the many institutions (factories, hospitals, prisons, schools, etc.) and families she visited, and with her interactions with women and children in kitchens, nurseries, and boudoirs – "all excellent schools in which to learn the morals and manners of a people" (p. 53).

Martineau commented approvingly on the honesty and kindness of Americans, but unlike de Tocqueville, she was also very critical of many of the things she observed. She took particular note of the contradictions she witnessed between American ideals of democratic equality and everyday practices. She wrote at length about slavery – the division of society "into two classes, the servile and the imperious" (Martineau 1837/1981: 220) – and criticized the oppression and degradation to which slaves were subjected. She also noted the prejudices against "people of colour" in the North, evident, for example, in families "being locked out of their own hired pew in a church, because their white brethren will not worship by their side" (pp. 122–123). Beyond racial issues, she commented on the mass conformity, apathy, and timidity in political opinion; the mass disapproval of religious skepticism and atheism; the many social status hierarchies and cliques that existed, even among children; and the inequalities in wealth and luxury e.g., arguing that "enormous private wealth is inconsistent with the spirit of republicanism" (p. 263).

De Tocqueville too commented at length on racial inequality in America and the oppressed status of both the Negro and the Indian (e.g., 1835–1840/2004: 365–476). He argued that slavery "can not endure in an age of democratic liberty and enlightenment" (p. 419).He found it hard, nonetheless, to imagine an American society in which blacks and whites would be equal. He believed that the consequences of slavery (even after abolition) would continue to foster servility among blacks and lead them to abuse freedom, with the overarching consequence that blacks and whites would invariably be in conflict. He wrote:

> Plunged into this abyss of woe, the Negro scarcely feels his affliction. Violence made him a slave but habituation to servitude has given him the thoughts and ambitions of one. He admires his tyrants even more than he hates them and finds his joy and his pride in servile imitation of his oppressors … Should he become free, independence will often strike him as a chain heavier to bear than slavery itself … You can make the Negro free, but you cannot make him anything other than alien vis-à-vis the European … those who believe that the Negroes will one day blend in with the Europeans are nursing a chimera [an illusion]. (De Tocqueville 1835–1840/2004: 367, 394, 395)

De Tocqueville conveyed a similarly passive, though a far more praising (and highly idealized) view of the status of women in America. He commented approvingly that Americans believe in a democratic equality which recognizes the complementary "natural differences" between men and women (1835–1840/2004: 705), something that accounted for women's comportment. Thus, he stated, "American women, who often display a manly intelligence and an energy that is nothing less than virile, generally maintain a very delicate appearance and always remain women in manners, although they sometimes reveal themselves to be men in mind and heart" (p. 706). American women, he further observed, did not "topple the husband from power and confuse lines of authority within the family"; instead, they

"prided themselves on the voluntary sacrifice of their will and demonstrated their greatness by freely accepting the yoke rather than seeking to avoid it. That, at any rate, was the sentiment expressed by the most virtuous among them" (p. 706). Indeed, so admiring was de Tocqueville of American women, he concluded that the "superiority of their women," most of whom "seldom venture outside the domestic sphere," was "primarily responsible for the singular prosperity and growing power of this people" (p. 708).

In stark contrast to de Tocqueville's assessment, Martineau was especially critical of the contradictions between democratic ideals of equality and women's inequality. She underscored the "political non-existence of women" (1837/1981: 125–128) due to their lack of voting rights. She also commented on the narrowness of women's interests, a narrowness forced by their general exclusion from the public sphere of economics and politics: "Wifely and motherly occupation may be called the sole business of woman there [in America]. If she has not that, she has nothing" (p. 301).

