Exploring Sociology A Canadian Perspective (Canadian) 3rd edition Ravelli Solutions Manual

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Chapter 2
Social Theories

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Chapter Summary

Understanding the social world around us is made possible, in part, because of the theories that we create. This chapter introduces the student to a wide array of classic social theories (e.g., functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism) and some of the thinkers that inspired those approaches. It is stressed that by utilizing social theories, we attempt to explain the observations we make about social interactions and to predict future activities.

To explain the theoretical approaches within sociology, it is best to start with the Enlightenment, its relationship to the emergence of sociology, and a few of the philosophical underpinnings of sociology (e.g., the ideas of Newton, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, which are all mentioned briefly in sections of this chapter). This will help the student place sociology in historical context.

Functionalism is discussed as one of the three major sociological theories. The work of Durkheim and Parsons is emphasized. Functionalists see the social world from a macro-level analysis which emphasizes that society is a system of interrelated and independent parts. To a functionalist, a society is like an organism (e.g., know as the organic analogy) that functions because of an established equilibrium between its parts.

Conflict theory, as represented by Marx and Engels, is noted as another theoretical perspective in sociology that uses a macro-level analysis. Here, unlike functionalism, society is seen as based on inequality and competition over scarce resources, which ultimately leads to conflict.

Last, symbolic interactionism can easily be distinguished from both functionalism and conflict theory because of its microsociological orientation and its focus on the ways in which meanings are created, constructed, mediated, and changed by members of society. The contributions of Weber, Mead, and Cooley (Blumer, Thomas, and Simmel are briefly discussed) are emphasized.

Rounding out the first half of the chapter is a discussion of marginalized voices and social theory which includes some discussion of contributions by women, visible minorities, and non-Western scholars (e.g., Wollstonecraft and MacLean, Du Bois, Fanon and Padmore, respectively).

Section Summary

"Seeing" the World Theoretically

- A theory is a statement that tries to explain how certain facts or variables are related to predict future events.

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- Learning to see the world as each theorist saw it or sees it will aid students of sociology in their exploration of the discipline.
- Some theories are more helpful than others when we utilize them to explain a current event or situation.

Philosophical Roots of Classical Sociological Theory

- This section draws upon thinkers in the history of European thought that have contributed to establishing the philosophical roots of sociology. The main thinkers that are discussed in this section include Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

- According to Hobbes, in our *natural state*, humans were curious but driven by self-interest and a desire for power. In an effort to avoid a war of all against all, humans entered a collective agreement with a *Leviathan* (a monster ruler). While the role of the new government was to preserve peace, humans gave up their individual freedom and autonomy to this absolute authority. Within this model, Hobbes suggested that it is the responsibility of the collective to revolt against absolute authority if it has become corrupt. Perhaps Hobbes' most influential contribution to sociological theory, then, is found in his suggestion that people create the social world around them and can change society through conscious reflection.

John Locke (1632-1704)

- Locke, building on the ideas of Hobbes, argued that while humans were born *tabula rasa* (blank slates), God was responsible for the emergence of society and government. According to Locke, however, God granted humans the right to self-preservation, private property, and individual autonomy. This line of thinking laid the foundation for the democratic principles that were weaved into the American Declaration of Independence.

Charles de Montesquieu (1689-1755)

- Montesquieu challenged the ideas of Hobbes and Locke by asserting that people had never existed outside of, or without, society. Importantly, then, Montesquieu claimed that humans were created by society. In addition, he also offered the first clear example of the sociological imagination in his work, the *Persian Letters*, which also fostered an appreciation for cultural diversity. For example, in this work, Montesquieu encouraged his readers to look at themselves and see the *strange in the familiar*.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

- Rousseau believed that the natural state of humanity was primitive before the development of laws or morality. In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau argued that humans are the only animals that can be perfected; within this model Rousseau claimed that humans could reach their full potential through society and good government.

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The Enlightenment

- The Enlightenment is represented by one main group–the Philosophes–who advocated critical thinking and practical knowledge over previous approaches to knowing.
- During the Enlightenment, then, individuals encouraged thinking that was not directed by God, the Church or aristocrats; instead, their quest for truth was built on the natural sciences and faith in human reason.

The Conservative Reaction to Enlightenment Thinking

- The "Conservative Reaction" to the Enlightenment rejected revolutionary ideas such as self-reflection, free thinking, and social change. It embraced tradition, authority, pre-determined hierarchies, and a fixed natural social order.
- The conservative reaction challenged the Enlightenment belief in individual autonomy and boasted the existence of society as an entity in itself.

