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AWL vocabulary is in **bold**.

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PART ONE

Foundations of Sociology

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Sociology

Different Kinds of Sociology

Sociology did not take on a **uniform** appearance as it grew as a discipline during the nineteenth century: instead, it diversified. European and North American social thinkers had differing views of what sociology was, what it could do, and how it should be applied. Consequently, sociology developed into several different schools that varied according to their particular applications and the perspectives (historical, political-economical, feminist, and so on) of those who were using it.

In this **section** we will explore two ways of distinguishing the various kinds of sociology. The first is based on the **approach** used; the second is based on the intended audience for the work and how socially critical the sociologist is.

1. Sociology by Approach

The traditional way of representing different kinds of sociology in introductory textbooks is to break it down into the different approaches sociologists use to **pursue** their inquiries:

- structural functionalism
- conflict **theory**
- symbolic interactionism
- feminist **theory**
- postmodern **theory**.

These terms are typically presented in the introductory **chapter** of a textbook and then repeated

throughout most, if not all, of the **subsequent** chapters. The linguist Edward Sapir said, “all grammars [i.e. explanations of language] leak.” We feel that this particular “grammar of sociology” leaks too much (like a flooded basement) to **sustain** using it throughout the **text**. Nevertheless, these distinctions do **reveal** some key differences in philosophy, so they are worth explaining and illustrating here.

Structural Functionalism

The **structural-functional** approach has deep roots in sociology. As the name suggests, the **approach** contains two dimensions. **Functionalism** focuses on how social systems, in their **entirety**,¹ operate and produce consequences. The work of Émile Durkheim, Robert Merton, and Talcott Parsons (discussed in Chapter 13, on health and medicine) represents the **functionalist approach**.

The **functionalist approach** was **fused**² with **structuralism** (grounded in the work of **anthropologists**³ Bronisław Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown) as a way of explaining social forms and their contributions to social **cohesion**.⁴ It uses an **organic, or biological**,⁵ **analogy** for society. How? Nursing students, when they take the **dreaded**⁶ Anatomy and Physiology course, have to learn all the different **structures** of the human body as well as the **functions** each one performs. The structural-**functionalist approach** treats society in a **similar** way: *This is the part of society we call “organized religion.” This is what it does for society . . .*

While the structural-**functionalist approach** was popular for most of sociology’s history, it has lost favour during the last few decades. It is **too much of a stretch**⁷, for example, to talk about the **functions** of poverty or inequality and how they **contribute** favourably to social stability. Poverty and inequality don’t really serve the interests of society at large, just the narrow class interests of those who profit from others’ **misfortunes**.⁸ In addition, functionalism is not good at promoting an understanding of conflict or social change. While sociologists still draw on the **classic** works and essential concepts of structural functionalism, few **contemporary**

¹ **Entirety:** the whole thing; all of it

² **Fuse:** join together

³ **Anthropologist:** an expert in the comparative study of human societies and cultures and the way they developed.

⁴ **Cohesion:** the way that things come together and stay together

⁵ **Organic/biological:** related to life and living things

⁶ **Dreaded:** feared; scary

⁷ If something is **too much of a stretch**, it’s very hard to make it work in this situation. It’s too hard to believe or too hard to do.

⁸ **Misfortune:** bad luck; bad things that happen to you

sociologists are committed to the theoretical practice itself in their **research** and writing.

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is one of the poorest urban neighbourhoods in North America. A **functionalist** would argue that homelessness is a natural social consequence of our economic system, and that it benefits society by providing citizens with an **incentive** to work hard. Would you agree?

Durkheim and Social Facts

To get a better sense of the **functionalist approach**, look at the work of **Émile Durkheim** (1858–1917), one of the founders of sociology. An important early sociological **concept** is Durkheim's **social fact**. Social facts are patterned ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that exist outside of any one **individual** but **exert**⁹ social control over all people. Think about how different social characteristics—**aspects** of your social location such as gender, age, religion, ethnicity, “race,” sexual orientation, your **role** as sister or brother or as student or teacher—**exert**⁸ a **compelling**¹⁰ social force over you and lead you to act in sociologically predictable ways. These ways of acting based on social characteristics are social facts.

