

*Topics in Sociology*

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**Abstract:**

This writing will look at several components in the study of sociology. The first will be an historical perspective of the discipline itself, with a review of Western European development of the city and the British Empiricist thought, which led to the development of the Social Contract Theory. It will examine the underlying philosophical nature of the movement and its influence on American social and cultural development in the New World. The second area of study will be a critical analysis of the three major schools of thought in today's study of sociology; the Structural-Functionalist perspective, Conflict Theory, and the Symbolic Interaction view. We then move on to a more specific look at the ongoing concept in the human condition, first noticed during the move from traditional to modernity, coined by Marx as alienation and by Durkheim as anomie. Merton, as well as many other sociologists and criminologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century continued the study of anomie in trying to explain crime and deviance in society.

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## **History and Development of the Sociology Discipline**

In comparison to many studied disciplines through history, sociology is relatively new. It began to develop in reaction to the rise of the urban centers in Western Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Because it studies social behavior of the individual in context to the surrounding environment, it is considered to be among one of the social sciences. It differs from psychology in that rather than look for personality traits, individual characteristics, or internal explanations of behavior; sociology looks at external forces, like the workings of society and its effects that social class, gender roles, age, technology, culture, and religion, have on people in a given social position or situation. Social psychology bridges the two fields and looks at the impact of groups on individual behavior. Anthropology is also a closely related field in that it is interested in the impact that social structure and culture has on behavior. However, rather than focusing on nonwestern preliterate societies as anthropologists often do, sociologists look more at modern industrialized and urban centers for research and study. (Gelles & Levine, 1999, p. 11)

### *Feudal Mercantile System to Urban Capitalism*

Looking back, to help explain the discipline's development, the decline of the western part of the old Roman Empire had left Europe without protection or laws, as the empire had previously provided the people. A feudal hierarchy and medieval society emerged. There was little sense of authority left for lawmaking, and the strong protected the weak within the community manor which developed. This system, fairly collective and altruistic in nature, grew out of a Christian Paternalistic ethic which had been very much influenced by the Roman Catholic Church and the writings of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). It was a medieval version of the Judeo-Christian tradition, which stressed a moral obligation of the elite to a position of authority and leadership and the common person to accept his or her role in society and subordinate to the nobility. It was this ethic that was used to justify the economic system which developed and continued for a few centuries. The lower level of class, called serfs, often had hereditary use of the land in exchange for goods, services, and protection. Kings held control over regional areas, while Lords held manor and local land control. The system was based on mutual obligations and services, which held close ties to the land because of its agrarian nature of farming and sheep herding. (Hunt & Sherman, 1986, p. 14)

When more productive and profitable use of the land began to develop along with improvements in power and transportation; trade and commerce between manors and over longer distances increased, along with the population of Europe, which doubled between 1000 to 1300. Trading villages along seaports developed into major urban centers, and annual week long trade fairs turned into permanent market centers. In the manorial system, the producer was the craftsman, but also the direct seller. However in the emerging capitalistic system, the producer often never seen the final buyer. Unlike the paternalistic feudal system which was based on

customs and traditions, the new system adhered to newly written laws and contracts of commerce, as well as debt, credit, and negotiable instruments used for payment of the goods and services being produced. Rather than just owning the land for farming, the new merchant-capitalist controlling class, now owned the means of production, tools, and buildings of operation. Many of the new working class, who began to get paid wages for their labor by the merchant-capitalists, deserted the fields for the urban centers, and left the communal lands, previously used for farming and grazing, for the feudal nobility to take control over. This enclosure movement which peaked in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries forced many tenets out of the countryside and into the cities. (Hunt & Sherman, 1986, p. 21)

There were other social stressors also, which were felt in reaction to the profit seeking accumulation of capital which encouraged the breakdown of the feudal system and the move to a market oriented economy. Between the Black Plague and the Hundred Years War between France and England (1337–1453), England had lost about 40 percent of the population by the early fifteenth century. Peasant revolts flared up throughout Europe throughout the fifteenth century and colonialism was taking hold in foreign lands by the major western world powers. Piracy and the slave trade were also on the rise and the hoarding of bullion was causing economic problems, specifically inflation, throughout Europe. A new intellectual awakening began to stir along with newly formed nation states along with new forms of government. More sophisticated methods for taxing along with the beginnings of government funded social benefit programs began to emerge. (Hunt & Sherman, 1986, p. 17)

The early stages of the new market system included heavy intervention by the new governments and the philosophical debate of just how much control should a government wield,

who should rule, and innate rights and liberties of the individual were in question at the intellectual centers across Europe.

