Sociology v4 1st edition Barkan Solutions Manual

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Sociology v4 1st edition Barkan Solutions Manual

Chapter 1
Sociology and the Sociological Perspective

1. The Sociological Perspective

- Define the sociological perspective.
- Provide examples of how Americans may not be as "free" as they think.
- Explain what is meant by considering individuals as "social beings."

Section Outline

- Though we live in a free country, we have less freedom than we think. Although we have the right to choose how to believe and act, perhaps many of our choices are affected—in ways in which we are often unaware—by our society and its culture and social institutions.
- The basic point is this: society shapes our attitudes and behavior even if it does not determine them altogether. We still have freedom, but that freedom is limited by society's expectations.
- Our views and behavior depend to some degree on our social location in society—our gender, race, social class, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, and so forth. Thus, **society** as a whole and also our own social backgrounds affect our attitudes and behaviors.
    - The 2020 exit polls provide an example of this—Black, Latinx, young, and college-educated people were especially likely to prefer Joe Biden. These patterns illustrate the influence of our social backgrounds on many aspects of our lives.
- Our social backgrounds also affect one other important part of our lives, and that is our **life chances**—our chances of being healthy, wealthy, well-educated, and, more generally, of living a good, happy life.
- The influence of our **social environment** in all these respects is the fundamental understanding that sociology aims to present.
- At the heart of **sociology** is the **sociological perspective**, the view that our social backgrounds influence our attitudes, behavior, and life chances.
- Although we all differ from each other in many respects, we share with many other people basic aspects of our social backgrounds, especially gender, race and ethnicity, and social class.

Key Takeaways

- According to the sociological perspective, social backgrounds influence attitudes, behavior, and life chances.
- Social backgrounds influence but do not totally determine attitudes and behavior.
- Americans may be less "free" in their thoughts and behavior than they normally think they are.

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Exercises

1. Do you think that society constrains our thoughts and behaviors as the text argues? Why or why not?
   Answer: Students should be able to identify the sociological pressures acting upon an individual's behaviors. Despite the fact that this is a world of choice, the options provided are limited by the society we live in. Students should be able to debate using good examples.

2. Describe how one aspect of your own social background has affected an important attitude you hold, a behavior in which you have engaged, or your ability to do well in life (life chances).
   Answer: Aspects such as ethnicity, family values, gender, etc. can affect social background. The students should explain how one of these social factors has influenced the formation their attitude. The students should also analyze if this attitude has helped them do well in life or has worsened their chances.

Additional Exercise

1. What is the sociological perspective? Do you believe in it? Why or why not?
   Answer: The sociological perspective is the belief that people's social backgrounds influence their attitudes, behaviors, and life chances. Opposing views may center on the role of absolute choice for the individual. The class may be divided into groups to conduct a healthy debate on this.

2. Understanding Society

- Explain the debunking motif.
- Define the sociological imagination.
- Explain what is meant by the blaming-the-victim ideology.

Section Outline

- The goal of sociology is to help us discover the "many layers of meaning" of social reality. The first wisdom of sociology according to Peter L. Berger is that "things are not what they seem."
- Debunking is a process of questioning actions and ideas that are usually taken for granted. Debunking refers to looking behind the facade of everyday life. It refers to looking at the behind-the-scenes patterns and processes that shape the behavior observed in the social world. The **debunking motif** is a theme of sociology which is to look for levels of reality other than those given in the official interpretations of society.
- **Social structure** refers to the social patterns through which a society is organized.
- Social structure can be either horizontal or vertical.

