

# Sociology concepts on the individual and society



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**Sociology developed as an academic discipline throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.**

**Provide an explanation of the historical and social context from which sociology developed.**

Sociology has its roots in the changes within the society since the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as there was the industrial revolution, the creation of empires, and the enlightenment of scientific reasoning (Bauman and May 2001, p. 3). Furthermore, early practitioners developed the discipline as an attempt to understand the societal changes. During the 1960s, especially, it became a major social science subject. ( Do mention capitalism)

Moreover, sociology is determined as a new academic discipline as it emerged in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in response to the challenges of modernity (British sociology). Eventually, there was an increasing exposure of people to cultures and societies different from their own due to the increasing mobility and technological advancement. Throughout this exposure, there was variation in the way people would eventually accept the sociology as a discipline. However, for some people it included the breakdown of traditional norms and customs and warranted a nuanced understanding of how the world works.

Furthermore, the term Sociology was coined by Auguste Comte in 1838. Comte hoped to unify all the sciences under sociology he believed sociology held the potential to improve society and direct human activity. In addition, the development of sociology was first recognized in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century by the English philosopher Herbert Spencer as he had written a book with term Sociology in its title. In the United States, the first sociology course was

taught at the University of Kansas, Lawrence in 1890 under the title Elements of Sociology.

In brief, sociology emerged in Comte's vision; it eventually subsuming all other areas of scientific inquiry, sociology did not replace the other sciences. Indeed, in the past decades, sociological research focused on the organization of complex, industrial societies and their influence on individuals. Today, sociologists study a broad range of topics which can be structures that deals with the organization of the society such as race or ethnicity, social class and gender roles. This shows the development of sociology throughout the years.

**Sociology involves a unique way of thinking. What are the features of sociological thinking and C. Wright Mills Sociological imagination?**

Sociology involves a unique way of thinking as one should have a broad mind in order to see little difference in everyday routine (Johnson Bethany 03 June 2015). Indeed, the sociological imagination is a concept used by the American sociologist C. Wright Mills to describe the ability to “ think yourself away from the familiar routines of everyday life” and look at them from an entirely new perspective (Johnson Bethany 03 June 2015). In order to develop such skills, one must be able to free yourself from one context and look at things from an alternative point of view (Johnson Bethany 03 June 2015).

Furthermore, Mills defined sociological imagination as “ the vivid awareness of the relationship between experience and the wider society” (Johnson Bethany 03 June 2015). It is a way of thinking about things in society that

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have led to some sort of outcome, and understanding what causes led to that outcome. The sociological imagination is the ability to see things socially and how they interact and influence each other. According to the theorist C. Wright Mills who stated that to do this; one must use critical thinking skills, such as the use of sociological thinking. In addition, sociological thinking and sociological imagination are intertwined and work together.

In brief, Mills deduced that one of the key ways people understand society and social change is to apply the sociological imagination. This involves something called making the familiar strange, or questioning and critiquing the world around us. It is similar to putting on a new pair of glasses, in this case with sociological lenses, seeing our society and the everyday behaviors and interactions we usually take for granted in a different way. In this case of analyzing the society, critical thinking is a means of understanding the surroundings in different perspectives.

**One way of using sociology to understand the relationship between the individual and society is to use different perspectives and models of society. Explain and contrast the key features of macro and micro models of society.**

Sociology has helped to understand the process of relationship between the individual and society. The society has contributed to the interaction, cooperating, and acting with one another. Furthermore, the question that arises is how to behave in one's society, what is right and what is wrong, all these things have to be learned in the society (Mondal, 2015). Indeed, macrosociology involves the study of widespread social processes whereas microsociology involves the study of people in face-to-face interactions.

Firstly, macro and micro level studies each possess their own benefits and disadvantages. For instance, macrosociology allows observation of large-scale patterns and trends, but runs the risk of seeing these trends as abstract entities that exist outside of the individuals who enact them on the ground (Mondal, 2015). Beneath, examples can be objective or subjective in accordance with macro studies such as: society, law, bureaucracy, architecture, technology and language for objective aspects. In addition, subjective examples would be culture, norms and values (Mondal, 2015).

In contrast to macro level, microsociology allows for this on-the-ground analysis, but can fail to consider the larger forces that influence individual behavior. However, sociological analysis can take place at micro level, and can be subjective or objective. Classifying the objectives examples would be patterns of behavior, action, and interaction (Mondal Puja 02 June 2015). In addition, subjective examples would be perception, beliefs and the various facets of the social construction of reality (Mondal, 2015).

In brief, it can be deduced that macro and micro level studies plays an important role within the society. It helps in the process of integration of the individual and the sustainability of the society.

**Using sociological concepts and theories, explain the relationship between the individual and society.**

**Answer should include explanations of the following: how the key sociological concepts of socialization, social order and social stratification can be applied to the analysis of the relationship between the individual and society.**

**How a theory of consensus, a theory of conflict and a theory of social action can be applied to an analysis of the relationship between the individual and society?**

Sociologists develop theories to explain social phenomena. A theory is a proposed relationship between two or more concepts such as theory of consensus, a theory of conflict and a theory of social action and can be applied to an analysis of the relationship between the individual and society. In other words, a theory is explanation for why or how a phenomenon occurs (Putnam, Robert, 2001). In addition, the relationship between individual and society can be viewed from three angles that are functionalist, conflict and symbolic interaction perspective.

Secondly, functionalist perspective focuses upon the macro level as it takes into consideration the individual as formed by society through the influence of such institution as the family, school and workplace (Mondal, 2015). Furthermore, functionalism draws its inspiration primarily from the ideas of Emilie Durkheim (Durkheim, and Lewis A. Coser. 1997). Indeed the functionalist deals up with rules and status that exists in society so as to provide social control or social order as it is necessary for survival. Durkheim pursued to explain social cohesion and stability through the concept of solidarity as the individual and the society would perform similar tasks that

held the society together. Based on the metaphor of an organism in which many parts function together to sustain the whole, Durkheim argued that modern complex societies are held together by organic solidarity (think interdependent *organs*) (Durkheim, and Lewis A. Coser. 1997).

Thirdly, there is conflict theory maintains that society as a complex system striving for equilibrium in contrast to functionalist but rather as a competition. Society is made up of individuals competing for limited resources (e. g., money, leisure, sexual partners, etc.) (Smith, Christian. 2003). However, the conflict theory contributes to social change in contrast to the functional approach. In fact, there are primary assumptions of conflict theory that are; consensus is characteristic of human relationships rather than competition, individuals and groups that benefit from any particular structure strive to see it maintained (Smith, Christian. 2003).

Last but not the least, there is symbolic theory which may involves exchange of communication or symbols among individuals. Here, the symbolic plays a prominent role in relationship with the individual and the society as it involves interchanging of culture and teaching. Symbolic theory argues that people become selves by learning and internalizing the symbolic materials of the social and historical context and culture they are born into and raised within (e. g., the individual is formed by the society), and then act back upon and alter societies (e. g., norms, cultures and structures) by deploying the symbolic resources at their disposal throughout the course of their ongoing lives (e. g., the society is formed by the joint action of individuals)(Merton, Robert 1957).

Thus to conclude, the a theory of consensus, a theory of conflict and a theory of social action can be applied to an analysis of the relationship between the individual and society as it can be deduced that each theory plays an integral part within the society. Each theory has its own contribution to the upbringing, stability and continuous survival of the society.

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