One strong movement during the Middle Ages period which sought to integrate the secular understanding of the ancient world with the dogma of Christianity, also promoted by Aquinas, was Scholasticism. It was not so much a philosophy or theology in itself, but a tool and method for learning which placed emphasis on dialectical reasoning. The Renaissance Age which Italy dominated followed, but stressed the arts more than philosophical thought put to rest the medieval period. The Age of Reason and the Enlightenment era then emerged which greatly affected thought while bringing about many changes in society. (Hunt & Sherman)

### *Age of Reason and Enlightenment*

The Age of Reason spanned throughout the seventeenth century and the Enlightenment period closely followed well into the eighteenth century. These two periods combined, as far as philosophical thought, and became the starting point of modern philosophy. Multiple schools of thought developed, but two main competing schools, the Rationalists and the Empiricists, became fore runners in thought and later Immanuel Kant divided the schools, which over simplified the movement, however made it easier to study.

This era developed unified philosophical systems to study the various disciplines, epistemology, metaphysics, politics, logic, mathematics, physical sciences, and ethics. It was a move away from theological control and divine explanation, an intellectual movement against blind dogmatic faith, rejecting unquestioned theology and crimes committed against humanity in the name of a universal sacred truth. The scientific method also was becoming more developed through this era, which later was applied to the study of sociology by Auguste Comte.

Paris was a great intellectual center for the Rationalists school, which was lead by Rene Descartes (1596-1650). Rationalism was the view that reason, as a source of knowledge, was to use individual intellectual abilities to seek evidence for or against an argument or belief. It opposed faith based belief, divine revelation, institutionalized authority, and sense experience as the basis for acquiring knowledge. Rational criterion of truth is not sensory but intellectual and deductive. Rationalism advocated reason as a means to establishing an authoritative system of aesthetics, ethics, government, and logic, to allow philosophers to obtain objective truth about the universe. Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677) from Amsterdam and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) from Germany both followed Descartes in this thinking. (Marias, 1967, p. 222)



***British Empiricism and the Social Contract Theory***

John Locke (1632-1704) in England, however, argued against Rationalism, insisting that it was sense experience which was the starting point to knowledge acquisition. Locke led the Empiricists in this thought, along with Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) also from England and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) from France. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1691), he argued that almost all of man's knowledge comes by way of perception and the mind is a blank tablet at birth. This philosophical school of thought mixed with the popular authoritarian and monarchy rule at that time sparked further thought of moral obligation in the political and social realm concerning the relationship of the governed people to the rulers in society. With the assumption that the state of nature is less than ideal, and the intention to escape from these harsh conditions, men enter into a contract with each other, allowing them to live in peace and unity. The Social Contract Theory is often seen as a justification for the formation of the new nation states with its urban populations, which began to develop during the Industrial Revolutions and Enlightenment period.

Early Social Contract theory layed the groundwork for today's democratic state, which often maintains a written constitution as a contract between rulers and the governed. Locke believed that men were born in a state of liberty, and so the ruler does not have absolute authority, but recieves the authority from the people. In his *Two Treatises of Government* (1690) and *Four Letters on Toleration* (1665-1689). The proper form of the State is a constitutional and representative monarchy, but with limited powers, independent of the church and tolerant in matters of religion. He favored freedom of religion and thought, on both moral and practical grounds. All men have innate rights to equal freedom and a duty to God to preserve themselves and mankind. Absolutism in rule is unjust. Locke was a determinist and did not consider the

human as being innately of free will. The right to govern comes with the duty to govern in the interest of the governed only. Failure of the government to recognize this duty creates the right of the people to rebel and overthrow the authority and the people should have the final say. (Craig, 2005, p. 599)

Hobbes maintained a more brutish pessimistic warlike view of society, denying man as a social creature by nature, who is only motivated by selfishness and greed. Like Locke he was an empiricist, materialist and determinist. However, unlike Locke, his theory presupposes equality of all men. In *Leviathan* (1651), which was one of the first scholarly works on Social Contract Theory, he argued that the absolute power of the sovereign state is justified by a hypothetical social contract in which the people agree to obey the authority in all matters in return for a guarantee of peace and security, which they initially lack in this warlike state of nature. In contrast to Locke again, Hobbes' State decides everything, aside from politics, also morality and religion. Hobbes explicitly states that the sovereign has authority to assert power over matters of faith and doctrine, and that if he does not do so, he invites disharmony. He felt that the three motives of discord in humans were; competition which provokes aggression, mistrust which threatens security and vanity which creates hostility between rivals. (Marias, 1967, p. 255)

