Sociology Project Essentials 1st edition NYU Sociology Department Solutions Manual

SKU: 9780135224953-SOLUTIONS

Chapter 2 Social Theory
Instructor's Resource Manual

Instructor's Resource Manual Contents

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The Big Questions

1. **What is social theory?**
   Social theories enable us to see the social world in different ways. In this section, we identify three common themes that all of the major sociological theories have sought to address.

2. **How did the early social theorists make sense of the world?**
   The foundations of modern sociology, and social theory as we know it today, can be traced to the writings of a handful of key thinkers working in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. In this section, we introduce the classical social theories of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and W. E. B. Du Bois.

3. **What innovations in social theory emerged in the mid-twentieth century?**
   After World War II, the interests of social theorists began to shift in new and unexpected directions, and leadership in the development of social theory and sociology as a whole passed from being located primarily in Europe to America. Here, we introduce the new directions in social theory that were embodied by functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

4. **How has a new generation of social theory evolved?**
   Finally, we provide a brief sampling of some important new theories that have evolved since the 1960s. How have contemporary theorists built upon or transformed the work of classical and mid-twentieth century social theory?

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Author's Note by Jeff Manza

The most obvious challenge we face in teaching social theory to beginning students is how to get them interested in what might otherwise seem to be abstract, or perhaps to put it better, "boring" ideas of no particular relevance to their everyday lives. One way I try to teach theory – and this is one reason why we have included short bios of the major classical thinkers -- is to turn the sociological imagination back on itself, so to speak: what were the unique conditions that each theorist was writing and thinking in, and how did that impact their thought? For example, in the years Marx was most active (1848-1878) there a lot of revolutionary activity in the air all over Europe and the United States. There had been upheavals in England in the 1830s, revolutionary outbreaks across Europe in 1848, the ongoing revolutionary movements in France (most notably the Paris Commune of 1871), the American Civil War and the struggle to end slavery, and towards the end of his life the beginnings of unions and socialist parties in many countries. Marx was also writing at a time when, as we know now (especially since the work of Thomas Piketty) that wages for factory workers in Europe had stagnated and did not start to rise until the late 19th Century. Given these two conditions during his lifetime, it is not surprising that Marx thought a revolution led by a working class which was facing deteriorating (or at least not improving) conditions of work and life in cities that were dirty and filled with signs of poverty.

Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel were very much products of the other side of the rise of modern industry and the wrenching changes it brought to early 20th Century Europe. Instead of seeing the conditions for revolution, the puzzle all three sought to theorize was how were newly modern societies able to hang together in the face of the dramatic changes that the industrial revolution, remarkable new technologies (electricity, the car, the plane, the telephone, etc.) and the rapid phase of urbanization were creating. Although they took up different themes and ideas, all of them were trying to understand the changes that the world was going through. We may be able to use the rise of social media and computing technologies to help our students think about the changes we are going through right now. We may have "new" Durkheims and Webers in our midst, but it is too early to know whether the changes these technologies are bringing about will prove as transformative as the changes in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. But our students all "get" that we are living through interesting times and that in 25 years the world could be very different.

I like to tell the story of W.E.B. Du Bois through the lens of his own humiliation as one of the towering intellects of American history who nevertheless lived in a racist society where he could neither obtain a job as a college professor at a top university or, especially once he moved to the South, have equality with ordinary whites. Facing the strictures of Jim Crow, Du Bois faced devastating challenges on a daily basis as a black man. For Du Bois, race was central to both everyday social life and interaction, *and* as a key to understanding American history. Similarly, the social theory produced by feminists can be viewed through the lens of what they have either personally experienced or have observed in their everyday lives. The

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neglect of gender was not just an intellectual matter, but an intensely personal issue as well.

What about Parsons (and functionalism)? How can his story be told in terms of social context? This is a little more difficult to do. But Parsons and functionalism is important to teach because so much modern social theory is a direct reaction, and refutation, of Parsons. I am not a huge fan of Parsons myself, but if we are to make the transition to modern social thought he needs to be made into a respectable and serious figure. One way is to turn to his biography: we now have some good biographical writing on Parsons that has emphasized just how much he was concerned about the rise of fascism and communism as alternatives to democracy, and was determined to develop a social theory that could show how social order could be achieved without authoritarian governance if the natural order is allowed to take its course. Another view of functionalism that can be taught is that we tend to think of communism and capitalism as two fundamentally different social orders, but it is remarkable how both of the major social systems of Parsons day had so *much* in common, as opposed to how they were different. The similarities suggested to Parsons that there were truly universal features of social order that even apparent revolutions could not undo. Finally, there is the route that a lot of Parsons' critics take, which is to use functionalism as a theory that defends inequality and the status quo. It does provide an explanation or even justification for all manner of things that we, and/or our students, may not like. Would Parsons have supported same-sex marriage? In fact, he was a political liberal who probably would; but he can read in a decidedly different light emphasizing tradition over change.

An alternative approach to using a sociological imagination to try to situate the major theorists, and one that is a bit simpler to use especially if the above history is unfamiliar, is to take an example that everyone is familiar with and see what the different theorists would say about it. We usually teach social theory early in the semester, which does have one big advantage: all of our examples are "fresh," and you can apply the ideas of theorists to help explain things that are interested in. So take an empirical problem you are familiar with to see what each of theorists might have said. For example, what would each have to say about democracy? Marx would be critical that you can have democracy and capitalism. Durkheim, Weber and Simmel would ask, what are the conditions that make democracy possible (e.g. social solidarity for Durkheim, networks of discourse and exchange for Simmel) and what are the principle threats (for Weber, the rise of bureaucracy that might be uncontrollable).
social theory?

Learning Outcomes

- Discuss the multiplicity of theoretical traditions and themes in sociology and how contemporary sociologists approach this diversity in the course of their research.

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- Describe some key historical transformations in society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that triggered upheaval and turmoil, and led to the emergence of influential social theories.
- Discuss how social and historical contexts are important in influencing individual behavior.
- Understand the factors that influenced Marx to think that capitalism would be overthrown in favor of a socialist society. Also, discuss why capitalism seems more entrenched than ever today.
- Discuss Simmel's insights about social distance and their implications.
- Explain the double consciousness that blacks endured in the context of racism and social structure in early twentieth century America.
- Discuss the three critical ideas of structural functionalism. Evaluate the important streams of criticism and the theories that emerged as a reaction to structural functionalism.
- Discuss the neo-Marxist ideas on the capitalist world system, including the state, social class and globalization.
- Understand how feminist social theory challenged many male-centered biases.
- Describe the role of intersectionality in theories of gender inequality.
- Describe how discipline can be both a major characteristic and function of power.
- Distinguish between cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital.
- Explain how analytical sociology absorbed concepts from psychology to understand the behavior and motivation of individuals.
- Define the following key terms:
    - social theory
    - class
    - modes of production
    - forces of production
    - social relations of production
    - bourgeoisie
    - capital
    - proletariat
    - socialist
    - class struggle
    - social facts
    - social forces
    - socialization
    - social solidarity
    - mechanical solidarity
    - division of labor
    - organic solidarity
    - sacred
    - interpretive sociology
    - power
    - authority
    - legitimacy
    - charisma
    - status group

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- stratification system
- social closure
- social distance
- network analysis
- social networks
- racism
- structural functionalism
- natural selection
- conflict theory
- symbolic interactionism
- neo-Marxism
- capitalist state
- capitalist world system
- globalization
- feminist social theory
- patriarchy
- sex
- gender
- social constructions
- sex differences
- psychoanalysis
- intersectionality
- habitus
- cultural capital
- social capital
- symbolic capital
- middle-range theory
- analytical sociology
- structural individualism
- self-fulfilling prophecy
- unanticipated consequences of social action
- mechanism

Detailed Chapter Outline

2.1 What Is Social Theory?

A. **Seeing the Social World Through Social Theory**

Theories guide or even provoke us into asking new or unusual questions and compel us to come up with a better approach. The best social theories have changed the way we understand societies in fundamental ways.