Every social fact has three essential characteristics:

1. It was developed **prior** to and separate from any **individual** (i.e. **you** didn't invent it).
2. It can be seen as being characteristic of a particular group (young Canadian men, for **instance**, like to watch sports while drinking beer—a social fact that explains why so many beer commercials **feature** young men watching sports).
3. It involves a constraining or **coercing**¹¹ force that pushes individuals into acting in a particular way (like when young men watching sports **succumb**¹² to “beer pressure” and begin yelling, high-fiving, and displaying other behaviour associated with this social fact).

You can see how looking for social facts would be a useful way for a sociologist to get beyond focusing on individuals to examine larger social forms and how different parts of society **function**.

In *Suicide* (1897), Durkheim examined suicide as a social fact. He found that in late

⁹ **Exert:** push/create/apply

¹⁰ **Compelling:** convincing; easily believed; persuasive

¹¹ **Coerce:** pressure; convince; threaten

¹² **Succumb:** give in

nineteenth-century France, certain groups were more likely to **commit** suicide than others: **military** officers more than **enlisted**¹³ men, Protestants more than Catholics, and unmarried people more than married people. He drew a **correlation**¹⁴ between suicide and the degree to which individuals were connected or committed to society, finding that those with a very strong **dedication**¹⁵ to society were more likely to **commit** suicide than those with a weaker commitment. Officers are responsible for the soldiers in their charge. It makes sense that a **heightened**¹⁶ sense of honour might make them **suicidal**¹⁷ when they make a mistake that results in the death of one of “their men.” On the other hand, Durkheim also concluded that having too weak a connection to society could produce suicide. Protestants were in the minority in France and thus had weaker bonds to both the country in which they lived and its **culture**.

In Canada today, men **commit** suicide more often than women do. This is a social fact. Why men **commit** suicide more often than women do is a complicated matter. It has to do in part with the fact that women are more likely to share their problems with other people than to “suck it up” and remain silent. Women are more likely to have a **network** of friends with whom they can **communicate** about serious matters, and they are more likely to go to a **therapist**¹⁸ with an **emotional**¹⁹ problem, which lowers their likelihood of committing suicide. Women attempting suicide are also more likely to use less efficient means: pills and **slashed**²⁰ wrists over the more deadly male choice of guns.

¹³ **Enlisted people:** lower ranking people in the army

¹⁴ **Correlation:** a mathematical connection; if x changes, then y also changes

¹⁵ **Dedication:** strong feeling of caring about something

¹⁶ **Heightened:** increased

¹⁷ **Suicidal:** related to killing one’s self

¹⁸ **Therapist:** a mental health worker

¹⁹ **Emotional:** related to your feelings

²⁰ **Slash:** cut

What Do YOU Think?

The **author** of this textbook considers himself fairly **enlightened**,²¹ with **feminist**²² sympathies. Yet a woman reader commented that it was **obvious** this commentary was written by a man: women, she pointed out, are less likely to **commit** suicide because of their **childcare** responsibilities, not because they're incapable or are more likely to "share their feelings." Do you agree?

Since the start of this century, and particularly since the start of the War in Afghanistan in 2001, a number of **high-profile**²³ **suicides**¹⁶ among Canadian soldiers have made the subject of suicide in the Canadian Forces a **topic** of concern among public health officials, **veterans**,²⁴ groups, and the public generally. In response, the Surgeon General commissioned a study of suicide among Canadian Forces **personnel**²⁵ from 1995 to 2012, comparing the suicide rate among male soldiers with the suicide rate among male **civilians**²⁶ in the general population (Bogaert et al. 2013). What the study showed was that in each age group, the rate of suicide among male soldiers was actually lower than the rate among non-soldiers (see Table 1.3). How can we account for the unexpected result? The authors of the report suggested that the screening **process** used by the Canadian Forces plays a **significant role**: in assessing **candidates**,²⁷ the **military** chooses only those who **exhibit** a high degree of **emotional**¹⁸ and **mental** stability. Do you think we could also argue, following Durkheim, that men in the Canadian Forces feel a greater degree of attachment to a larger group than their male **civilian**²⁵ **peers**²⁸ do?

When examining Table 1.3, you should note that the difference between the projected number of **suicides**¹⁶ and the actual number of **suicides** was **shrinking**²⁹ as Canada's participation in the Afghanistan **mission**³⁰ continued. We also know that public support for Canada's **mission**²⁹ was falling during that time. Do you think that the lack of support here at home might have played a **role** in narrowing the gap?