Rousseau, opposes Hobbes concerning the natural state of people, who he felt were good by nature, and that they became corrupted by society and civilization. In their development of reason and morality, they acquire political liberty and civil rights within a system of laws based on the general will of the governed. In *Social Contract* (1762), Rousseau takes a similar position to Locke in the importance of a democratic government with the people at then center. He argued that the state of nature eventually degenerates into a brutish condition without law or morality, at which point the human race must adopt institutions of law or perish.

All three men, although differing in specifics of nature, made great strides in contribution to early Social Contract Theory. Around the same time a new system of political economy, Classic Liberalism, was also coming into favor in Western Europe and the new America. It was along the lines of free market merchant capitalist thought, and it worked in unison with what was developing in liberal political theory, both stressed the move away from collective and religious thinking onto freedom of the individual. It is a doctrine stressing the importance of individual property rights as well as natural rights, constitutional limitations of government, the protection of civil liberties, individual freedom from restraint, and free trade between nation states. Adam Smith (1723–1790) and David Hume (1711-1776) both from Scotland, and David Ricardo (1772-1823) from England, influenced Western European as well as New World thinking in America, in this new theory of political economy.

This new movement of liberalism, both political and economic, initiated social unrest and revolts against the institutionalized political power of nobility, monarchy, and authoritarian rule. Both the French Revolution (1789–1799) and the American Revolution were repercussions of this thinking. The Founding Fathers in the New World who wrote the Declaration of Independence and created the United States Constitution followed this new thought of individual freedom, socially, politically, and economically. Classical Liberal Economics and Social Contract Theory are still major concepts which remain strong in America, although today's *liberal* thought in America stresses *individual social freedom* and today's *conservative* thought stresses *economic freedom*. Libertarian thinking would be the closest thought of today in comparison to the mix of Classical Economic Liberalism and Social Contract Theory of the Enlightenment Age.

## Sociological Paradigms and their Philosophical Origins

Although the new liberalism was gaining popularity in both Europe and America, there were adversaries of the thinking who felt that it encouraged excessive individualism and fostered greed in society. As a result, human exploitation of the weaker being was established and instead of breaking down the social stratification system to equalize the levels, it was worsening the class separation, causing alienation, discouragement and more conflict between the people than before. The new liberalism did increase wealth and offer the individual, no matter what strata level he or she was born into, the ability to rise in class level, but often at the expense of many, to the benefit of the few. In contrast, a more collective approach of Socialism, which is theoretically more altruistic and ethical in nature, although not as effective monetarily, began to develop out of Germany for similar political, economic and social reasons. It was called German Idealism and Dialectical Materialism and its proponents were Georg Hegel (1770–1831), Karl Marx (1818–1883), and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), all from Germany.

Eventually these two differing philosophies of government and economics worked their way into the new field of sociology, and the two systems were studied from differing sociological perspectives to explain society's workings and problems. The Classical Liberalism and Social Contract thinking school led into what is now called the *Functional-Structuralist* school and the German Idealism and Dialectical Materialism, because of its position on Capitalism being basically the root of all evil and causing conflict in society, was named *Conflict Theory*, or later, *Marxism*, after Karl Marx himself.

***Structural-Functionalist***

Although Auguste Comte (1798-1857) from France, is often called the Father of Sociology and is sometimes credited for the early Structural-Functionalist school, it was not until long after his death into the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the name Structural Functionalist came into use with the systems method of study, which was later credited to Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), an American sociologist. However, some might argue that Claude Henri de Rouvroy, also known as Saint Simon (1760-1825) from France, whom Comte studied under, to be the first sociologist, Comte did originate the word sociology and was the first to apply the scientific method to the study of society. He later parted ways with Rouvroy because of differences in thought, Rouvroy adhering to the Conflict thinking which we will discuss later. Comte viewed the need and possibilities of integration and interaction during tumultuous times in society with social progress being man's humanity over animality and altruism over egoism. (Peterson, 1987, p. 113). He was a true humanist leaving his old God of theology for humanity. Comte had his own philosophy, a stage theory of knowledge acquisition, called *Positivism*, which assumes an empirical thought processes with sense experience as being the starting point of all knowledge.