1. **The Diversity of Social Theory**

   2.1.1 Define social theory and describe the range of different social theories.

   a. **Social theories:** systematic ideas about the relationship between individuals and societies.

b. There are different kinds of social theories. Some are grand, explaining universal features of all societies, while others apply to specific theories about race, gender, or religion.
c. Sociology has multiple and often competing social theories and theoretical traditions.

2. **Three Common Themes**
2.1.2 Identify the three common themes that all of the major sociological theories have sought to address.
a. What is the nature of the individual? How does the individual act in the context of society?
b. What are the circumstances or conditions under which societies change?
c. What is the basis for social order? What is it that holds societies together?

2.2 How Did the Early Social Theorists Make Sense of the World?

A. Classical Social Theory in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Four key transitions included:

1. Industrial Revolution: change from agriculture-based economy to industry-based one
2. Movement of people from rural areas to cities
3. Change from monarchies to democracies
4. Decline in religious influence in public life

1. **Karl Marx (1818–1883)**
2.2.1 Discuss why Marx believed that societies were so heavily shaped by their economic systems.
a. All societies produce an economic surplus, but never share all goods equally. Control over surplus gives some members of a society extra rewards giving rise to conflicts between groups or classes.
c. **Classes:** groups of people who share a similar set of economic interests.
d. Three **modes of production** characterize the dominant economic system in a society: ancient societies based on slavery; feudalism, consisting of a tiny group of landowners; and capitalism, organized around market-based exchange. Each mode of production consists of two components: **forces of production** and **social relations of production**, and would shape or determine the kinds of laws and government systems.
e. Capitalist societies foster conflict between the **bourgeoisie** (who own **capital**) and **proletariat** (who do not own capital and must seek paid employment to meet their basic needs).
f. Proletariat was expected to create a social revolution that would overthrow capitalism in favor of a **socialist society**, where productive forces are owned by everyone and not by individual owners. The theory of **class struggle** is based on the idea that

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classes of people who are treated so differently by the economic system are inevitably going to be in conflict with one another.

g. Capitalism seems more entrenched than ever, but has become more versatile, and also has developed large government-funded and operated social programs designed to reduce poverty and inequality.

2. **Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)**
   2.2.2 Analyze Emile Durkheim's explanation of what holds societies together.
   a. Three important contributions: his development of the concept of the social fact, his analysis of the roots of social solidarity, and his analysis of religion as a force in modern life.
   b. **Social facts**, or **social forces**, are "social" in the sense that they arise from human action at some point. Norms are like physical walls in constraining our actions.
   c. Social forces work through the process of **socialization**, the process we go through as we learn how to behave in society (and all of the different situations we encounter).
   d. Two forms of **social solidarity:**
      i. **Mechanical solidarity:** dominant form of solidarity in primitive societies built around extended clans of tribes, characterized by a very minimal **division of labor**.
      ii. **Organic solidarity:** very extensive division of labor and mutual dependence among people.
   e. Religion helps to knit societies or groups of people together. It provides individuals with a common set of beliefs and makes both individuals and societies stronger.

3. **Max Weber (1864–1920)**
   2.2.3 Discuss Max Weber's contributions to our understanding of motivations for behavior, legitimacy and authority, and status groups and social closure.
   a. One of Weber's foundational contributions was to consider the role of individual action and behavior as a foundation for social order—the motivations that guide individual behavior.
   b. **Interpretative sociology:** science concerned itself with the interpretative understanding of social action.
   c. Protestantism seemed to be closely aligned to the most successful capitalist economies.
   d. **Power:** a person's ability to achieve his or her objective even if someone else wants to try to prevent it.
   e. **Authority:** the capacity to get people to do things because they think they should abide by the commands of the people above them.
   f. Three Types of Legitimate Domination:
      i. Traditional authority**: legitimacy** arising out of tradition. Common in societies with rigid social structures, like those in aristocratic Europe in the Middle Ages.

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ii. Charismatic authority**:** legitimacy arises out of the perception that a leader is endowed with special powers or gifts.
iii. Legal-rational authority: legitimacy based on explicit rules. Most obviously displayed in the rise of one of the pillars of modern life: bureaucracy.

g. **Status groups:** groups of people with similar kinds of attributes or identities such as those based on religion, ethnicity, or race.
h. Status-group struggles have been an important aspect of every society's **stratification system**, that is, inequalities between groups that persist over time.
i. **Social closure:** a term that captures the various ways that groups seek to close off access to opportunities by other groups.

4. **Georg Simmel (1858–1918)**

2.2.4 Explain how Georg Simmel's insights on social circles and social distance help us understand how individuals and groups relate to one another.

a. Any individual stands at the intersection point of overlapping social circles, and societies are built upon these social circles.
b. **Social distance:** a way of describing the importance of how close or distant the individuals in groups are, or groups themselves, are from one another. It describes the quality of the relationships between people, and measures the degree of closeness or distance that individuals and groups feel toward one another.
c. **Network analysis:** study of how individuals are connected to other individuals and the consequences of those connections.

5. **W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963)**

2.2.5 Explain W. E. B. Du Bois's views of the diverse ways in which racism influences the lives of African Americans and how racism produces a double consciousness.

a. His theoretical writings contained powerful insights into the patterns of race and racial inequality in America. Rejected the dominant theory of the time that European whites and blacks were biologically endowed differently in terms of intelligence, capacity, and ability to be good citizens.
b. **Racism:** the assumption that members of a racial group are inherently inferior to other races. This prevented blacks from achieving at the same level as whites. The social structure of American society was both the culprit and cause of the appearance of inferiority in the black community.
c. Racism and social structure impacts individual blacks, producing in them a kind of "double consciousness"—this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. Marginalized from the mainstream of American life, blacks led double lives, one as a black person, one as an American, and also felt devalued in the eyes of white Americans.

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2.3 What Innovations in Social Theory Emerged in the Mid-Twentieth Century?

A. New Directions In Social Theory, 1937–1965

This period saw both the elaboration of the functionalist model of society and the development of several key alternatives to Parsons's functionalist theory—most importantly conflict theory and symbolic interaction.

1. **Structural Functionalism**

2.3.1 Discuss the roles that norms, values, and institutions play in society, according to the theory of structural functionalism.

a. **Structural functionalism:** a theory of society in which individuals, groups, and the institutions of any society are guided by an overarching social system. It emphasizes that norms, values, and institutions arise and persist because they prove to be good ways of maintaining social order.
b. Three critical ideas:
    i. Enduring features of society can be explained in terms of their functional purpose.
    ii. Individuals are heavily shaped and constrained by the social system in which they are living.
    iii. Conflicts are minimized by the social system.
c. **Natural selection:** advantageous traits were selected over traits that were not, generation by generation.
d. Structural functionalism seemed to provide a way of integrating the diverse elements of any society into a single, coherent theory.

2. **Conflict Theory**

2.3.2 Discuss how conflict theory attempted to explain social inequalities.

An alternative to functionalist social theory, **conflict theory** placed social and economic inequalities under the microscope, noting that inequalities of wealth and power are not natural outcomes but rather their privileges persist because powerful individuals and groups go to great lengths to protect them. Inequality inevitably produces tensions between groups and individuals over who gets what. The work of C. Wright Mills was the most popular and influential work in the conflict theory tradition.