Anticipating an argument elaborated by Karl Marx with regard to economic class inequality (see chapter 1), Martineau exhorted women to collectively take responsibility for their own emancipation; she argued this freedom was necessary to the realization of American ideals of equality:

> The progression or emancipation of any class usually, if not always, takes place through the efforts of individuals of that class: and so it must be here. All women should inform themselves of the condition of their sex and of their own position. It must necessarily follow that the noblest of them will, sooner or later, put forth a moral power which shall [expose hypocrisy], and burst asunder the bonds (silken to some, but cold iron to others,) of feudal prejudices and usages. In the meantime, is it to be understood that the principles of the Declaration of Independence bear no relation to half of the human race? … how is the restricted and dependent state of women to be reconciled with the proclamation that "all are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?" (Martineau 1837/1981: 307–308)

In sum, as a woman and a feminist sensitized to inequality, Martineau readily saw and highlighted the various ways in which women were excluded from full democratic participation in society (denied access to voting/the public sphere). Similarly, coming from his minority status as a black man, Du Bois articulated a penetrating critique of racial domination and inequality. Yet, both Du Bois and Martineau, unlike de Tocqueville (a privileged white male aristocrat), were able to transcend their own particular gender/racial identities: Du Bois was also able to transcend a male standpoint to recognize the intersecting character of gender and racial (and economic) inequality; and Martineau was able to transcend her white identity to recognize the oppression of black people.

SUMMARY

The intent of this book is to provide you with a thorough grounding in sociological theory. It discusses the conceptual frameworks elaborated by sociology's core founding theorists – Marx, Durkheim, and Weber – as well as the broader range of ideas and concepts that comprise contemporary theory. My approach is to demonstrate the applicability of sociological theory and its relevance in helping us make sense of the complexity of the social world in which we live. This chapter highlighted the historical background to the emergence of sociology as an intellectual discipline. I discussed the influence of Enlightenment thought, and Auguste Comte's vision of sociology as a scientific field of social inquiry, and also highlighted how the subject matter of sociology – human-social behavior and social processes – complicates its analysis and interpretation.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Sociological theory:
  - Aims to explain empirical social phenomena
  - Focuses on social structures, culture, and institutional practices
  - Incorporates both macro- and micro-level approaches to the study of society
  - Addresses the interplay between individual/collective agency and structural forces
  - Enhances students' critical analytical thinking skills
- Sociology is a relatively new discipline – its origins date to the mid-nineteenth century
- The Enlightenment (eighteenth century) set the scene for the emergence of sociology. The Enlightenment:
  - Emphasized human reason and social progress
  - Moved away from the explanatory forces of the past (myth, tradition, despotism)
  - Reason in politics translates onto ideals of equality democracy, and collective self-governance
  - US Declaration of Independence, 1776
  - French Revolution, 1789
  - Scientific reasoning emphasizes observable, empirical phenomena
- Auguste Comte: sociology as the empirical, positive science of society
  - Positive sociology: scientifically discoverable laws of society
- Harriet Martineau: sociology as the scientific study of morals and manners
  - Subject matter of sociology different to that of natural science
  - A positive scientific method that includes sympathetic understanding of individuals
- Wilhelm Dilthey: sociology as interpretive understanding
- Du Bois was the first sociologist to systematically draw attention to racial inequality
- The subjects addressed by Du Bois, Martineau, and de Tocqueville, and their interpretations, highlight how an observer's social background and theoretical questions influence the content/social processes that are observed/critiqued

GLOSSARY

agency individuals, groups, and other collectivities exerting autonomy in the face of social institutions, social structures, and cultural expectations.

canon established body of core knowledge/ideas in a given field of study.

classical theory the ideas, concepts, and intellectual framework outlined by the founders of sociology (Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Martineau).

concepts specific ideas about the social world defined and elaborated by a given theorist/school of thought.

conceptual framework the relatively coherent and interrelated set of ideas or concepts that a given theorist or a given school of thought uses to elaborate a particular perspective on things; a particular way of looking at, framing, theorizing about, social life.

contemporary theory the successor theories/ideas outlined to extend and engage with the classical theorizing of Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and Martineau.

culture beliefs, rituals, ideas, worldviews, and ways of doing things. Culture is socially structured, that is, individuals are socialized into a given culture and how to use it in everyday social action.

democracy political structure derived from the ethos that because all individuals are endowed with reason and created equal they are entitled (and required) to participate in the political governance of their collective life in society.

double-consciousness the alienation of blacks' everyday identity/consciousness as a result of slavery such that blacks invariably see themselves through the eyes of (superior) whites, the dominant race.

emancipatory knowledge the use of sociological knowledge to advance social equality.

empiricism use of evidence or data in describing and analyzing society.