Functionalism

- Theorists who adopt this perspective see the world as a dynamic system of interrelated and interdependent parts and society as an organism (this perspective is often called the organic analogy).
- The organic analogy compares the human body to society. For example, in the same way that the body is comprised of various structures that operate together for a common goal, the health of the individual, so too does society: it, however, works toward the good of the collective.
- While some consider Ibn Khaldun as the father of functional for his discussion of social forces, social facts, and social laws, Comte is generally recognized as the father of sociology for his attempt to use the techniques and principles of the hard sciences to study the social world.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

- Spencer also applied principles of biology and evolution to the study of society. For example, in offering his famous phrase "survival of the fittest," which predated Darwin's idea of natural selection, Spencer suggested that in the same way that organisms compete for survival (and, of course, serve valuable functions), so too do institutions within society.

Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)

- Durkheim, often considered the founder of modern sociology, worked at creating sociology as discipline. He adopted some of Comte's thinking and claimed that actions originate in the collective rather than the individual. In fact, Durkheim provides a good example of the conservative reaction to the Enlightenment because he argued that culture and society exist outside of the individual (viz., the *collective conscience*).

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- Durkheim in addition to introducing terms as the collective conscience, Durkheim emphasized that social facts are independent of individuals. Some of the other important terms that Durkheim discussed include anomie, and the mechanical and organic solidarity.

Talcott Parsons (1902-1979)

- Parsons, an American functionalist, was interested in explaining people's behaviour. His social action theory attempted to separate behaviours (mechanical responses to stimuli) from actions (an active and inventive process).
- Parsons developed the four functional imperatives–adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency–required for a social system to maintain homeostasis.

Robert K. Merton (1910-2003)

- Merton stressed the role of social structures within society. In other words, according to Merton, social structures serve functions within society. Within this model, Merton emphasized the difference between manifest (intended consequences) and latent functions (unintended consequences).

Critiquing Functionalism

- While society is an integrated and interrelated system, functionalism has difficulty accounting for social change; that is, if the natural state is homeostasis.
- In the end, functionalism often overlooks the positive consequences that result from conflict and struggle.

Conflict Theory

- Conflict theory assumes that society is based on inequality and competition over scarce resources.
- Rousseau's contribution to conflict theory can be found in his assertion that society imposes some forms of inequality that are not related to natural differences. Keeping this in mind, Rousseau notes that inequality is the original evil and is the ultimate source of conflict.

Marx and Engels

- Marx and Engels developed a clear alternative to functionalism.
- The section provides a history of Marx's though and relationship to Hegel's idealistic philosophy. While Hegel provided Marx with some insight into the idea that history unfolds through a series of conflicts and transformations, Marx ultimately rejected Hegel's emphasis upon the role of the human mind in favour of the important of the interaction of the material and social worlds.
- The concept of power, as a force that defines and influences virtually all human interactions, plays an important role in Marx's and the conflict perspectives.
- This section introduces the student to Marx's key terms such as:
    - dialectic
    - idealism

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- means of production
- relations of production
- social class
- alienation
- exploitation
- superstructure
- ideology
- false consciousness
- class consciousness

Critiquing Conflict Theory

- As a mirror image of functionalism, where functionalism emphasizes homeostasis or balance and consensus, conflict theory emphasizes struggle, and power imbalance. It is here that conflict theory tends to diminish the consensus that does exist in our social worlds.
- In addition to the above, some critique conflict theory's tendency to become actively involved as a violation of scientific objectivity.
- Finally, some critics point out that conflict theory tends to emphasize, all too often, the primary and driving role of economics in social life.

Symbolic Interactionism

- Utilizing a microsociological approach to the study of the social world, symbolic interactionism differs from both functionalism and conflict theory, which are both macro in focus.
- This perspective originated in the U.S. and is largely based on the works of Mead and Cooley, though others such as Weber, Simmel, Blumer, and Thomas can be discussed here as well.
- Symbolic interactionism maintains seven basic principles regarding humanness: (1) capacity for thought, (2) thinking is shaped by social interaction, (3) people learn social meanings that allow them to interact in social groups, (4) symbolic communication is uniquely human, (5) social meanings and symbols can change, (6) people can interact with themselves, and (7) groups and societies are the culmination of patterns of actions and interaction.