3. **Symbolic Interactionism**

2.3.3 Analyze how everyday social interaction lies at the heart of understanding society, according to symbolic interactionism.

a. **Symbolic interactionism:** a theory of society that focuses on how people interact with one another and the role that symbols play in those interactions. The symbolic interactionists challenged social theorists to pay more attention to the centrality of everyday acts in creating the conditions for social order.
b. Symbolic interactionists argue that understanding everyday social interaction—including basic things such as people eating together, being in a classroom together, or greeting each other on the street—lies at the heart of understanding society, as it is through such

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interactions that both individual identities as well societies are formed.

2.4 How Has a New Generation of Social Theory Evolved?

A. Social Theory Since the Turbulent 1960s

Sociology and the leading social theories underwent an enormous transition in the 1960s and the early 1970s as social movements around the world demanded, and sometimes won, important types of social change.

1. **The Revival of Marxism**

   2.4.1 Discuss neo-Marxist ideas about the capitalist state, social classes, and globalization.

   a. One central focus was to expand on the theory of the **capitalist state**, which established social programs like pensions for the elderly (what is known as Social Security in the United States), unemployment insurance, etc. to benefit poor and working class people, while simultaneously ensuring that capitalist firms remain profitable and the capitalist economy is able to grow.

   b. Emergence of a large middle class made up of professionals. Capitalism is an economic system that exists not only within countries but also in the economic relationships between countries (where rich countries are able to exploit poor countries).

   One important theory is Immanuel Wallerstein's **capitalist world system theory** – which views capitalism as an economic system that exists not just within countries but also in the economic relationships between countries.

   c. Rise of **globalization:** the increasing flows of goods and services across national borders and how the economic inequalities between countries were reproduced over time.

2. **Feminist Social Theory**

   2.4.2 Analyze the role of intersectionality in theories of gender inequality. This theory placed gender and gender inequality at the center of its theoretical lens.

   a. **Patriarchy:** the idea that societies are set up to ensure that women are systematically controlled (and devalued).

   b. **Gender** and femininity are **social constructions:** societies create gender categories, which are not natural outcomes of biological differences; these are translated into enduring inequalities between men and women.

   c. Drawing on **psychoanalysis,** Chodorow (1978) theorized that the sexual division of labor in the family, where women were primarily responsible for childrearing, created distinct development pathways for boys and girls, and created deep rooted sex differences.

   d. **Intersectionality:** Highlights the interlocking nature of inequality and focused on the linkages among disadvantaged groups.

3. **Michel Foucault and the Problem of Power**

   2.4.3 Explain Foucault's theory of how power operates in society.

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a. Role of discipline: It's a major characteristic and function of power; we are all subjected to a disciplining power that we can't see but that is all around us.
b. Foucault was interested in the ways in which institutions such as schools, prisons, mental institutions, sports teams, and others train (or retrain) individuals to conform in certain ways (including not just their minds but also their bodies).

4. **Pierre Bourdieu: A New Approach to Theorizing Social Inequality**
   2.4.4 Discuss how Bourdieu redefined classes and the nature of class differences.
   a. **Bourdieu's social theory** attempted to combine the ways in which individuals behave in the context of class differences of which they are largely unaware.
   b. Classes: groups of people who share the same position within the structure of the economy. People act differently in the world depending upon their class location. Different people have different kinds of **habituses**, depending on their upbringing and education. People from different economic classes express different cultural tastes.
   d. **Cultural capital:** refers to knowledge about what is considered "high" or respected culture, expressed in a person's capacity to be able to talk intelligently about art or literature.
   e. **Social capital:** resources whom you know and can call upon for help; **symbolic capital** consists of how a person or group is judged by a particular community, often in reference to their accomplishments.
   f. Someone who has a lot of economic capital may be able to get away with a lack of symbolic capital, whereas someone who has a lot of cultural capital or social capital may be able to rise up in the class system even if he or she is not wealthy.

5. **Analytical Sociology**
   2.4.5 Discuss the relationship between the individual and society for analytical sociologists.
   a. **Middle-range theories:** theories that make specific, researchable propositions about particular aspects of society that consciously connect social structure with individual action.
   b. **Analytical sociology:** idea that sociologists must study the relationship between the "macro" aspects of societies and the "micro" aspects of how and why individuals make the choices they do. This approach of linking the micro and macro is defined as **structural individualism**.
   c. **Self-fulfilling prophecy:** the idea that if you start to think or predict something will happen, it becomes more likely to actually happen than if you had not
   d. **Unanticipated consequences of social action:** the idea that the outcome of any action we undertake may well be unanticipated.
   e. Ideas about how the mind works in social situations are one of the hallmarks of analytical sociology.

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f. Analytical sociologists are keen to identify the key **mechanisms** that connect individuals and social structures.
g. Power of social networks has been demonstrated with the growth of social media. Networking is an important strategy for building a career or a good life.

Conclusion: Social Theory and the Sociological imagination
It is important to understand that the history of social theory in sociology is different from the history of theories in some other disciplines. Older, classical theoretical ideas continue to inform the development of new social theories. And social theories are very much part of the sociological imagination. Understanding how and why social theorists have puzzled over the questions they have underscores why sociology exists in the first place.

Incorporating Functionalism, Conflict, and Interaction Theories

This chapter explores influential early social theories that have attempted to provide frameworks for understanding societies and the relationship between individuals within these societies.

#1. What Is Social Theory?

The authors explain the three common themes that run through all major sociological theories, no matter how diverse they may be.

#2. How Did the Early Social Theorists Make Sense of the World?

The authors discuss key changes that gradually unfolded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which led the early social scientists and thinkers such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and W. E. B. Du Bois to dwell further into these transformations and attempt to make a sense of crisis they evoked in society.

#3. What Innovations in Social Theory Emerged in the Mid-Twentieth Century?

Sociology began to shift toward new and unexpected directions from the late 1930s onward. The authors expand upon Parsons's structural functionalism theory and its three critical ideas, and two important streams of criticism to this theory: the conflict theory and symbolic interactionism.

#4. How Has a New Generation of Social Theory Evolved?

The authors talk about the period of enormous social change and era of movements, such as the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, the

environmental movement, the anti–Vietnam War movement, and the beginnings of the gay and lesbian rights movement. The neo-Marxist ideas, feminist social theory, theories of power, social inequality, and analytical sociology are discussed at length.

Class Discussion Questions

#1. What Is Social Theory?

- What are social theories? What are their impact upon society?
- What are the three common themes that all major sociological theories have sought to address?

#2. How Did the Early Social Theorists Make Sense of the World?

- Discuss the foundations of modern sociology and social theory and the transitions that marked this era.
- What, according to Marx, could be the central conflict between the members of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat?
- What is the difference between mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity?
- Discuss Weber's typology of motives for action.
- What are the three types of legitimate domination?
- What is social distance? How do social networks work?

#3. What Innovations in Social Theory Emerged in the Mid-Twentieth Century?

- Explain structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

#4. How Has a New Generation of Social Theory Evolved?

- What was the objective behind reviving Marxism? Discuss the neo-Marxist social theories.
- What were the three distinct approaches to feminist social theory?
- Explain Foucault's theory of how power operates in society.
- Discuss Bourdieu's new approach to theorizing social inequality.

#5. Conclusion: Social Theory and the Sociological imagination

- How is history of social theory different from the history of theories in natural sciences?

Short Essay Questions and Exercises

- Assess Durkheim's book *Suicide.* Do you agree with Durkheim's view that suicides are influenced by social factors?