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    - **Horizontal social structure** refers to the social relationships and social and physical characteristics of communities to which individuals belong.
    - **Vertical social structure**, more commonly called **social inequality**, refers to ways in which a society or group ranks people in a hierarchy, with some "more equal" than others.
- Sociology stresses that individual problems are often rooted in problems stemming from the horizontal and vertical social structures of society. This key insight informed C. Wright Mills's classic distinction between **personal troubles** and **public issues**.
    - Personal troubles refer to problems affecting individuals that are often attributed to an individual's own failings; examples include eating disorders, divorce, and unemployment.
    - Public issues refer to problems in society that affect many individuals and thus help explain the problems that individuals experience.
    - Mills felt that many problems ordinarily considered private troubles are best understood as public issues, and coined the term **sociological imagination** to refer to the ability to appreciate the structural basis for individual problems.
        - An example of Mill's viewpoint is the rising unemployment rate that stemmed from the 2020 pandemic. When our society and economy shut down in March and April of 2020, millions of people lost their jobs through no fault of their own. Their sudden unemployment was best understood as a public issue, not just a personal trouble.
- **Blaming the victim** vs. **blaming the system**: William Ryan said that Americans typically "blame the victim" when they think about the reasons for social problems like poverty, unemployment, and crime. Americans tend to think of social problems as personal troubles rather than public issues.
    - A blaming-the-victim approach points to solutions to social problems like poverty and illiteracy that are very different from those suggested by a more structural approach that "blames the system."
    - If we blame the victim, we would spend our limited dollars addressing the personal failings of individuals who suffer from poverty, illiteracy, poor health, eating disorders, and other difficulties.
    - If we blame the system, we would focus our attention on the various social conditions (run-down schools, harmful cultural standards of female beauty, and the like) that account for these difficulties.
- Early U.S. sociologists emphasized the use of sociological research to achieve social reform, and today's public sociology reflects the historical roots of sociology in this regard.

Key Takeaways

- The debunking motif involves seeing beyond taken-for-granted assumptions of social reality.

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- According to C. Wright Mills, the sociological imagination involves the ability to recognize that private troubles are rooted in public issues and structural problems.
- Early U.S. sociologists emphasized the use of sociological research to achieve social reform, and today's public sociology reflects the historical roots of sociology in this regard.

Exercises

1. Select an example of a "private trouble" and explain how and why it may reflect a structural problem in society.
   Answer: Private troubles such as eating disorders are caused by larger structural problems in the society. Most people with eating disorders are women, not men. This gender difference points that there is something about being a woman in American society that makes eating disorders so much more common. Students are encouraged to discuss the structural problems associated with it.

2. Do you think it is important to emphasize the potential use of sociological research to achieve social reform? Why or why not?
   Answer: Private troubles are often caused by a larger structural problem in the society. Sociological research is needed to identify these structural problems and to initiate corrective actions. Students should conduct secondary research to identify instances when sociological research has helped in directing social reform (as in government sponsored surveys, studies, etc.).

Additional Exercises

1. Critically examine the typical American viewpoint of 'blaming the victim' rather than 'blaming the system.' What according to you is the source of such an ideology?
   Answer: William Ryan (1976) said that Americans typically blame the victim when they think about the reasons for social problems such as poverty, unemployment, and crime. If instead we blame the system, we would focus our attention on the various social conditions (decrepit schools, cultural standards of female beauty, and the like) that account for these difficulties. A sociological perspective suggests that the latter approach is ultimately needed to help us deal successfully with the social problems facing us today.

3. Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

- Distinguish macro approaches in sociology from micro approaches.
- Summarize the most important beliefs and assumptions of functionalism and conflict theory.
- Summarize the most important beliefs and assumptions of symbolic interactionism and exchange theory.

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Section Outline

- Sociologists' views basically divide into two camps: **macrosociology** and **microsociology**.
    - Macrosociologists focus on the big picture, which usually means such things as social structure, social institutions, and social, political, and economic change.
    - Microsociologists study social interaction. They look at how families, co-workers, and other small groups of people interact; why they interact the way they do; and at how they interpret the meanings of their interaction and of the social settings in which they find themselves.
    - Both types of approaches can give us a valuable understanding, but together they offer an even richer understanding than either approach can offer alone.
- Two perspectives dominate within the macro camp: functionalism and conflict theory. Within the micro camp, two traditions exist: symbolic interactionism and utilitarianism.
- The theory snapshot from **Table 1.1**:
    - *Functionalism*: Social stability is necessary to have a strong society, and adequate socialization and social integration are necessary to achieve social stability. Society's social institutions perform important functions to help ensure social stability. Slow social change is desirable, but rapid social change threatens social order.
    - *Conflict theory*: Society is characterized by pervasive inequality based on social class, gender, and other factors. Far-reaching social change is needed to reduce or eliminate social inequality and to create an egalitarian society. Conflict theory is a macro theory.
    - *Symbolic Interactionism*: People construct their roles as they interact; they do not merely learn the roles that society has set out for them. In so doing, they rely heavily on symbols such as words and gestures to reach a shared understanding of their interaction. Symbolic interactionism is a micro theory.
    - *Utilitarianism (Rational choice theory or Exchange theory)*: People act to maximize their advantages in a given situation and to reduce their disadvantages. Social order is possible because people realize it will be in their best interests to cooperate and to make compromises when necessary. Utilitarianism is a micro theory.
- **Functionalism**, also known as the functionalist perspective, arose out of two great revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the French Revolution of 1789 and the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century.
    - Émile Durkheim was largely responsible for the sociological perspective as we now know it.
        - Socialization and social integration help establish a strong set of social rules—or, as Durkheim called it, a strong **collective conscience**—that is needed for a stable society.