Max Weber (1864-1920)

- Weber's term "verstehen", which refers to a deep understanding of subjective social meanings, is noted as a key concept that helps us understand the actions of others. Rather than emphasizing the actions of people as a product of external forces, verstehen draws attention to the meaning individual actors assign to their world.

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Georg Simmel (1858-1918)

- Simmel challenged the organic theories offered by Comte, Durkheim, and Spencer. In doing so, he argued that society was not a living thing, but rather the summation of human experience and patterned interactions.

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931)

- Mead argued that human behaviour is almost always the product of interaction with others. Mead discussed the human mind as a product of the individual's engagement with the environment, and human behaviour as a product of interaction with others.

Charles H. Cooley (1864-1929)

- Cooley proposed that we develop our self-image through the cues we receive from others. Through sympathetic introspection, Cooley argued, sociologists could gain insight into human behaviour by "putting yourself into another person's shoes" and trying to see the world the way they do.
- Cooley's looking-glass self is defined as an active, imaginative process through which individuals develop their self-image. According to Cooley, people are by and large informed by the cues they receive from other people.

Critiquing Symbolic Interactionism

- While symbolic interactionism reminds us that social reality is a human construct, it does not account for the role institutions and social structure play in shaping our social world.

Marginalized Voices and Social Theory

- This section addresses the contributions of women, visible minorities, and non-Western scholars, and explores the exclusion and oppression of the weak in classical social theory.

Contributions by Women

- Many women have made important contributions to classical theory. From thinkers such as Wollstonecraft to Martineau, Nightingale, Addams, and Luxemberg, their emphasis upon social equality and activism has often been devalued as a result of a patriarchy within academics.

Contributions by Visible Minorities

- Insights from minority authors have also been devalued. For example, substantial insight has been marginalized from the work of Copper (born a slave in North Carolina) who confronted racism to the academic and civil rights leader Du Bois who developed the concept of double-consciousness.

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Contributions of Non-Western Scholars

- While classical theory is generally associated with European social theorists, the work of individuals from developing nations has been marginalized. For example, Fanon not only supported resistance to French colonialism in Algeria, but he also made significant contributions to understanding black identity, colonial rule and decolonization. Other individuals who offered insight into imperialism and colonialism include James and Padmore.

Preconception Survey

True or **False**	All sociologists see society the same way, regardless of their actual theoretical perspective.
True or **False**	A theory is always untestable.
True or **False**	All thinkers throughout history believed that humans define and create society, not the other way around.
True or **False**	All people commit suicide for the same reasons.
True or False	Traditionally, many fields of academia have excluded the ideas of minorities.
True or **False**	Capitalism has shown itself, even to sociologists in the modern world, to be a primarily positive economic form.

In-Class Discussion Questions

Opportunities for Discussion: Reviewing the Concepts

1. There are a number of defining features associated with Enlightenment thinking. Ask students to offer contemporary examples that boast the relevance of critical thinking, practical knowledge, the value of the natural sciences (as applied in other areas), and human reason over other ways of understanding the world around us.

2. The organic analogy draws upon a number of ideas that provided an early foundation for understanding society and how it works. Ask students to explain why the organic analogy is so important to functionalism. This discussion should make it clear that within the organic analogy, any change in an institution will have an impact upon the functioning of society. Further, the model also clearly emphasizes the connection that early thinkers sought between sociology and science.

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3. In their own words, have students provide a definition for Spencer's phrase: "survival of the fittest." If the fittest institutions survive, ask them to explore what it means to be "fit." Do all people benefit from so-called "fit" institutions?

4. Ask students to compare and contrast mechanical solidarity with organic solidary. Students often tend to–erroneously–think of mechanical solidarity as a feature of industrial society. With this in mind, you may want to help them devise a way associate mechanical solidarity with early societies whereas organic solidarity emerged with increased divisions of labour in contemporary society.

Small Group exercises

For these exercises, break the class into appropriately sized groups, depending on the exercise and/or class size; then, assign each group a question. Once students have completed the assignment, the students will report their ideas to the class. The pedagogical point behind this exercise is: (1) to allow the students a different forum to engage in thinking and (2) to apply the concepts of the chapter to everyday life.

1. Break the class into several groups. Provide each group with a short newspaper article on a recent event. Ask students to examine the article through the lens of each of the main perspectives discussed in the chapter.

   When students come back to the main class and report their findings, this provides you with an opportunity to expand and clarify the various theoretical perspectives.

2. Divide the class into several groups. Assign each group a different classical theorist (preferably the earlier ones). Ask each group to come up with three ways in which the ideas of the classical theorist are present in contemporary society.