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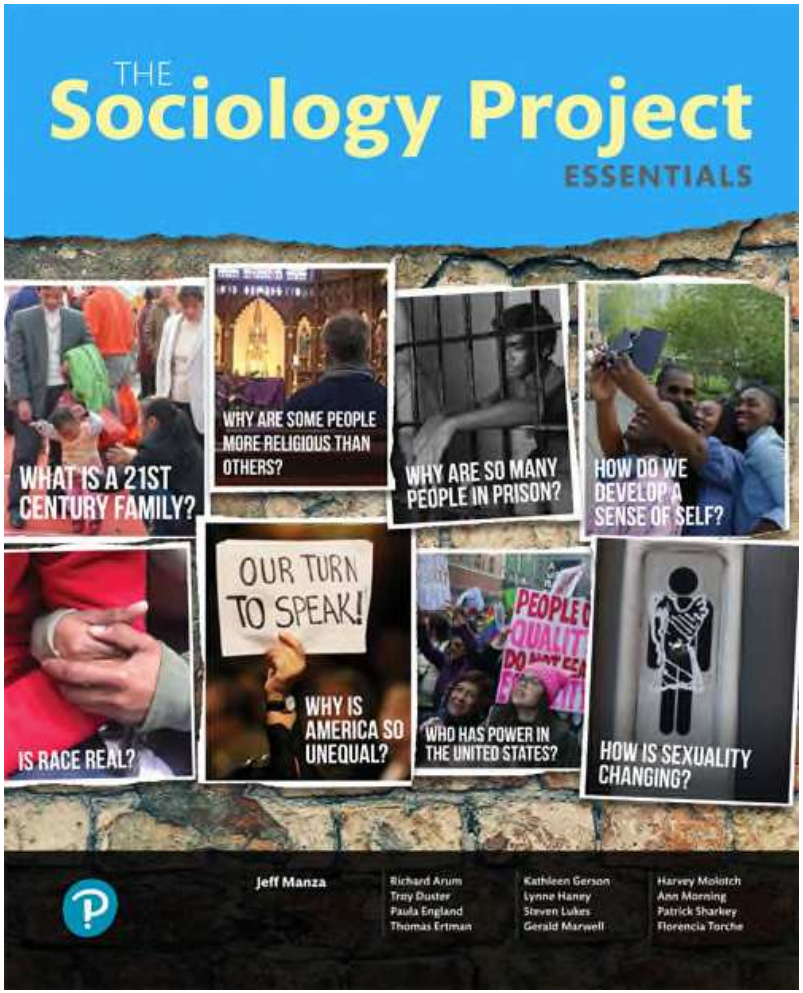
- Conduct a study on a few charismatic political leaders belonging to the late twentieth century, and the power they possessed to inspire people, breaking through the constraints of traditional authority.

- Discuss the role of racism and racial segregation in American life, and its impact on African Americans from the time of the Civil War until the present day.

- Observe "impression management" in some daily situations when people strategically act in certain ways to achieve a desired interpretation from others. Present your conclusions.

The Sociology Project: Essentials

First Edition



Chapter 2

Social Theory

Pearson

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The Big Questions: Learning Objectives (1 of 4)

2.1: What is social theory?

Learning Objectives:

- **2.1.1:** Define social theory and describe the range of different social theories.
- **2.1.2:** Identify the three common themes that all of the major sociological theories have sought to address.

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The Big Questions: Learning Objectives (2 of 4)

2.2: How did the early social theorists make sense of the world?

Learning Objectives:

- **2.2.1:** Discuss why Marx believed that societies were so heavily shaped by their economic systems.
- **2.2.2:** Analyze Emile Durkheim's explanation of what holds societies together.
- **2.2.3:** Discuss Max Weber's contributions to our understanding of motivations for behavior, legitimacy and authority, and status groups and social closure.
- **2.2.4:** Explain how Georg Simmel's insights on social circles and social distance help us understand how individuals and groups relate to one another.
- **2.2.5:** Explain W. E. B. Du Bois's views of the diverse ways in which racism influences the lives of African Americans and how racism produces a double consciousness.

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The Big Questions: Learning Objectives (3 of 4)

2.3: What innovations in social theory emerged in the mid-twentieth century?

Learning Objectives:

2.3.1: Discuss the roles that norms, values, and institutions play in society, according to the theory of structural functionalism.

2.3.2: Discuss how conflict theory attempted to explain social inequalities.

2.3.3: Analyze how everyday social interaction lies at the heart of understanding society, according to symbolic interactionism.

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The Big Questions: Learning Objectives (4 of 4)

2.4: How has a new generation of social theory evolved?

Learning Objectives:

- **2.4.1:** Discuss neo-Marxist ideas about the capitalist state, social classes, and globalization.
- **2.4.2:** Analyze the role of intersectionality in theories of gender inequality.
- **2.4.3:** Explain Foucault's theory of how power operates in society.
- **2.4.4:** Discuss how Bourdieu redefined classes and the nature of class differences.
- **2.4.5:** Discuss the relationship between the individual and society for analytical sociologists.

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Big Question 2.1

What Is Social Theory?



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Seeing the Social World Through Social Theory

- Theories enable us to see things in a different way
  - They can guide and provoke
  - They encourage us to ask new questions
  - They often incite action and critical thinking to come up with new approaches
- Social theorists look to develop understanding of how whole societies hold together and affect lives of individuals
- Social theory is central to the discipline of sociology
- It helps us develop and demonstrate our sociological imagination

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The Diversity of Social Theory

2.1.1: Define social theory and describe the range of different social theories.

- Social theories: Systematic ideas about the relationship between individuals and societies
  - Some seek to explain universal features of all societies
  - Others apply to a single topic, such as within race, gender, or religion
- Sociology has multiple and often competing social theories

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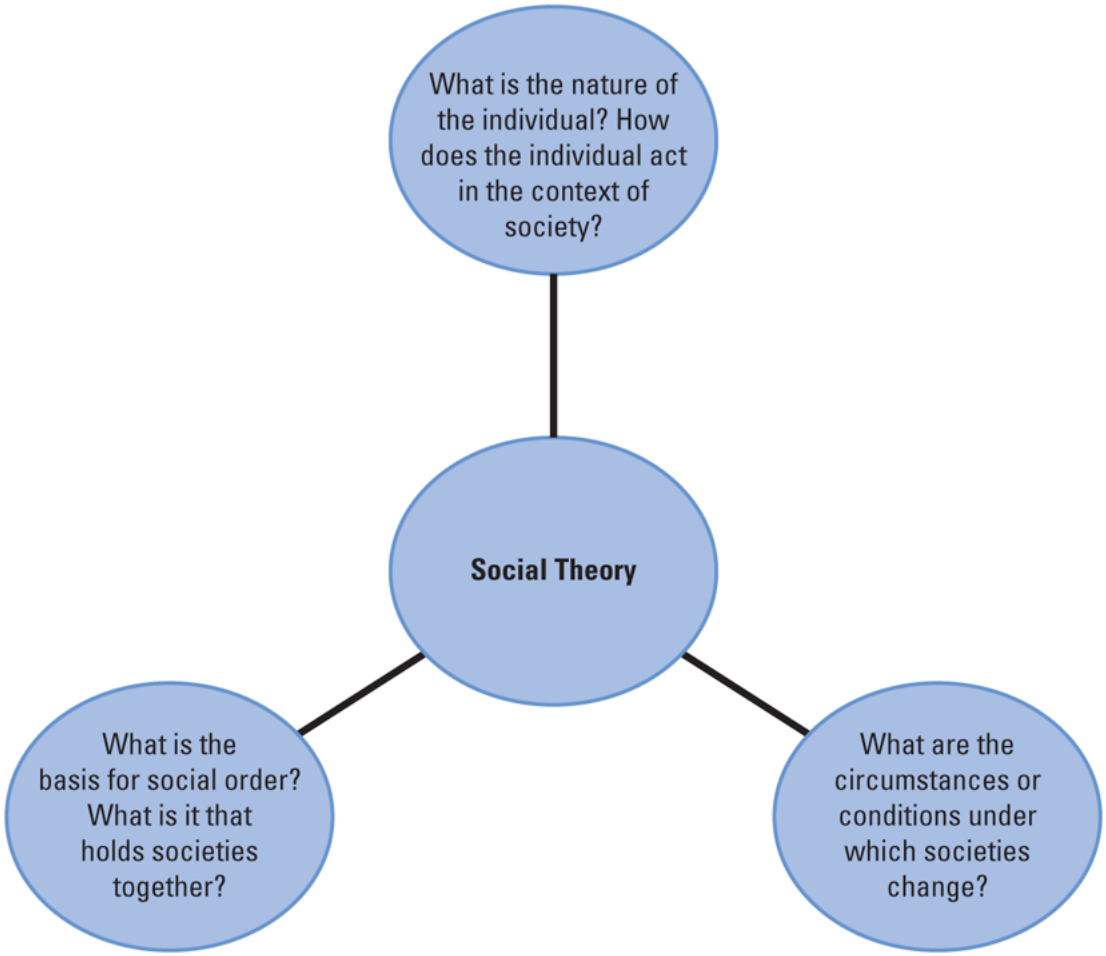
Three Common Themes