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        - Durkheim believed that social disorder can result from a weakening of society's moral cocoon. One such external force is **anomie**, or normlessness, which results from situations, such as periods of rapid social change, when social norms and social ties have weakened.
- In many ways, **conflict theory** is the opposite of functionalism, yet ironically also grew out of the Industrial Revolution.
    - Instead of fearing the breakdown of social order that mass violence represented, Marx and Engels felt that revolutionary violence was needed to eliminate capitalism and the misery they saw as its inevitable result.
    - According to Marx and Engels, a capitalist society features two classes based on the ownership of the means of production.
        - The **bourgeoisie**, or ruling class, owns the means of production.
        - The **proletariat**, or working class, does not own the means of production and instead is oppressed and exploited by the bourgeoisie.
    - Capitalists try to keep wages as low as possible and spend as little money as possible on workplace conditions, which can lead workers to develop **class consciousness.** This can then lead them to revolt against the bourgeoisie to eliminate the oppression and exploitation they suffer.
    - **Feminist theory**, considered as a specific application of conflict theory, concerns gender inequality conflicts rather than class inequalities.
    - **Critical race theory**, or CRT, is another specific application of conflict theory.
        - A key insight of CRT scholars is the concept of **intersectionality**, a term coined to describe the triple burden that low-income women of color face in American society from classism, racism, and sexism.
- **Symbolic interactionism** focuses on the interaction of individuals and on how they interpret their interaction.
    - The roots of interactionism lie in the work in the early 1900s of American sociologists, social psychologists, and philosophers who were interested in human consciousness and action. Herbert Blumer, a sociologist at the University of Chicago, built upon their writings to develop a view he called "symbolic interactionism."
    - According to symbolic interactionists, social order is possible because people learn what various symbols like shaking hands mean and apply these meanings to different kinds of situations.
- **Utilitarianism** assumes that people act to maximize their pleasure and to reduce their pain. In sociology, utilitarianism is commonly called **exchange theory** or **rational choice theory**.
- Functionalist theory tends to support the status quo and thus seems to favor existing inequalities based on race and ethnicity, social class, gender, and other dimensions.
- Conversely, conflict theory emphasizes how social institutions contribute to social inequality, and it neglects these institutions' contributions to social stability.

Key Takeaways

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- Sociological theories may be broadly divided into macro approaches and micro approaches.
- Functionalism emphasizes the importance of social institutions for social stability and implies that far-reaching social change will be socially harmful.
- Conflict theory emphasizes social inequality and suggests that far-reaching social change is needed to achieve a just society.
- Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the social meanings and understandings that individuals derive from their social interactions.
- Utilitarianism emphasizes that people act in their own self-interest by calculating whether potential behaviors will be more advantageous than disadvantageous.

Exercises

1. In thinking about how you view society and individuals, do you consider yourself more of a macro thinker or a micro thinker?
   Answer: Macro sociologists focus on the "large picture," which usually means things like social structure, social institutions, and social, political, and economic change. They look at the large-scale social forces that change the course of human society and the lives of individuals. Micro sociologists, on the other hand, study social interaction. They look at how families, co-workers, and other small groups of people interact, at why they interact the way they do, and at how they interpret the meanings of their interaction and of the social settings in which they find themselves.

2. At this point in your study of sociology, which one of the four sociological traditions sounds most appealing to you? Why?
   Answer: Within the broad macro camp, two perspectives dominate: functionalism and conflict theory. Within the micro camp, two traditions exist: symbolic interactionism and utilitarianism. The students could select one of these traditions and explain the reasons why the tradition appeals to them.

Additional Exercise

1. Explain the mechanisms that can be used to limit individual aspirations.
   Answer: Two related social mechanisms, socialization and social integration, can be used to limit individual's aspirations. Socialization helps us learn society's rules and the need to cooperate, as people end up generally agreeing on important norms and values, while social integration, or our ties to other people and to social institutions such as religion and the family, helps to socialize us and to integrate us into society and reinforce our respect for its rules.