   Upon the completion of this assignment, ask each group to present their finding to the class. Through this exercise, the link between the ideas of these theorists and our contemporary everyday lives will be illuminated.

3. After separating the class into groups, ask each group to create plans for a company that would not exploit its workers. Have students decide on the product, organizational structure, and employment strategies.

   As each group presents its unique company to the class, focus on getting students to consider whether profitability is possible without exploitation.

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4. Introduce the entire class to a single event. Perhaps it can be in the form of a newspaper article, a YouTube video, or a narrative. Then, break the class into different groups. Assign each group the role of a particular social group. Then, request that they ponder how a member of the social group that they are representing might view the original event.

   Once they come back to discuss their results as a class, emphasize the different ways that seemingly objective circumstances can be viewed by those who are from different standpoints.

Think-Pair-Share Exercise

Direct the students to work in pairs and take turns asking and answering the following questions. For example, Student A asks Student B question 1; Student B answers question 1, then asks Student A question 2, and so on. Give the students five minutes to form answers to each question, then ask the questions of the class, and choose students to share their answers with the larger group. The purpose of this activity is to focus the students' attention on their own experiences, as well as to improve their listening and reporting skills. Tell the students before they begin the exercise that they may be called upon afterwards to report, orally, to the rest of the class, their partner's answers. When conducting the group discussion at the end of the activity, be sure to phrase your question in this manner: "Jerry, how did Elaine say her personality has changed over her life course? What sort of events created these changes?"

1. What do you think the *natural state* of humans is? Why do you think this?

2. Do you think that you could apply the organic analogy to this classroom? If so, what would it look like? If not, why?

3. Have you ever had a job? Were you exploited in this job? Were you alienated?

Essay Questions

1. What did Durkheim mean when he talked about four different types of suicide? Compare and contrast the four types that he identified. Which type do you think would be most common among your general age group in Canada? Explain your decision.

ANSWER

- Durkheim links suicide to large-scale collective phenomena.
- According to Durkheim, a person's decision to attempt or commit suicide is a function of their relationship, or lack of relationship, to the larger social group.

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- Altruistic suicide involves too much integration into the larger social group.
- Egoistic suicide involves not enough integration into the larger social group.
- Fatalistic suicide occurs when a person experiences too much regulation in the larger social group.
- Anomic suicide occurs when an individual suffers from a lack of regulation from the larger social group.
- Student answers to the second part of the question will be different and should be justified.

2. How did distinct groups like women, visible minorities, and non-Western scholars introduce viewpoints into sociology that are beneficial to us in terms of understanding the social world? Without such standpoints, would sociology be able to produce an accurate understanding of the social world?

ANSWER
- Women began questioning and challenging traditional views of women in society.
- Visible minorities added social insight into how race played a defining role in contemporary, mostly American, society.
- Non-Western scholars explored the legacy of colonial experiences of peoples around the world.
- Sociology would not be able to describe the social world of more than half of the human population if only white males were to comment on what are essentially their own experiences and interpretations of the experiences of others.

Assignments

Insights and Opportunities for Discussion of the Theme Boxes

Box 2.1 – Evolution and Social Darwinism
- This box provides an introduction to Darwin, his idea of natural selection, and selective advantages in biology. In addition, the box discusses the ideas of Spencer as they were applied to society. Theory, however, is not always benign. For example, Spencer's formulation of social Darwinism promoted a debate about fit and unfit individuals in society and spawned the eugenics movement among others. Keeping these ideas in mind, this box will allow you to engage the students in a discussion about the application of science and the sociological commitment to the value and preservation of human diversity.

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Box 2.2 – The Gap between the Rich and Poor Continues to Grow

- This box points out that over the last 30 years there has been an unprecedented the growth of the rich at the expense of the poor. This box will provide you with an opportunity to discuss some of the principles and concepts associated with Marx and conflict theory. Once you have used the box to discuss Marx and conflict theory, ask your students to explain how inequality might be viewed by functionalists.

Box 2.3 – Can the Industrial Revolution Teach Us Anything about the Cybernetic Revolution?

- This box underscores the social change that occurred alongside of the Industrial Revolution. If no society managed to industrialize with massive social change, what might we expect with the Cybernetic Revolution? Ask your students to link the classical philosophies of this chapter with the contemporary cybernetic revolution. Through this discussion, you can ensure that they can apply the various theories in a potentially novel way.