Positivism is the theory that the act of learning, or the human mind philosophizing, as Comte put it, goes through three unique stages. The first is the necessary starting point of all human intelligence, called the *theological or fictitious state*. The *metaphysical or abstract stage* follows, which is considered only a transitional period, and a modification of the first step, where supernatural agents are replaced by abstract forces. Finally, in the *positive stage*, the mind recognizes the impossibility of knowing absolute truth and acknowledges only the use of reasoning, observation, and the actual laws of phenomena. (Ferre, 188, p. 1-3) Comte applied this law of mental development to society in general, which is considered one of the first socio-

cultural theories of social evolution. He believed that the basic scientific method could be transferred and used in the social sciences, as well as the natural sciences and performed through observation. (Craig, 2005, p. 826) Until his time scientific data was collected only in the general fields of astronomy, physics, chemistry, and physiology.

A primary assumption of the functionalist perspective is that society naturally acts as a stable, self-regulating, although very complex, system that sustains itself because its institutions serve peoples basic needs. Its parts work together to promote stability and solidarity. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) who was also from France, closely followed Comte in his thinking, but rather than continuing with philosophizing, he put Comte's theoretical work to practical use studying specific social problems in society, such as crime and suicide, using observational methods and a scientific approach. He published his dissertation in 1893 under the title of *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893). In it he addresses the ongoing debate of the success or failure of a capitalistic society. He can understand Smith's argument of vast increases of capital and productivity. However, although he views society as more functional than Marx, he sympathizes with him, asking the question, at what human sacrifice do we strive for capital and wealth creation choosing production over human alienation. Durkheim also conceived the concept of *anomie* in social theory, which he describes as the chaotic state in the human condition which he blames on a lack of work ethics and morality in industry between workers and employers, which perpetuates conflicts and disorders in society (Lemert, 2004, p. 72). This concept continues to be a major topic of study in sociology and will be looked at more in depth later. Durkheim also looked closely at education and religion in society. His *Rules of the Sociological Method* (1895) explained his methods of how sociology should be studied. One of his last works was his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) which he looks at religion in

society, specifically totemism among the Aborigines of Australia. He was one of the first Structural Functionalists using the concept of solidarity and humanism to create cohesion and fill social needs and he took Comte's work to a higher level. He viewed the purpose of the various institutions in society as necessary to create social stability and stressed social order over action and conflict. Talcott Parsons later refined Durkheim's work further using a systems approach with his "Unit Act of Actions Systems", from his *Structure of Social Action* (1937), which was a well developed theory of social action.

Robert Merton (1910-2003) was a modern day Functionalist, who greatly influenced sociology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century predominately in the areas of deviance, anomie, and crime in society. His major work was his *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1949). In it Merton critically looks at the social structures and cultural sources that surround the deviant behavior patterns and develops a stage theory which he calls "Five Modes of Social Adaptation". He also developed work in the area of manifest and latent functions and dysfunctions, which looks at the intended and unintended consequences of certain functions in society. Other research interests were concerning reference groups and self-fulfilling prophecy. His "Middle-Range Theory" bridged the gap between the theory and empirical evidence. Later we will look more in depth at both Durkheim's and Merton's concept of anomie in society.

### ***Social-Conflict***

The social-conflict school rejects this functionalist school of thought and vision of society being a well working system of institutions, focusing instead on the stratification in society and the inequality which generates from conflict and change. The thought is that it is the structure and complexity which perpetuates the system benefit some, while depriving others, and society or organizations function so that each individual participant and its groups struggle to maximize their own benefits. The assumption underlying this thinking is that society is a complex mix of competing groups of people, each with separate goals and agendas. Conflict and constraint holds society together, rather than structure and institutions which serve peoples needs. An either or type of view is apparent, in which in order to give to one group, something must be taken from the other group. An economic system match to this social system often is socialism or an extreme of communism, and redistribution of wealth, rather than free-markets, characterize it.