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Sociology: Understanding and Changing the Social World, Comprehensive Edition, Version 4.0

Steven E. Barkan

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Chapter 1
Sociology and the Sociological Perspective

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Section 1.1: Learning Objectives

1. Define the sociological perspective.
2. Provide examples of how Americans may not be as “free” as they think.
3. Explain what is meant by considering individuals as “social beings.”

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The Sociological Perspective

- Society shapes our attitudes and behavior
- The freedom we have is limited by society's expectations
- Our views and behavior depend to some degree on our gender, race, social class, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, and so forth
- Our life chances are affected by our social backgrounds
  - **life chances:** the degree to which people succeed in life in such areas as education, income, and health

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The Sociological Perspective (continued)

- **social environment:** a general term for social backgrounds and other aspects of society
- **sociology:** the scientific study of social behavior and social institutions
- **sociological perspective:** the belief that people's social backgrounds influence their attitudes, behaviors, and life chances

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The Sociological Perspective (continued, 2)

- **society:** a group of people who live within a defined territory and who share a culture
  - It does not determine our beliefs, behavior, and life chances in totality
    - Individual differences are important
    - Disciplines like psychology are crucial for the complete understanding of human action and beliefs
    - Even the most individual attitudes and behaviors such as voting decisions reflect to some degree our social backgrounds and the society to which we belong



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Section 1.2: Learning Objectives

1. Explain the debunking motif.
2. Define the sociological imagination.
3. Explain what is meant by the blaming-the-victim ideology.

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The Debunking Motif

- **debunking motif:** it is a theme of sociology in which the aim is to go beyond superficial understandings of social reality
- This can help to recognize the value of alternative understandings
- In this manner, sociology can challenge conventional understandings about social reality and social institutions

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Social Structure and the Sociological Imagination

- **social structure:** the social patterns through which society is organized
  - **horizontal social structure:** the social relationships and social and physical characteristics of communities to which individuals belong
  - **vertical social structure:** a term used interchangeably with social inequality
  - **social inequality:** the unequal distribution of resources, such as wealth, that a society values
- People's positions in society's hierarchy in turn often have profound consequences for their attitudes, behaviors, and life chances

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Social Structure and the Sociological Imagination (continued)

- Sociology stresses that individual problems are rooted in problems stemming from the horizontal and vertical social structures of society
  - **personal troubles:** C. Wright Mills's term for the personal problems that many individuals experience
  - **public issues:** C. Wright Mills's term for problems in society that underlie personal troubles
- **sociological imagination:** from C. Wright Mills, the realization that personal troubles are rooted in public issues

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Social Structure and the Sociological Imagination (continued, 2)

- **blaming the victim:** the belief that people experiencing difficulties are to blame for these problems
  - If we blame the victim, we would spend our limited dollars addressing the personal failings of individuals who suffer from poverty, illiteracy, poor health, eating disorders, and other difficulties
- **blaming the system:** the belief that personal difficulties stem from problems in society
  - If instead we blame the system, we would focus our attention on the various social conditions (run-down schools, harmful cultural standards of female beauty, and the like) that account for these difficulties, as many contemporary observers urge

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Sociology and Social Reform: Public Sociology

- Early U.S. sociologists emphasized the use of sociological research to achieve social reform
  - Early Chicago sociologists aimed to use their research to achieve social reform and to reduce poverty and its related effects
  - In 1951, some sociologists formed a new national association, the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), whose primary aim today remains the use of sociological knowledge to achieve social justice
  - In 2004, the president of the American Sociological Association, Michael Burawoy, called for public sociology, or the use of sociological insights and findings to address social
  - Today's public sociology reflects the historical roots of sociology in this regard issues and achieve social change

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Section 1.3: Learning Objectives

1. Distinguish macro approaches in sociology from micro approaches.
2. Summarize the most important beliefs and assumptions of functionalism and conflict theory.
3. Summarize the most important beliefs and assumptions of symbolic interactionism and exchange theory.

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Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

- **macrosociology:** that part of sociology that deals with issues involving large-scale social change and social institutions
- **microsociology:** that part of sociology that deals with social interaction in small settings



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Table 1.1: Theory Snapshot

Theoretical Perspective	Major Assumptions
Functionalism	Social stability is necessary to have a strong society, and adequate socialization and social integration are necessary to achieve social stability. Society's social institutions perform important functions to help ensure social stability. Slow social change is desirable, but rapid social change threatens social order. Functionalism is a macro theory.
Conflict theory	Society is characterized by pervasive inequality based on social class, gender, and other factors. Far-reaching social change is needed to reduce or eliminate social inequality and to create an egalitarian society. Conflict theory is a macro theory.

