Sociological Accounts
An Overview

Context of the Beginning
- 19th Century Europe
- Social Change
  - Industrial and French Revolutions
  - Farm to Factory, Rural to Urban, etc.
- Controversy
  - Loss of old order (authority, power, etc.)
    - Land, church, kinships, community
  - Conservative reactions to social chaos...

Lecture Outline
- Sociological theory – Origin & Early History
  - Theory – Meaning, Focus, Levels
  - Alt Rubric for Differentiating Theories
- Next:
  - Structural Theories
  - Process/Developmental Theories
  - Critical Theory
  - Social Geometry

Key Figures: Early Philosophy
- Adam Smith (Scott, 1723–1790)
  - Personality rooted in association w/ others
  - Rules learned for approval from others
- Georg Hegel (German, 1770–1831)
  - National stages of development
  - August Comte (French, 1798–1857)
    - Coined sociologie – science of society
    - Improve through systematic investigation
- Herbert Spencer (English, 1820–1903)
  - Darwin’s “survival of the fittest”
  - Natural selection & specialization
  - Just understand; change inevitable

Theories noted in text
- Disorganization
- Ecology
- Strain
- Anomie
- Learning
- Subculture
- Control
- Life Course
- Integrated
- Labeling
- Critical
- Geometric

Key Figures: Early Scientists
- Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)
  - Intensely empirical / scientific
  - Alienation through lack of solidarity (anomie)
- Karl Marx (1818–1883)
  - Intensely critical / normative
  - Alienation through class conflict (oppression)
- Max Weber (1864–1920)
  - "Value-free" study of historical societies
  - "Verstehen" – understand subjective meanings
  - All systematic – comparative systems
What is a “theory”?

› Set of comprehensive statements
  - Typically Explanatory & Predictive
  - Might simply be interpretivist
  - Not testable?
› Facts don’t determine theory choice
  - Different theories do diff. things w/ same facts
  - Though Internet sidebar doesn’t illustrate that…
  - Social life explains which likely to be employed
  - Last lecture on Theorists, & Later lecture on science

Key Figures in Contemp. Theory

› **Microsociology**
  - George Herbert Mead
  - Charles Cooley
  - Erving Goffman
› **Mesosociology**
  - Robert Merton
  - John Turner
› **Macrosociology**
  - Roger Dahrendorf
  - W.E. Du Bois

Normative vs. Empirical Inquiry

› Style of Account
  - Objectivity – fact-oriented
  - Subjectivity – judgemental
› Role of Accounter
  - Value Orientation – we *have* biases
  - Value Neutrality – don’t let them effect results
› Goal of the Account
  - Applied Science – engineering, solve problem(s)
  - Pure Science – provide understanding of reality

Overview of Major Perspectives

› 3 Popular Flavors
› 4 Major Strands
› 8 Specific Strategies
  - Two flavors of each major strand
  - Plus 3 others that don’t quite fit the 4 majors

Levels of Analysis

› Micro–sociology
  - People’s interactions
  - Daily life
› Macro–sociology
  - Groups & societies
  - As a whole, not parts within
› Meso–sociology?
  - Connection between the two
› Sociology which is not level–specific

Three Popular Flavors

› Typical focus = on three:
  - Symbolic Interactionist – micro
  - Conflict Theorist – macro
  - Functionalist – macro?
› Put those in a larger typology
  - Formulated by Donald Black
  - = the way he teaches Contemp. Theory
  - Hope he’ll publish in some form
### Four Major Strands of Strategy

- **Individualism**
  - Look to experiences of reality by free agents

- **Utilitarianism**
  - Patterns follow the goals of social actors

- **Functionalism**
  - Patterns satisfy some systemic balance

- **Structuralism**
  - Patterns explained by sociological distributions

### Individualism I: Motivational Theory

- Group factors of individual behavior
- Explanations of conduct with psychological impact of social forces

  - **Classical Examples**
    - Durkheim: *Suicide*
    - Weber: *Protestant Ethic & Spirit of Capitalism*

  - **Contemporary Examples**
    - Learning: emphasize socialization – Howard Becker
    - Bonding: attachments / role models – Lofland/Stark
    - Pressure: implicit or explicit force to behave a certain way (peer, supervisory)
    - Strain: emphasizes psych pain or discomfort (deprivation, marginality, isolation)

### Two Flavors of Each Strand

- **Individualism**
  - Motivational & Phenomenological
    - Symbolic Interactionism
  - Utilitarianism
    - Rational Choice & Conflict Theory
    - Feminism
  - Functionalism
    - System Theory & Neo-Darwinian Theory
  - Structuralism
    - Contraint Theory & Behavioral Theory

### Individualism II: Phenomenology

- Explains human behavior from within the objective conscious experience of actor acting within a situation
- Delinquency thru neutralization – Sykes/Matza
- Sensuous Attractions of Doing Evil – Katz
- Social Construction of Reality – Berger/Luckman
- Social Meanings of Suicide – Douglas

### Symbolic Interaction

- Strand of phenomenology
- Meanings arise from interactions in 1-to-1 or small group
  - micro-level
  - Typically face-to-face (FTF)
- George Herbert Mead
  - Minute forms of communication, esp. nonverbal
- Erving Goffman – dramaturgical approach
  - Presentation of Self in Everyday Life
- Difficult to observe/interpret (e.g. eyebrow raise)

### Structuralism

- Patterns explained by sociological distributions

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