Conflict theory has its early roots in the thinking of Georg Hegel (1770-1831) a German philosopher. His philosophy was in oposition to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), also from Germany, who combined the Rationalist and Empirical thought on knowledge. Hegal's strain of Idealism called Dialectical Materialism was a complex and unique system that few could understand. The universe was, as Hegal saw it, the Absolute as Thought, thinking its way forward. His passing of history, or dialectic of history, is seen as the process by which the divine Idea passes from one society to another, with history being the upsetting of old empires and the emerging of new ones. Cultural energies of a society begin to die when when new or innovative realities no longer arise, although military power may still remain. This causes tension between power and values. (Peterson, 1987, p. 127)



Karl Marx (1818-1883) took Hegel's thinking and used it to explain the social situation at the time, which he was disillusioned with, the exploitation of the lower class factory workers in England during the Industrial Revolution. His dialectic had a simple triple rhythm of thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis, and he used it to support his theory of material evolution using social class conflict as the explanation to how society moves. Having no empirical validity at all, the reason of the vast acceptance of Marxism through the 19<sup>th</sup> century is because it caters to the downtrodden in society and pushes all blame of stratification and inequality back onto society itself and off of the individuals personal responsibility. (Peterson, 1897, p. 135) Marx's greatest written work, *Communist Manifesto* (1848), was co-authored with his good friend Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), also from Germany. The writings introduction includes the line "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Marx believed that capitalism would fall to communism by way of social revolution initiated by the lower class workers. The class struggle he seen as between the capitalist or bourgeoisie, who own the means of production, and the proletariat, those who labor for the wages. Later he penned his treatise on political economy, *Das Kapital*, which was in three volumes. The first he wrote alone in 1867, but died before he could complete the complete trilogy and Engels completed the second two volumes after his death. Marxism is still followed in parts of the world today, although often only lingers or is initiated in the more economically deprived or socially desperate areas.

### ***Symbolic Interaction***

Unlike the two paradigms just discussed which use a macro view of society, symbolic interaction looks at it from a micro level on an individual basis with a focus on specific social interaction in exact environmental settings. This view analyzes society from the everyday interactions of the individual at the most basic level. The assumption here is that rather than objective facts determining human behavior, the subjective meanings that a person ascribes to a situation will determine the behavioral outcome. Two sociologists which are often credited with this school of study are Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1924) and George Herbert Mead (1863-1931). Cooley and Mead were primarily concerned with the individual's sense of self or identity. They proposed that it was social interaction that defined and developed the person's opinion of themselves and who they were, with biology taking a back seat. It was other people's reaction to us which determined personal self image, and primary groups, such as family, had the most impact. Cooley called it the *looking glass self*. This school is often studied in the discipline of social psychology which looks closely at group interaction and has many subsections such as sociolinguistics, the study of social factors influencing speech patterns and the dramaturgical approach which analogizes individual behaviors to actors on a stage.

## **Anomie, Deviance, and Crime in Society**

The term anomie in the social sciences is described in various ways which can relate to both the individual and society itself. The word originates from the Greek language, namely the prefix *a* meaning "without", and *nomos* meaning "law". Traditional use of the word was to mean the state of illegitimacy or lawlessness. However, general use of the term is to mean a description of a human condition caused by social instability or a lack of regulation in society, resulting from a breakdown of standards and values or from a lack of purpose or ideals, which cause a personal unrest in the individual. An extreme use of the word which may be considered is normlessness in society which leads to anarchy. However, for purposes of this writing we will consider Durkheim's *anomie* which is a reaction against, or a retreat from, the lack of rules, norms, and values as social controls in society, and is a completely separate concept from a situation of anarchy which is an absence of effective rulers or leaders. (Wikipedia)

Although Durkheim is often credited with first using the term anomie in sociology studies, it was actually the French Philosopher Jean Marie Guyau, who first coined the term in his writings, *The Non-Religion of the Future* and the *Sketch of a Morality without Obligation or Sanction*. (British Journal of Sociology) However, Durkheim is often credited with its origins from his *Division of Labor in Society* (1893) in which he argues Guyau's work in his introduction. Durkheim later further developed the concept with his suicide studies, published in 1897 simply called, *Suicide*. He was the first to study suicide from a sociological perspective of environmental external forces contributing to, or influencing the individual behavior, rather than a psychological approach looking at personal characteristics, traits, or biological tendencies as others had done before him. He used these studies to measure anomie in various societies.