Box 2.4 – Exploring Theory

- You can you this box to help students make connections between various social theorists and sociological theory. This might serve as a review tool for students.

Going Beyond the Classroom

Encourage your students to think about active citizenship through involvement with these various groups:

- Consider asking students to join an Organization that is trying to eliminate labour exploitation in the world. For example, the International Labour Organization http://www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/lang--en/index.htm attempts to prevent the exploitation of children's and women's labour internationally.
- Join a political party that seeks to change the political landscape in a way that matches the theoretical perspective that you agree with.
- There are many organizations that are based on ideals and principles that the Classical Theorists propose. Students could join one of these organizations and be involved in the dissemination of the ideas that they support. For example, one such organization is: http://www.marxist.ca/.

Probing Questions to Facilitate Students' Sociological Imaginations

1. Why, do you think, women are excluded from the group of classical theorists? Do you agree that the insights of women were not theoretical? Explain why or why not.

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2. If you accept Marx's notion of false consciousness, how would a person become aware of their own false consciousness? Or, is it something that she/he needs to be informed of by an external observer?

3. The three main theoretical perspectives presuppose that society is knowable, that there are universals in place that can be observed and recorded. What other ways are there to imagine society?

Post-Lecture Survey

Thinking about the in-class lecture or lectures on Classical Social Theories:

1. Do you feel that the material in this chapter was covered in an easily understandable way?

2. Was the lecture on this topic too fast, too slow, or just right?

3. Do you feel that the lecture(s) added to your understanding of this material?

4. How would you improve the presentation of this material in class? Be as specific as possible.

5. What modern examples could have been used in class to emphasize the material in this chapter?

Suggestions for Local Guest Lecturers

- Invite a political scientist to discuss how the various political philosophies have affected our current political order.

- Ask a historian to discuss the importance of the Enlightenment to social and cultural change.

- Invite a scholar from women's studies to discuss the role of women in classical social theory.

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Keeping it Fresh: Ideas for the Experienced Instructor

1. Provide a lecture that delves further into the philosophical and historical underpinnings associated with the emergence of sociology. Discuss social philosophers such as Hobbes (emphasize the twin passions, the social contract and the leviathan, and responsibility), Locke (God-given social rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, social responsibility, the American Revolution, and the ability to change society), and Rousseau (the natural state of humans, tutelage, perfecting humans though social development, social change and the French Revolution). This will provide the historical context for a discussion of Comte and the conservative reaction to the Enlightenment.

2. Since this chapter pays little attention to female theorists in the classical tradition, it may be useful to talk a bit about this with your class. You can develop a lecture to discuss the various contributions of women to classical sociology, and allow your students an opportunity to decide if women's role was 'theoretical'.

3. To help your students understand that classical theory can still be used to explore the contemporary social landscape, consider analyzing the 2008 economic collapse from each of the classical theories as reviewed in the text. By demonstrating your own ability to see the world through a theoretical lens, students will gain experience seeing contemporary issues from the classical perspectives.

Annotated Resources

Web Resources

http://www.6sociologists.20m.com/index.html

The website provides overviews of 6 major classical social theorists, including Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Harriet Martineau, Karl Marx, Herbert Spencer, and Max Weber.

http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/intellect.html#table

This excellent resource contains information with which to create lectures on important and relevant social events, such as the French and Industrial Revolutions, Comte, and Marx.

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Videos

(2006). *Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment*. Madison [WI]: Hawkhill Associates.

> The western world experienced revolutionary transformations from the 15th to the 17th centuries. This new program can help your students understand why these revolutions were so important in preparing the ground for our modern 21st century world.

(1996). *The Nationalists*. Princeton: Films for the Humanities & Sciences.