2.1.2: Identify the three common themes that all of the major sociological theories have sought to address.

- What is the nature of the individual? How does the individual act in the context of society?
- What is the basis for social order? What is it that holds societies together?
- What are the circumstances or conditions under which societies change?

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Figure 2.1: Three Common Themes



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Big Question 2.2

How Did the Early Social Theorists Make Sense of the World?



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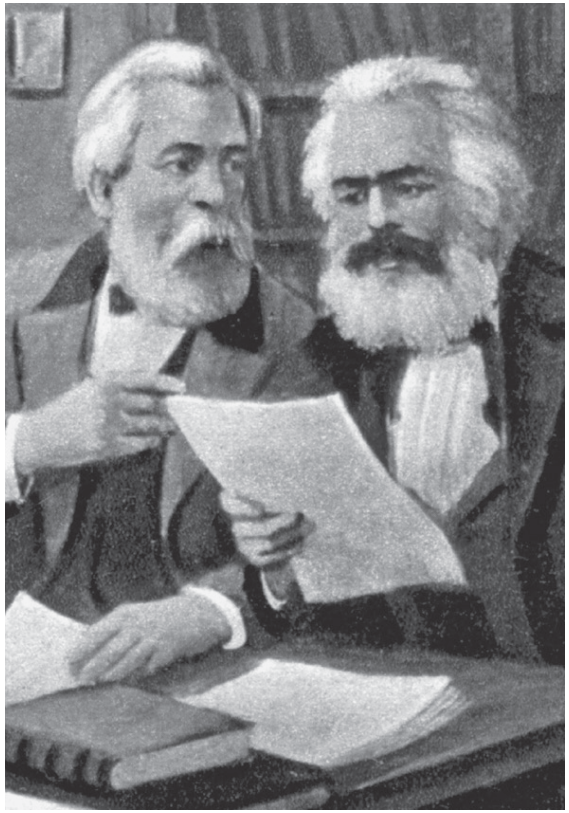
Classical Social Theory in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

- Late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: A period of enormous change, with four key transitions
  - Economy changed from agricultural to industrial
  - Movement of people from rural areas to cities
  - Predominant form of government changed from monarchies to democracies
  - Role of religion declined in public life as nonreligious ideas became important
- Social theory and sociology were both heavily impacted by these powerful social transformations

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Karl Marx (1818–1883) (1 of 3)

2.2.1: Discuss why Marx believed that societies were so heavily shaped by their economic systems.



- Marx's influence based on one key principle: The way humans produce the things they need to live is the essential foundation of any society.
- Marx: Human history best understood through history of different economic systems

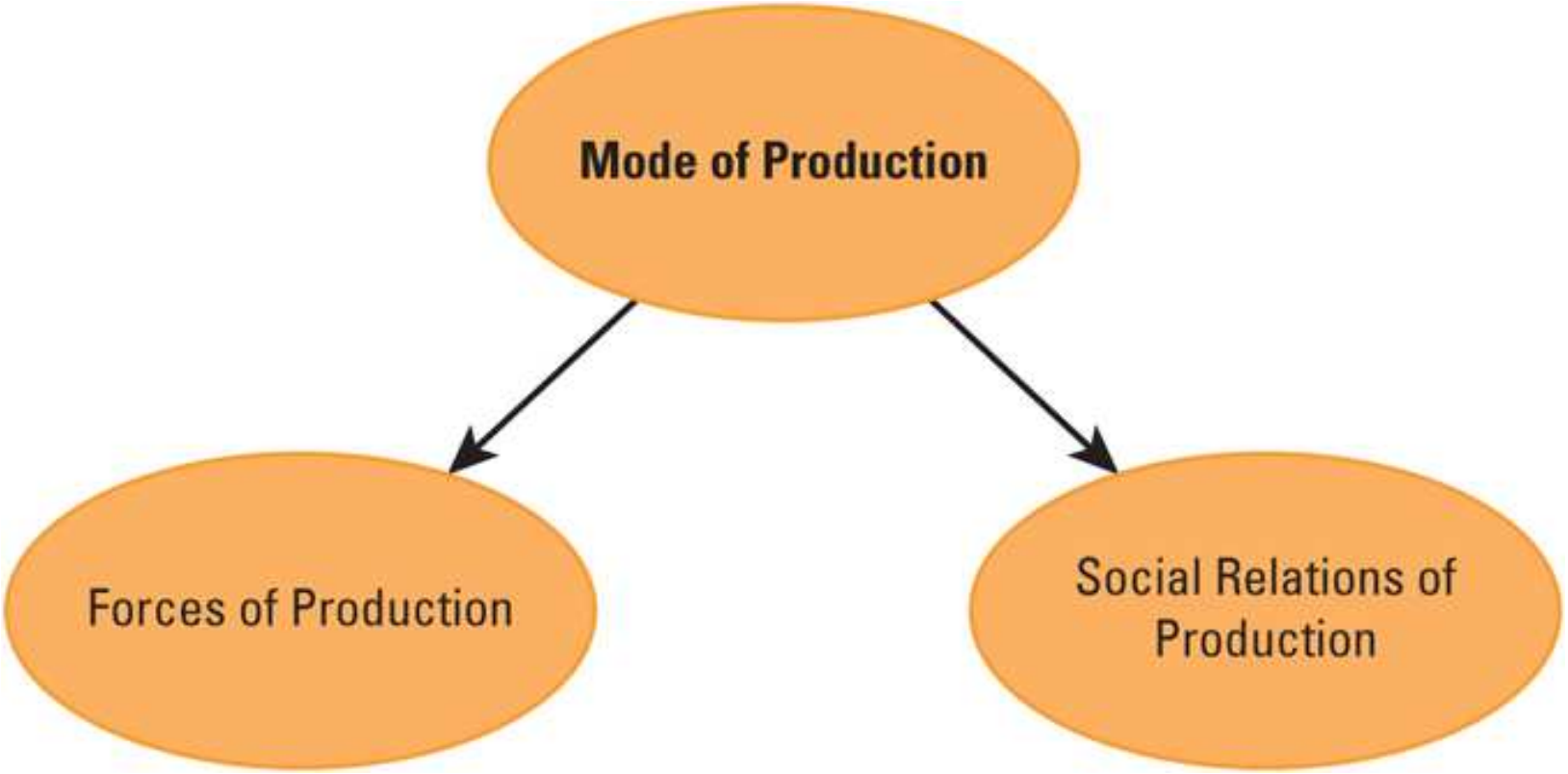
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Karl Marx (1818–1883) (2 of 3)

- Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) with Friedrich Engels
  - Divide all history into three modes of production
    - Ancient societies: Based on slavery
    - Feudalism: Characterized by largely agrarian societies with a tiny group of landowners
    - Capitalism: Economies organized around market-based exchange
  - Each mode of production has two parts:
    - Forces of production: Technological and productive capacity of a society at a point in time
    - Social relations of production: Relationships and inequalities between different kinds of people within economy

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Figure 2.2: Marx's Model of Society: Components of a Mode of Production



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Karl Marx (1818–1883) (3 of 3)

- Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867)
  - Anticipated that capitalism would become the dominant global economic system
  - Believed the conflict between members of bourgeoisie and proletariat at heart of capitalist societies
- Marx: When mode of production becomes stagnant, social revolution likely
  - Just as capitalists overthrew feudalism, proletariat would overthrow capitalism
  - Would bring about the rise of socialism; productive forces owned by everyone
- Marx's relevance today
  - Was an early theorist of globalization
  - Claimed socialist revolution most effective after long period of capitalist growth in development

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Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) (1 of 3)

2.2.2: Analyze Emile Durkheim's explanation of what holds societies together.

- Emile Durkheim considered a founding father of sociology
  - Developed the concept of the social fact
  - Provided analysis of the roots of social solidarity
  - Provided analysis of religion as a force in modern life



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Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) (2 of 3)

- Social facts: Regularities and rules of everyday life that every human community develops
- Social forces:
  - Broader than social facts, but terms are largely interchangeable
  - Important for influence on individual behavior
- Human behavior is not natural but learned
- *Suicide* (Durkheim, 1897) was a landmark in the integration of social theory and empirical research

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Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) (3 of 3)

- Social solidarity: Shared morals and connections between individuals
- Durkheim's definition of religion
  - Centers on the **sacred**, i.e., those objects, places, and symbols that are treated with exceptional deference
  - Provides individuals with a common set of beliefs and a context for joining together in a shared activity

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Max Weber (1864–1920) (1 of 4)

2.2.3: Discuss Max Weber's contributions to our understanding of motivations for behavior, legitimacy and authority, and status groups and social closure.

- Lasting contributions to social theory in writings on:
  - Motives of individual behavior
  - Forms of legitimate authority
  - Concept of the status group and process of how groups seek to monopolize opportunities for members



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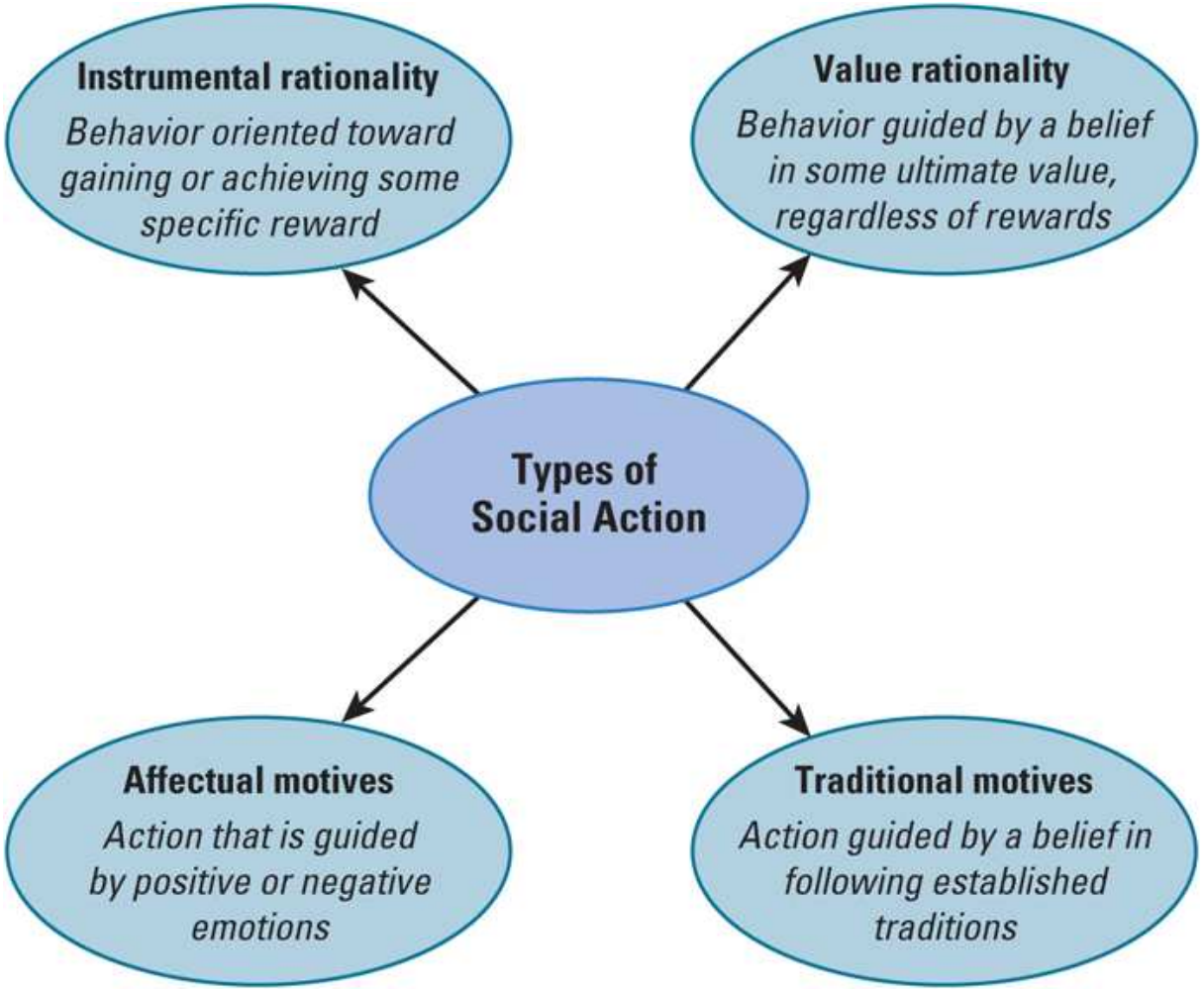
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Max Weber (1864–1920) (2 of 4)

- Interpretive sociology
  - Asked, “What motivates behavior?”
  - Introduced interpretation of individual actions
  - Proposed typology of different kinds of social action, each differentiated by motivations that guide behavior
- *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904)
  - Advanced new theory about why capitalism appeared earlier and grew faster in some parts of the world than others
  - Argued that appearance of strict forms of Protestantism altered market behavior (e.g., “The spirit of modern capitalism”; “the Protestant ethic”)

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Figure 2.3: Weber's Typology of Motives for Action



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Max Weber (1864–1920) (3 of 4)

- Legitimacy and authority
  - Made distinction between power and authority
  - Argued that obedience related to legitimacy rather than to threat of force
  - Kinds of legitimacy
    - Traditional authority
    - Charismatic authority
    - Legal-rational authority

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Max Weber (1864–1920) (4 of 4)

- Status groups: People with similar kinds of attributes or identities, such as based on religion, ethnicity, or race
- Stratification system
  - Inequalities between groups that persist over time
  - Status-group conflicts that enable a group to gain advantage over other groups are an important part of this system
- Social closure: Ways that groups seek to close off access to opportunities by other groups

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Georg Simmel (1858–1918) (1 of 2)

2.2.4: Explain how Georg Simmel's insights on social circles and social distance help us understand how individuals and groups relate to one another.