²¹ **Enlightened**: having modern views and treating people fairly

²² **Feminist**: a person who believes in equal rights, power, and opportunity for all people

²³ **High-profile**: famous; in the news

²⁴ **Veteran**: somebody who is not working as a soldier anymore; somebody who fought in a war

²⁵ **Personnel**: people; workers; soldiers

²⁶ **Civilian**: somebody who is not a soldier or a police officer

²⁷ **Candidate**: somebody who wants to or could be chosen

²⁸ **Peers**: people who are the same as you, not at a higher or lower level, for example, other students

²⁹ **Shrink**: get smaller

³⁰ **Mission**: a job, especially for soldiers

TABLE 1.3 Suicides¹⁶ among male Canadian Forces personnel:²⁴ Actual versus³¹ expected, 1995 to 2009

Years	Suicides		Difference between Actual and Expected	
	Actual	Expected*	Number	Percentage
1995–1999	56	78	-22	72
2000–2004	50	63	-13	79
2005–2009	50	59	-9	85

* Based on the rate of suicides¹⁶ among Canadian civilians²⁵ within the same age groups studied.

Source: Adapted from Bogaert et al. 2013, Table 1 (p. 3) and Table 2 (p. 4).

A woman holds a message as Canadian soldiers who served in Afghanistan are recognized during the National Day of Honour on Parliament Hill in Ottawa (9 May 2014). How do you think a show of public support like this might **affect** a returned soldier's connection to society?

Merton's Manifest and Latent Functions

Robert K. Merton (1910–2003), one of the leading American sociologists of the mid-twentieth century and a **major** contributor to **functionalist** thinking, identified three types of functions:

1. **Manifest functions** are both intended and readily recognized, or “manifest” (i.e. easily seen).
2. **Latent functions** are largely **unintended³²** and **unrecognized³³**.
3. **Latent dysfunctions** are **unintended³¹** and produce socially negative consequences.

This last group is often studied using the conflict **approach**, making Merton's **brand³⁴** of functionalism something of a bridge to conflict **theory** (which we will examine in the next **section**). The three examples in Table 1.4 **illustrate** the differences among Merton's three

³¹ **Versus:** against something; vs.

³² **Unintended:** not the plan; not expected

³³ **Unrecognized:** not noticed

³⁴ **Brand:** kind; version

functions.

TABLE 1.4 Examples of Robert Merton’s three functions

Example 1	Postsecondary education
manifest function	Postsecondary education provides students with the skills and knowledge to find a profitable career ³⁵ in order to become productive, self- sufficient citizens.
latent function	It provides a social network that will make the search for employment and a marriage partner easier.
latent dysfunction	From a left-wing perspective , postsecondary education reinforces class distinctions, since people in the lower socioeconomic classes cannot afford to attend; from a right-wing perspective , it exposes students to (dangerous!) socialist ideas.
Example 2	Religion
manifest function	Religion fulfills ³⁶ spiritual and emotional needs, and answers important existential ³⁷ questions that many people have.
latent function	Religion creates a social support network and marriage market.
latent dysfunction	Religion provides justification for judging outsiders (“non-believers”) negatively.
Example 3	Canadian doughnut shops
manifest function	Doughnut shops provide customers with coffee, snacks, and light meals, served quickly and conveniently.
latent function	Doughnut shops serve as places to meet and socialize ³⁸ with others.
latent dysfunction	Doughnut shops provide late-night venues ³⁹ for drug dealing.

³⁵ **Career:** a good job

³⁶ **Fulfill:** gives you what is needed

³⁷ **Existential** questions ask, “why do we exist? What is our purpose?”

³⁸ **Socialize:** talk with people in a friendly way

³⁹ **Venue:** a place where some event happens

<End table>

What Do YOU Think?

1. Could you **challenge, amend**, or add to any of the functions presented in Table 1.4?
How?
2. What would be the three different functions for the following?
 - a) children's organized sports in Canada
 - b) large organized walks, runs, or bike rides for social causes
 - c) religion.

The relationship between a teacher and her students is a social fact. What patterned ways of acting influence this teacher's behaviour towards her students? How might the teacher, should she not **conform** to the behaviour expected of her, be punished, either in some formal way (i.e. by the school board) or in some informal way (i.e. by her **peers**²⁷ or her students or their parents) depending on the nature of the **transgression**?⁴⁰ What are some of the patterned ways of acting that influence students' behaviour?

⁴⁰ **Transgression:** when you go across a line; break a rule