

### FOUNDERS (EUROPE)

**Auguste Comte (1798-1857): *The Founder of Sociology.*** Was a French social philosopher. First coined the phrase "sociology" in 1839 to designate the science of society. Came up with the divisions of the theory of "social statics" and the theory of "social dynamics." Both continue under the present label of "social structure" and "social change". Founded a philosophy known as positivism which held that the society could be studied with the same precision and accuracy as the physical universe. His work influenced the subsequent work of Spencer, Durkheim, and Weber.

**Harriet Martineau (1802-1876): *The first practicing sociologist.*** In 1837 published the first bonafide piece of sociological research entitled *Theory and Practice of Society in America*. Based her book on her observations of the customs and lifestyles of 19th century American society. Examined the impact of immigration, religion, politics, and stratification on the structure of American society. Because of the limitations of her time, her research has largely been ignored until recent times. She is best known for her translation into English of Auguste Comte's six volume *Cours de Philosophie Positive (Positive Philosophy)*.

**Herbert Spencer (1820-1903): *Social Darwinism.*** Advanced the theory that evolution accounts for development of social and natural life. Likened society to an organism in which different parts worked together in order to maintain the whole. To understand society sociologists must focus on the processes of growth and change or "social evolution." Applied Darwin's theory of evolution or natural selection (which he termed "survival of the fittest") to humans. As in the animal world, he noted that the most fit or able rose to the top of human society; the least fit or poor were at the bottom. To intervene or help the poor was to intervene vainly in natural evolution. Advocated objectivity and neutrality in scientific investigation. Coined many of the current concepts and terms still employed in contemporary sociology.

**Marx (1818-1883): *The Sociology of Anger.*** Not really a sociologist but an economic historian whose research is rich in sociological insight. Made a lasting contribution to the conflict perspective. His two main enduring legacies:

- 1). Economic determinism: Basic task of society is to provide food and shelter for its members (the mode of production). All social and political arrangements are built upon this.
- 2). Dialectic Materialism: The basis of change was conflict rather than adaptation. Theory of change was derived from Hegel's philosophy of the dialectic: Every idea (thesis) produces its opposite (antithesis), that in turn, produces a new idea (synthesis). Applied this dialectic or process of change to the material and economic systems of a society.

Marx came up with a theory of social change based on class conflict: the conflict between the bourgeoisie who own the mode of production and the proletariat who make up the mass of workers. The bourgeoisie used their control of the economy to determine the distribution of wealth, power, laws, and even ideas of that society. In every society the existing polarization led to class conflict--it was resolved when the proletariat overthrew the existing ruling class. History was moving towards the elimination of class-based systems of stratification and the emergence of a communist society where the state withered away and people worked according to their ability and their needs. Marx advocated social activism. Social scientists should seek to change as well as explain what they find in their research.

**Emile Durkheim (1858-1917): The Scientific Breakthrough.** Durkheim devoted his life to the research of social stability and social participation. His research contributed to the development of the functionalist perspective. Durkheim's theories focused primarily on the positive contributions made by existing social patterns. He was the first sociologist to stress the importance of statistics in explaining social patterns. He achieved a scientific breakthrough in his 1897 study titled *Suicide*. His painstaking statistical analysis on fluctuations in suicide rates more or less set sociology on its present scientific course. In it he came up with three types of suicide, each of which was social in origin and was based on social solidarity and societal stability:

- 1). **Egoistic Suicide:** Occurs when the individual has low group solidarity as well as under involvement with others. Loneliness and commitment to own personal beliefs rather than group values can lead to suicide. Predicted and found in research that single individuals were more likely to commit suicide than married individuals; Protestants who stressed individualism also had higher suicide rates than Catholics.
- 2). **Altruistic Suicide:** Occurs as a result of high group involvement with others. The individual is so tied to certain set of goals that he/she is willing to die for the group under certain conditions. Examples: Japanese Kamikaze attacks (WWII), the Jonestown suicide.
- 3). **Anomic Suicide:** Results from a sense of feeling disconnected from society's values. Occurs when a person either knows the goals to strive for but can't achieve them, or else is uncertain or doesn't know what goals to pursue. Most prevalent in times of rapid social change or economic crisis.

Durkheim studied suicide in an effort to show that an act that many considered the most personal of all was patterned by social factors that could only be explained by social facts (things that explained existing social structures and social forces rather than individual states of mind). Durkheim identified social integration (the degree to which people are tied to their social group) as the primary factor accounting for fluctuations in suicide rates.