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Table 1.1: Theory Snapshot (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	Major Assumptions
Symbolic interactionism	People construct their roles as they interact; they do not merely learn the roles that society has set out for them. As this interaction occurs, individuals negotiate their definitions of the situations in which they find themselves and socially construct the reality of these situations. In so doing, they rely heavily on symbols such as words and gestures to reach a shared understanding of their interaction. Symbolic interactionism is a micro theory.
Utilitarianism (rational choice theory or exchange theory)	People act to maximize their advantages in a given situation and to reduce their disadvantages. If they decide that benefits outweigh disadvantages, they will initiate the interaction or continue it if it is already under way. If they instead decide that disadvantages outweigh benefits, they will decline to begin interacting or stop the interaction if already begun. Social order is possible because people realize it will be in their best interests to cooperate and to make compromises when necessary. Utilitarianism is a micro theory.

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Functionalism

- **Functionalism** arose out of two great revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:
  - French Revolution of 1789
  - The Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century
- Émile Durkheim was largely responsible for the sociological perspective as we now know it
  - Emphasized two related social mechanisms—socialization and social integration
  - These mechanisms help establish a strong set of social rules, or a strong **collective conscience:** the combined norms of society
  - Believed social disorder can result from weakening of society's moral cocoon—one such external force is **anomie:** normlessness, a state in which social norms are unclear

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Conflict Theory

- In many ways, **conflict theory** is the opposite of functionalism, yet ironically also grew out of the Industrial Revolution
- According to Marx and Engels, a capitalist society features two classes based on the ownership of the means of production:
  - The **bourgeoisie:** ruling class, owns the means of production
  - The **proletariat:** working class, does not own the means of production and instead is oppressed and exploited by the bourgeoisie
- Capitalists try to keep wages as low as possible and spend as little money as possible on workplace conditions
  - Lead workers to develop **class consciousness:** awareness of one's placement in the social structure and the interests arising from this placement

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Conflict Theory (continued)

- **Feminist theory**, considered as a specific application of conflict theory
  - Concerns gender inequality conflicts rather than class inequalities
  - Society is filled with gender inequality such that women are treated as the subordinate sex in many dimensions of social, political, and economic life
- **Critical race theory**, or CRT, is another specific application of conflict theory.
  - Key insight of CRT scholars is the concept of **intersectionality:** a term coined to describe the triple burden that low-income women of color face in American society from classism, racism, and sexism

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Symbolic Interactionism

- **Symbolic interactionism** focuses on the interaction of individuals and on how they interpret their interaction
  - Roots lie in the work in the early 1900s of American sociologists, social psychologists, and philosophers interested in human consciousness and action
  - Social order is possible because people learn:
    - What various symbols like shaking hands mean
    - To apply these meanings to different kinds of situations

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Utilitarianism

- **Utilitarianism** assumes that people act to maximize their pleasure and to reduce their pain
  - Originated in the work of such eighteenth-century thinkers as the Italian economist Cesare Beccaria and the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham
  - Often called **exchange theory** or **rational choice theory**
- Emphasizes that people decide to engage in a behavior only after first deciding that the potential benefits will outweigh the potential disadvantages
  - Social order possible because people realize it will be in their best interests to cooperate and to make compromises when necessary

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Comparing Macro and Micro Perspectives

- Problems with functionalist theory
  - Support the status quo
  - Minimizes the ways in which social institutions contribute to social inequality
- Problems with conflict theory
  - Overlooks the large degree of consensus on many important issues
  - Minimizes the ways in which social institutions are necessary for society's stability
- Problems with symbolic interactionism and utilitarianism
  - Pays relatively little attention to fundamentally important macro issues as economic inequality and the loss of manufacturing jobs in the information era
  - Ignores the importance of emotions and values such as altruism for guiding human interaction

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Key Terms

- Life chances
- Social environment
- Sociology
- Sociological perspective
- Society
- Debunking motif
- Social structure
- Horizontal social structure
- Vertical social structure
- Social inequality
- Personal troubles
- Public issues
- Sociological imagination
- Blaming the victim
- Blaming the system
- Macrosociology
- Microsociology
- Functionalism
- Collective conscience

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Key Terms (continued)

- Anomie
- Conflict theory
- Bourgeoisie
- Proletariat
- Class consciousness
- Feminist theory
- Critical race theory
- Intersectionality
- Symbolic interactionism
- Utilitarianism
- Exchange theory
- Rational choice theory

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