- Simmel's key concepts
  - Social distance: Attempt to map how close or distant the individuals in groups or groups themselves are from one another
  - Social networks: Groups of people who are tied together in ways they do not even notice



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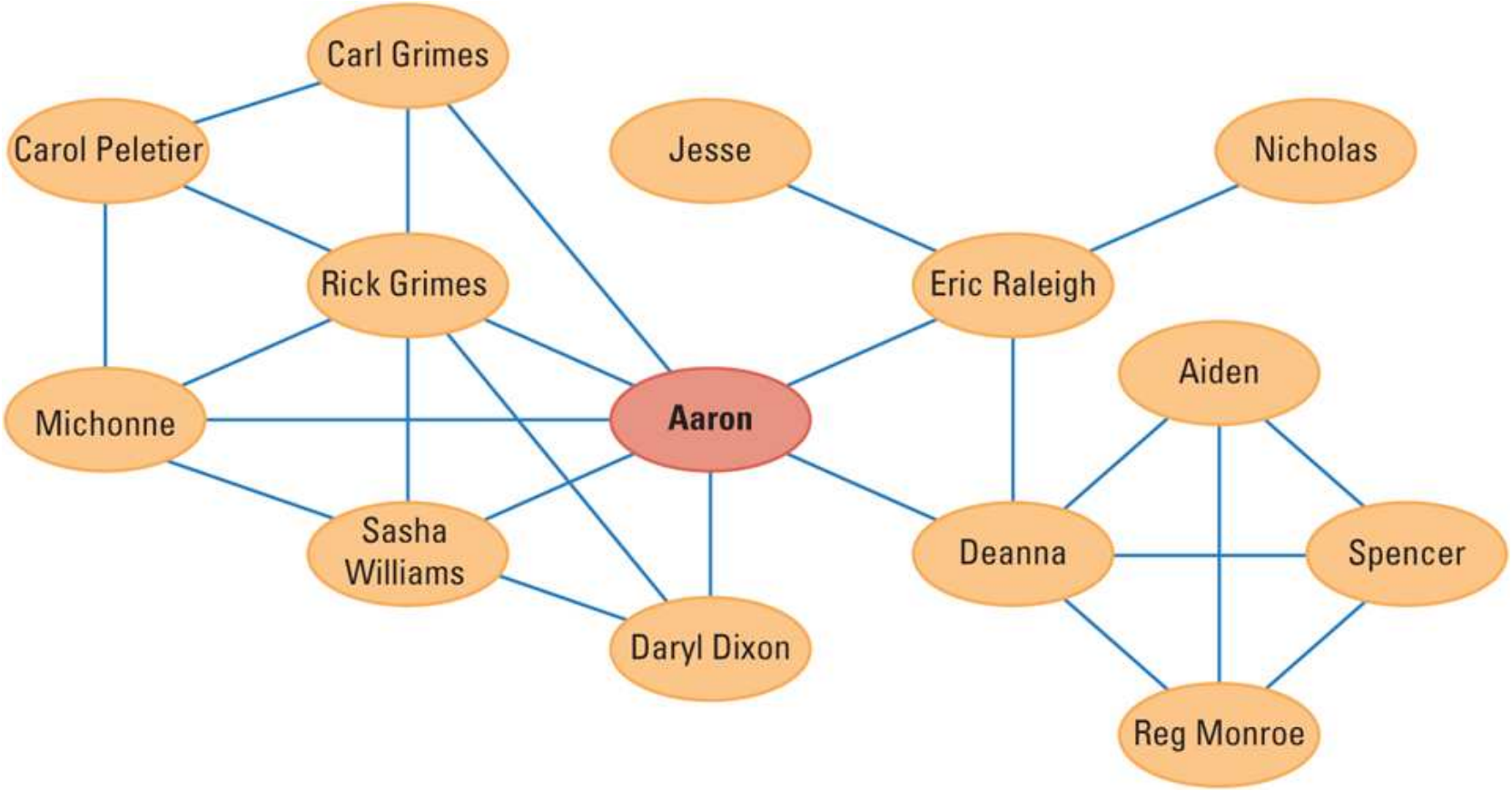
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Georg Simmel (1858–1918) (2 of 2)

- Theorized about nature of social order
  - Individual stands at the intersection point of overlapping social circles
  - Societies are built on these social circles
  - Key aspect of the rise of modern societies was the widening of the social circles
- Network analysis: Study of how individuals are connected to other individuals and consequences of those connections
  - An important consequence of such connections is development and acceptance of shared values and and norms
  - Individuals are members of multiple social circles and as a result may have to navigate competing norms and values

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Figure 2.5 An Example of a Social Network Using Characters from the Television Show *The Walking Dead*



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W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) (1 of 3)

2.2.5: Explain W. E. B. Du Bois's views of the diverse ways in which racism influences the lives of African Americans and how racism produces a double consciousness.



- W. E. B. Du Bois: A founder of the NAACP
- His writings provide powerful insights about patterns of race and racial inequality in America

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W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) (2 of 3)

- Du Bois's key concepts
  - Racial inequality was not rooted in biological differences but manufactured in American society
  - Every aspect of African Americans' lives was shaped by limited opportunities
- Developed theory of how racism prevented black people from achieving at same levels of status and power as white people

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W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) (3 of 3)

- Developed theory of how racism and social structure produced "double consciousness" in black people
  - Black people lived multiple lives—one as black, one as American
  - Suffered from having to view themselves this way

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Big Question 2.3

What Innovations in Social Theory Emerged in the Mid-Twentieth Century?



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New Directions in Social Theory, 1937–1965

- 1930s saw a shift in direction of social theory
- Leadership in development of social theory and sociology passed from being primarily located in Europe to America
- Talcott Parsons developed a functionalist theory that would be one of dominant traditions in social theory until 1960s
- Alternate theories of the era included both conflict theory and symbolic interactionism

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Structural Functionalism (1 of 2)

2.3.1: Discuss the roles that norms, values, and institutions play in society, according to the theory of structural functionalism.

- Talcott Parsons's theory of structural functionalism
  - Key elements of any society—including the economy, culture, and government—were all organized around the broader (and often hidden) needs of the society as a whole
  - Individuals, groups, and the institutions of any society are guided by an overarching social system
    - Social system contains powerful norms, values, and institutions
    - Within the social system, individuals take on certain roles throughout life

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Structural Functionalism (2 of 2)

- Three ideas of structural functionalism:
  - Enduring features of society can ultimately be explained in terms of their "functional" purpose.
  - Individuals are heavily shaped and constrained by the social system in which they are living.
  - Conflicts are minimized by the social system as individuals learn (or "know") and more or less accept their "place."

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Conflict Theory

2.3.2: Discuss how conflict theory attempted to explain social inequalities.

- Conflict theory
  - Provides alternative to functionalist social theory
  - Attempts to explain social inequalities that produce tensions between groups
  - Ralf Dahrendorf (1929–2009): Founding figure
- C. Wright Mills (1918–1962)
  - Posited that America in the 1950s was governed by “power elite” that strove to protect privileges and dominated government policy making
  - Introduced the concept of the “sociological imagination”

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Symbolic Interactionism (1 of 2)

2.3.3: Analyze how everyday social interaction lies at the heart of understanding society, according to symbolic interactionism.