**Max Weber (1864-1920): The Sociology of Disenchantment.** Like Marx, Weber's research has contributed to the fields of history, political science, and economics. He made three lasting contributions to the field:

- 1). **Subjective Meanings:** Social actions were best understood not at the statistical level but rather as the level of understanding for the participants. He advocated the use of *verstehen* ("to have insight into someone's situation") in the study of social phenomena, thus contributing to symbolic-interactionism.
- 2). **Social v.s. Material Causes:** In his classical 1908 study entitled *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber argued that existing cultural values and religious beliefs were the underpinning of economic systems. He reversed the Marxist position.
- 3). **Value-free science:** Sociologists should be concerned with what is rather than with what should be. He advocated the pursuit of research for its own sake. Weber's legacy in this regard has made a lasting impression on American sociology and political science.

Weber accepted bureaucracy and the growth of the state as inevitable consequences of industrialization. At the same time, he viewed modern humanity as trapped in an "iron cage" in which bureaucrats and bloated government bureaucracies made most of the decisions concerning the operation of society. He foresaw the loss of individual freedom and the rise of the totalitarian state. Weber predicted that bureaucratization would characterize modern societies irrespective of whether they followed a capitalist or a socialist model of industrialization.



The following gallery provides pictures of the major European contributors to sociology. From left to right, they include Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber.

## DEVELOPMENT OF U.S. SOCIOLOGY

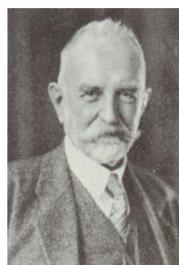
Sociology came to North America at a later date than it did to Europe. The first sociology course was taught in 1876 at Yale University. Sociology in the U.S. has from the start been characterized by greater gender and ethnic diversity than European sociology. From the outset sociology in the U.S. has had three distinctive features: (1) A concern with social problems; (2) A reformist rather than a radical approach to their resolution; and (3) an emphasis on the scientific method and statistical analysis. U.S. sociology has gone through three distinct stages.

**Stage I. Reformist (1870-1930's):** The focus was on problems stemming from ethnic diversity, discrimination, immigration, urban blight, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, and chemical dependency. The early growth of American sociology took place at the University of Chicago under the direction of Robert Park, Lester Ward, W.I. Thomas, and Ernest Burgess. Most were Protestant ministers or the sons of ministers. American sociologists not only engaged in the empirical analysis of these problems, but they were in the forefront of lobbying efforts for legislation on safer working conditions, public sanitation, and services for the poor. American sociology was characterized by the theoretical combined with the practical.

**Stage II. Behaviorist Revolution (1950's-1970's):** Sociologists turned from their earlier reformist tradition to a preoccupation with abstract theorizing and statistical modeling. A new generation of sociologists committed to gaining scientific respectability for the field emerged. Research-oriented universities such as Michigan State or the U.C. system now became the dominant centers for sociology. The focus was on the development of mid-range theories that centered on a specific aspect of society or social problems. Sociology became behaviorist in the sense that the emphasis was on observable patterns of behavior that could be quantified. The major American sociologists of this period include Robert K. Merton and Talcott Parsons.

**Stage III. Sociology in Transition (1980's-present):** Sociology has increasingly become an applied science. The majority of sociologists with higher degrees work either in education or government. Sociological research is increasingly becoming conducted in applied research centers. Sociology is being used to try and find practical solutions to certain social problems. The field could be entering a crisis stage according to Alvin Gouldner in *The Coming Crisis of American Sociology*. According to Gouldner the discipline has become part of the welfare state. Sociological research is increasingly becoming co-opted by those government or public agencies that are using it to pursue certain social or political agendas. The shift from general to applied research has resulted in a dearth of theory-building and theory-testing, the hallmarks of a true science. Gouldner fears that sociology is in danger of losing its relevance unless academic sociologists assert their independence and pursue knowledge for its own sake rather than for political ends.

At present, the majority of sociology departments and higher degree programs are found in the U.S. Most American sociologists work in education, with government being the second highest employer. In the U.S. the field is a combination of the practical as well as the theoretical with a shift towards applied as opposed to general research. In Europe the emphasis is less on research and more on theory. Sociologists there continue to integrate their work with history, economics, political science, and philosophy.



Yale University (left) is where the first sociology course in the U.S. was taught. Major contributors to U.S. sociology from left to right include Jane Addams, G.H. Mead, W.E.B. DuBois, Lester K. Born, and Robert K. Merton.