Enlightenment eighteenth-century philosophical movement emphasizing the centrality of individual reason, scientific rationality, and human-social progress; and the rejection of nonrational beliefs and forms of social organization (e.g., monarchy).

inalienable rights Enlightenment belief that all individuals by virtue of their humanity and their naturally endowed reason are entitled to fully participate in society in ways that reflect and enrich their humanity (e.g., freedom of speech, of assembly, to vote, etc.).

interpretive understanding *Verstehen*; task of the sociologist in making sense of the varied motivations that underlie meaningful action; because sociology studies human lived experience (as opposed to physical phenomena), sociologists need a methodology that enables them to empathically understand human-social behavior.

macro analytical focus on large-scale social structures (e.g., capitalism) and processes (e.g., class inequality).

micro analytical focus on small-scale, interpersonal, and small group interaction.

objectivity positivist idea (elaborated by Comte) that sociology can provide an unbiased (objective) analysis of a directly observable and measurable, objective social reality. This approach presumes that facts stand alone and have an objective reality independent of social and historical context and independent of any theories/ideas informing how we frame, look at, and interpret data.

pluralistic simultaneous coexistence of, and mutual engagement across, diverse strands (of thought, of research, of people).

positivist the idea that sociology as a science is able to employ the same scientific method of investigation and explanation used in the natural sciences, focusing only on observable data and studying society with the same objectivity used to study physical/biological phenomena.

post-truth society a term that has gained currency amid the whirl of misinformation and false statements disseminated on social media and by partisan news outlets; it conveys that objectively validated, evidence-based statements are displaced by distorted or contrary assertions adjusted to suit the interests of the individual or group making particular, untruthful claims.

rationality emphasis on the authority of reason in deliberating about, and evaluating explanations of, the nature of reality/social phenomena.

reason human ability to think about things; to create, apply, and evaluate knowledge; and as a consequence, to be able to evaluate one's own and others' lived experiences and the socio-historical contexts that shape those experiences.

scientific reasoning emphasis on the discovery of explanatory knowledge through the use of empirical data and their systematic analysis rather than relying on philosophical assumptions and faith/religious beliefs.

social structures forms of social organization (e.g., capitalism, democracy, bureaucracy, education, gender) in a given society that structure or constrain social behavior across all spheres of social life, including the cultural expectations and norms (e.g., individualism) that underpin and legitimate social institutional arrangements.

sociological theory the body of concepts and conceptual frameworks used to make sense of the multilayered, empirical patterns and underlying processes in society.

utilitarianism idea from classical economics that individuals are rational, self-interested actors who evaluate alternative courses of action on the basis of their usefulness (utility) or resource value to them.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What is sociological theory and what does it do?
2. Why does it make sense that the discipline of sociology emerged *after* rather than *before* the Enlightenment?
3. What does it mean to say that sociology is a social science? Why social? And why science?
4. How might subjectivity and the social context of a sociologist influence what they study/see and how they interpret what they see?

NOTE

1 A helpful introduction to the various philosophers and other thinkers associated with the Enlightenment can be found in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, edited by Robert Audi (1999).

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CHAPTER ONE

KARL MARX (1818–1883)

KEY CONCEPTS

capitalism
bourgeoisie
inequality
mode of production
means of production
proletariat
private property
exploitation
historical materialism
class relations
class consciousness
dialectical materialism
communism
subsistence
species being
capital
profit
use-value
commodification of labor power
false consciousness
surplus value
exchange-value
division of labor
alienated labor
alienation from products
objectification
alienation in the production process
alienation from our species being
alienation of individuals from one another
standpoint of the proletariat
ideology
fetishism of commodities
superstructure
economic base
ruling class
ruling ideas

Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and Their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century, Third Edition. Michele Dillon.

Companion website: www.wiley.com/go/dillon

CHAPTER MENU