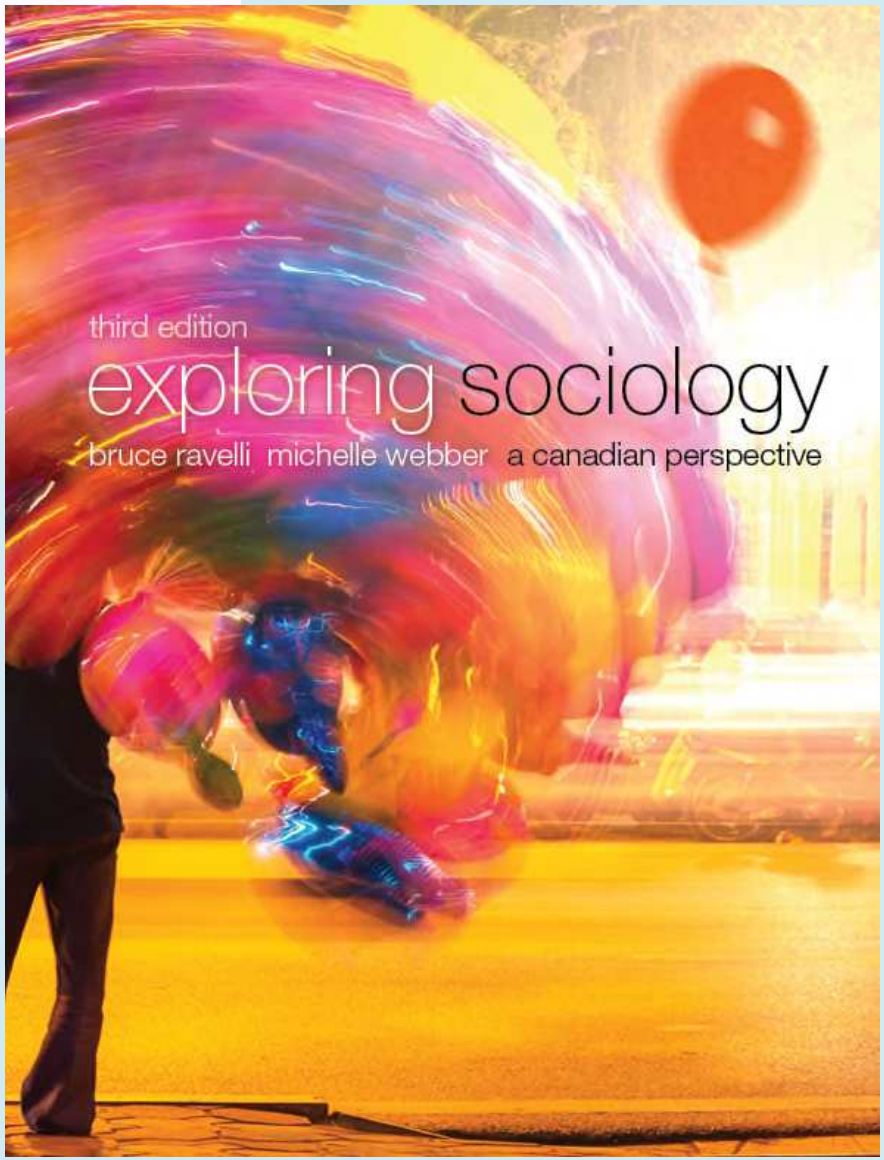
> This program examines how liberal ideas from the French Revolution fueled the fires of European nationalism, and how extreme nationalistic beliefs led to World War I. In Germany, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck constructed the philosophical and political framework for a unified Germany, steeped in the mythology of a German super-race and its destiny: to rule Europe. Serbians, inflamed by nationalism, assassinated Austrian Archduke Ferdinand, and Germany, as Austria's ally, declared war on Russia, and subsequently on Britain and France.

Banning, L. (2004). *The History of Sociology*. New York: Insight Media.

> This video looks at the move from premodernity to modernity to the information age, as well as looking at the conflict perspective, the structural functional perspective, and symbolic interactionism.

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Chapter 2

Classical Social Theories

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Learning Objectives

1. Describe the early contributions of social philosophers and their relevance to classical sociological theory
2. Review and critique functionalism and the contributions of its principal theorists
3. Review and critique conflict theory and the contributions of its founding theorists
4. Review and critique symbolic interactionism and the contributions of its founding theorists
5. Describe how marginalized voices contributed to sociological theory

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"Seeing" the World Theoretically

- A **theory** is a statement that tries to explain how facts or events are related, in order to predict future events
- **Your job**: Develop skills that are necessary to see the world from alternative perspectives
  - Each theory has both strengths and weaknesses
  - Each theorist offers unique insights into our social world

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1. Classical Sociological Theory (1600-1750)

- Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)
  - People are responsible for creating their social worlds
  - **Natural state**: how humans existed prior to the emergence of social structures
  - People are motivated by self interest and the pursuit of power
- John Locke (1632-1794)
  - God was responsible for the emergence of society and government
  - **Tabula rasa**: people are born as blank slates
  - Right to self-preservation and to private property
  - Individual autonomy and freedom

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Classical Sociological Theory, cont'd.
(1600-1750)