- Symbolic interactionism: Theory suggesting social order starts from individuals and meanings they give to objects, events, and relationships with others
- Founders: George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) and Herbert Blumer (1900–1987), University of Chicago

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Symbolic Interactionism (2 of 2)

- Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959)
  - Argued that we constantly seek to influence how people interpret our behaviors by strategically acting in certain ways to achieve a desired interpretation
  - Said we engage in "impression management," organizing behavior to communicate ideas about who we are

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Big Question 2.4

How Has a New Generation of Social Theory Evolved?



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Social Theory Since the Turbulent 1960s

- Sociology and the leading social theories underwent an enormous transition in the 1960s and the early 1970s
  - Shift away from functionalism
  - Shift from conflict theory to other critical theories
  - Symbolic interactionism remained central
  - New theories related to social change and social movements emerged

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The Revival of Marxism (1 of 2)

2.4.1: Discuss neo-Marxist ideas about the capitalist state, social classes, and globalization.

- Neo-Marxists: New generation of Marxist social theorists
  - Argued that capitalist state could, and had, forced powerful economic classes to make “concessions” to working class (improving living standards of all citizens)
  - Developed a more elaborate understanding of the nature of social classes and class structure within capitalist societies
- Erik Olin Wright: “Embarrassment of the middle classes” required a new body of theory about how modern societies are divided

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The Revival of Marxism (2 of 2)

- Neo-Marxist social theorists revived study of capitalism as a global economic order
  - Immanuel Wallerstein's capitalist world system theory: Views capitalism as an economic system that exists both within and between countries
  - Robert Brenner: Analysis of global crisis of capitalism offered an alternative view

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Feminist Social Theory (1 of 2)

2.4.2: Analyze the role of intersectionality in theories of gender inequality.

- Feminist social theory
  - Placed gender and gender inequality at the center of its theoretical lens
  - Challenged many of the presuppositions of classical social theory for its male-centered biases
- Simone de Beauvoir
  - Saw gender and femininity as social constructions
  - Believed that societies create gender categories, and these differences typically are translated into inequalities

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Feminist Social Theory (2 of 2)

- Three key approaches to social theory:
  - Early feminist scholars searched for cause of gender inequality
  - Next wave of theorists posited that existence of gender needed to be examined and challenged
  - More recent theory attempts to view gender in relationship to other social hierarchies

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Michel Foucault and the Problem of Power

2.4.3: Explain Foucault's theory of how power operates in society.

- Foucault's contributions
  - Was particularly interested in the role of "discipline" across societies—both how we discipline ourselves and how others (and institutions) try to discipline us
  - Saw discipline as both a major characteristic and a function of power
    - Argues that everyone disciplines everyone else

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Pierre Bourdieu: A New Approach to Theorizing Social Inequality (1 of 2)

2.4.4: Discuss how Bourdieu redefined classes and the nature of class differences.

- Pierre Bourdieu focused on how we understand mechanics of social inequality
  - Attempted to analyze ways in which individuals behave in context of class differences of which they are unaware
  - Enlarged definition of “classes” to include multiple dimensions
- At core of his work is everyday actions people undertake
  - People act differently depending on class location
  - People have different habituses, depending on upbringing and education
  - those who have cultural capital are those whom we judge to be “cultured.”

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Pierre Bourdieu: A New Approach to Theorizing Social Inequality (2 of 2)

- Argued that groups in society fight over cultural resources
  - Cultural capital: Knowledge about what is considered “high” or respected culture
  - Social capital: Resources based on who you know and can call on for help when you need it
  - Symbolic capital: Refers to reputation; consists of how a person or group is judged by a particular community, often in reference to someone’s accomplishments

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Analytical Sociology (1 of 2)

2.4.5: Discuss the relationship between the individual and society for analytical sociologists.

- Middle-range theories make specific, researchable propositions about aspects of society that consciously connect social structure with individual action
- Structural individualism: Theory that starts from proposition that societies rest on choices and actions that individuals make, although choices and actions that follow are always constrained by society as a whole

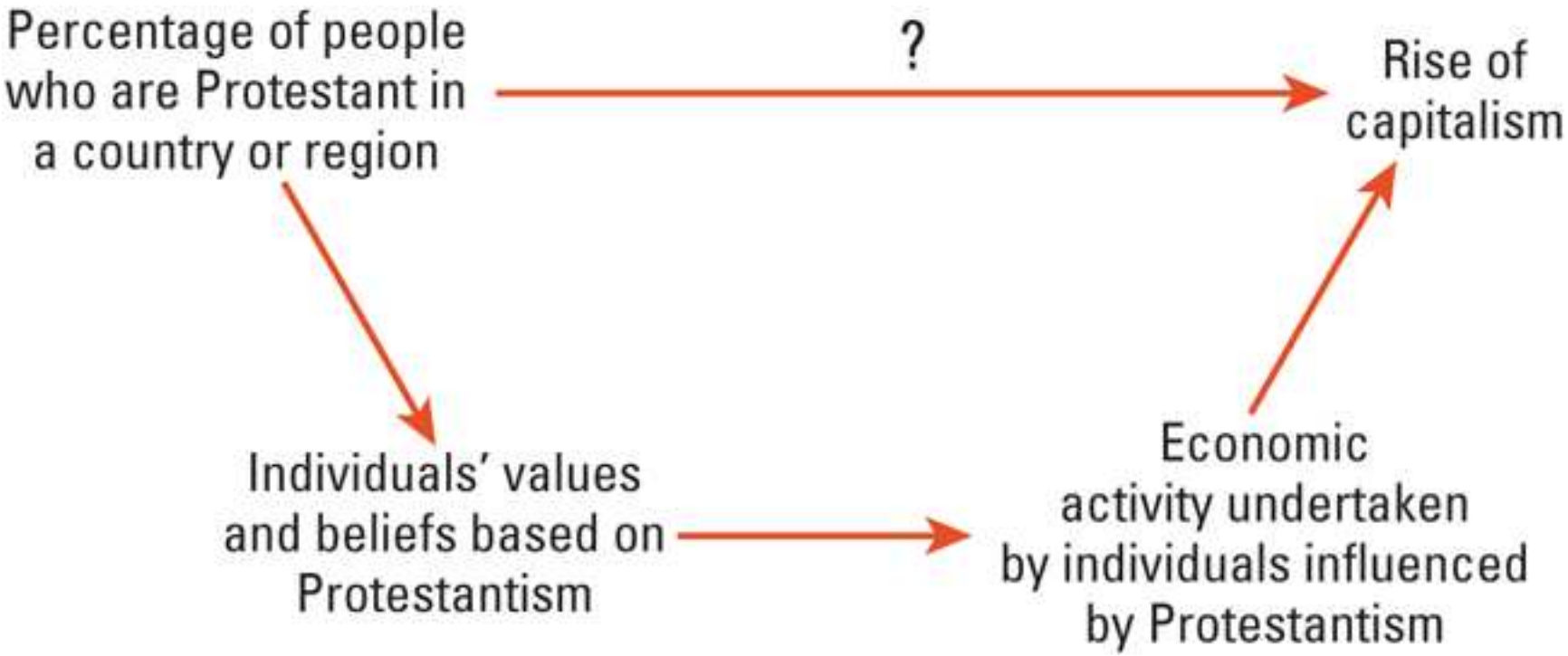
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Analytical Sociology (2 of 2)

- Founding figures of analytical sociology
  - Robert Merton (1910–2002)
    - Theories should be neither too general nor too specific
    - Self-fulling prophesy and unanticipated consequences
  - James Coleman (1926–1995)
    - Importance of micro (individual) sociology
    - Coleman's Boat

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Figure 2.7: Coleman's Boat



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