- Charles Montesquieu (1689-1755)
  - People never existed outside, or without, society
  - Humans created and defined by society
  - Laws define the spirit of the people; the *Republic*, the *Monarchy*, and *Despotism*
  - Appreciation for cultural diversity and comparative methodology
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)
  - **The Social Contract***:* people existed in symbiotic and idyllic relationships in the natural state
  - Human beings are perfectible and can achieve their potential only through society
  - Entered into the social contract free and equal individuals

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The Enlightenment
(1650-1799)

Challenged years of Christian teachings

- *Philosophes* advocated critical thinking and practical knowledge and built on the natural sciences
  - Challenged beliefs guided in tradition
  - Resulted in the ability of the masses to challenge their oppressors
- Reorganization of societies
  - Sociology was born out of the conservative reaction against enlightenment thinking

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The Birth of Sociology

Conservatives believed that society is not the product of individuals, rather an entity in itself.

1. Society exists on its own
2. Society produces the individual
3. Individuals simply fill positions
4. Smallest unit of social analysis is the family
5. Parts of society are interrelated and interdependent
6. Change is a threat
7. Social institutions are beneficial
8. Modern social changes create fear and anxiety
9. Emphasis on seemingly irrational factors
10. Return to social hierarchies and healthy competition

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2. Functionalism

- Social world is a dynamic system of interrelated and interdependent parts
  - Social structures exist to help people fulfill their wants and desires
  - Human society is similar to an organism, when it fails to work together the “system” will fail
  - Society must meet the needs of the majority
  - Dominant theoretical paradigm between the late 1920s and the early 1960s

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Functionalist Theorists

Herbert Spencer

- **Survival of the fittest** justifies why only the strong should survive
  - Societies evolve because they need to change in order to survive
  - Environmental pressures allow beneficial traits to be passed on to future generations
- **Social Darwinism** draws upon Darwin's idea of natural selection; asserts societies evolve according to the same principles as biological organisms
- **Laissez-faire approach** (opposes regulation of or interference with natural processes)

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Functionalist Theorists

Emile Durkheim - Founder of modern sociology

- Human action originates in the collective rather than in the individual
  - **Collective conscience** drives behaviour
  - **Social facts** are general social features that exist on their own and are independent of individual manifestations
- **Anomie** is a state of normlessness that results from the lack of clear goals and creates feelings of confusion that may ultimately result in higher suicide rates
- **Mechanic solidarity** describes early societies based on similarities and independence
  Organic solidarity describes later societies organized around interdependence and the increasing division of labour

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Functionalist Theorists

Talcott Parsons

- Interested in explaining why people do what they do
- **Social Action Theory** is a framework which attempts to separate behaviours from actions to explain why people do what they do

Four Functional Imperatives (AGIL)

1. Adaptation
2. Goal Attainment
3. Integration
4. Latency

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Functionalist Theorists

Robert Merton

- Social structures have many functions
  - **Manifest functions**: the intended consequences of an action or social pattern
  - **Latent functions**: the unintended consequences of an action or social pattern

- **Criticisms of functionalist approaches:**
  - Inability to account for social change
  - Overemphasis on the extent to which harmony and stability actually exist in society

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True or False

The educational system provides both manifest and latent functions.

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Questions

Can you think of some criticisms of functionalism?

Is this theory still applicable today?

If so, can you think of some examples?

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3. Conflict Theory

- Society is grounded upon inequality and competition
  - **Power** is the core of all social relationships; scarce and unequally divided among members of society
- Social values and the dominant ideology are the vehicles by which the powerful promote their own interests at the expense of the weak
  - Rooted in the writings of Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau

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Karl Marx

- ***Dialectics***: a way of seeing history and society as the result of oppositions, contradictions and tensions from which social change can emerge (Hegel)
- ***Idealism***: human mind and consciousness are more important in understanding the human condition than is the material world
- Human consciousness and human interaction with the material world could change society
- Relations of production based on power

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Base/Superstructure

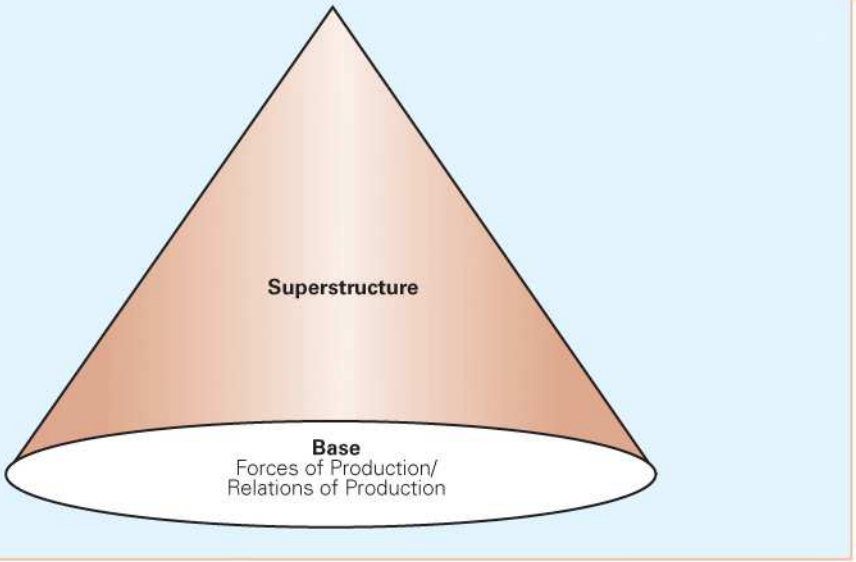


FIGURE 2.3

Marx's Base/ Superstructure Model

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Dynamic relationship between the material and social elements of society

- **Base**: material and economic foundation for society. Includes the forces and relations of production
- **Superstructure**: all of the things that society values and aspires to once its material needs are met. Includes religion, politics and law

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Marx, cont'd.

- ***Proletariat*** (the workers) and ***bourgeoisie*** (rich owners)
  - ***Alienation***: the process by which workers are disconnected from what they produce
  - ***Exploitation***: the difference between what workers are paid and the wealth they create for the owners
    - Within capitalism, the exploitative nature of labour is hidden within the wage system
- ***Ideology:*** set of beliefs and values that support and justify the ruling class of society
  - Dominant ideology maintains the position of the ruling elite
- ***False consciousness***: belief in and support of the system that oppresses you
- ***Class consciousness***: recognition of domination and oppression and the collective action that arises in response

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Questions

- *Can you think of some criticisms of conflict theory?*

  Is this theory still applicable today?

  If so, can you think of some examples?

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4. Symbolic Interactionism

- *People act toward things based on the meaning those things have for them; and these meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation (Blumer)*
- **Ritzer's principles of Symbolic Interactionism**
  1. Humans have the capacity for thought
  2. Human thinking is shaped by social interaction
  3. People learn meanings and symbols in social settings
  4. Meanings and symbols enable people to carry on uniquely human actions and interactions
  5. Meanings and symbols change dependent upon interpretation
  6. Unique ability to interact with self
  7. Culmination of interaction and patterns of action make up society

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Symbolic Interactionism, cont'd.

- **Micro versus macro approach**
  - Highlights the ways in which meanings are created, constructed, mediated and changed by members of a group or society
- **Max Weber**
  - **Verstehen**: a deep understanding and interpretation of subjective social meanings
- **Georg Simmel**
  - Society is the summation of human experience and its patterned interactions
  - **Formal Sociology**: different human interactions can be similar in form

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Symbolic Interactionism, cont'd.

- **George Herbert Mead**
  - *Mind, Self and Society* (1934), the social organism is not an organic individual but a social group of individual organisms (p. 130)
  - Human mind results from the individual's ability to respond and engage with the environment
- **Charles H. Cooley**
  - **Sympathetic introspection**: putting yourself into someone else's shoes
  - **Looking-glass self**: we develop our self image through the cues we receive from others
  - **Self-fulfilling prophecy**: internalize impressions and as a result become the kind of person we believe others see us as

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Symbolic Interactionism, cont'd.

- **Erving Goffman (1922 –1982)**
- **Dramaturgical analysis -** The 'self' emerges from the performances we play and how the other actors relate to us
  - Does not really exist
  - A function of how others interpret the signs and signals we convey during social interaction
  - We Attempt to control how others see us or hide our true feelings or motivations through deceptions, misrepresentations, or enactment of idealized notions of behaviour
- No interaction is as simple as it first appears

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5. Marginalized Voices and Social Theory

- Contributions by women
  - Wollstonecraft, Martineau, MacLean
- Contributions by visible minorities
  - Cooper, Well-Barnett, Du Bois
- Contributions by non-Western scholars
  - Fanon, James, Padmore, Nkrumah

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Questions

- *Compare and contrast functionalist, conflict and symbolic interactionist perspectives. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?*
- *Discuss macro versus micro approaches to examining society.*
- *How have marginalized voices influenced the development of sociology?*

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