***Durkheim on Anomie***

As many sociologists did, Durkheim had a strong interest in the social changes or patterns brought about by the Industrial Revolution, which has been termed *modernity* or *modernization*. For Durkheim, this change was distinguished by the increasing division of labor in society, which he defined as a *specialized economic activity*. Whereas members of the traditional society (pre-industrial) performed similar activities on a daily basis, members of modern societies performed more specialized routines. He held that the traditional society was maintained by a *mechanical solidarity*, with a sense of a collectively shared togetherness, norms, and morality. With modernization, the division of labor becomes more pronounced and less mechanical, offering an *organic solidarity*, or a forced dependency, based on merely economic or individual gain. He maintained that because people of the modern society were engaged by different work, the society was held together more by differences and economic dependency rather than likenesses or similarities. (Macionis, 2002, p. 442)

Although he felt that society was much more than just the sum of its parts, Durkheim was one of the first to explain the existence of structural differences as important functional parts in society which help to keep society healthy and balanced. In the modern society, individual consciousness emerged distinct from the collective unconsciousness of the traditional society, creating a pathology or conflict, which he called anomie. The increased division of labor caused a change from relative simplicity to rapidly advancing complexity in society and the lack of regulation and industry norms in the labor divisions led to a normlessness and uncertainty in the individual. As were common in early sociology, biological analogies were made to society and Durkheim compared the changes in society to human evolutionism with the higher level organisms exploiting the available resources in order to survive and thrive.

However, to distinguish himself as a functionalist rather than a conflict theorist, he argued that the pathological features could not be traced to inherent flaws in the systems built on organic solidarity. Rather he felt that the conflict or anomie was traced to transitional periods only. This he felt could be overcome with the emergence of new norms and values created in new institutions, organizations, or corporations. He was not opposed to the expanding role of state involvement in modern life, however he was concerned with excessive growth of the state which could lead to the breakdown of individual liberties. (Intro by Lewis Coser of Durkheim's *Division of Labor*, 1997)

One German sociologist in particular during Durkheim's time who shared similar views of modernity was Ferdinand Tonnies (1855-1937). Tonnies' named his two societies the *Gemeinschaft*, meaning community, which was the lost society (pre-industrial) and *Gesellschaft*, meaning association or civil society, being the new modern one. The former society was tied together by kinship and tradition and the later by impersonal relations based on individual economic needs with little sense of community. Although Tonnies might be considered a conflict theorist, as he viewed modernity not so much as a change or transition in society, which can be compensated for with new institutions to compensate the changes, as Durkheim did, but as a continued unresolved conflict. Durkheim's view was a bit more complex and optimistic, however both men feared that the lack of moral guidance was causing increased alienation, egocentrism, excessive individualism, and greed. In periods of social change, previous rules may not apply and the unpredictability and lack of new rules emerging fast enough to keep up with the change will cause people to lose control and begin to act on every whim creating their own rules as they go, as social unrest, chaos and uncertainty will bring about anomic fears.

Shortly after Durkheim's debut of anomie in his writing on the division of labor, he further began to elaborate on the concept during his study of suicide. He specifically looked at the differing suicide rates among Protestants and Catholics finding that stronger social controls among Catholics resulted in lower suicide rates than Protestants. He also noticed higher rates among those with less social integration in their lives; higher rates for those who are widowed single and divorced versus married; and higher rates for those with no children. His study concluded that there were four major categories of suicide; *egoistic*, *altruistic*, *fatalistic*, and *anomic*. Egoistic suicide situations found the ties from the individual to society and others as weaker than normal, often caused by excessive isolationism or seen with singles living alone. Altruistic suicide would be excessive allegiance to the community or society, such as police, fire, and military giving their lives for civilians or an ideal. Fatalistic, Durkheim considered the opposite of anomie suicide, with the individual having excessive social regulation or oppression of the state. For instance those imprisoned, institutionalized, enslaved or individuals in the midst of hopelessness. Anomic suicide he found among those societies with weak social regulation or control, with uncertainty or changes in order, at war, or in economic crises'.

Through his studies on crime Durkheim found that there was nothing abnormal about deviance in society and that it performed four basic essential functions:

- Deviance affirms cultural values and norms, it is needed to define and sustain morality in society.
- Social response to deviance clarifies moral boundaries between right and wrong.
- Responding to deviance reaffirms moral ties that bind society together.
- Deviance encourages change and pushes society's moral boundaries, offering alternatives to the status quo.

### *Merton on Social Structure and Anomie Strain Theory*

In contrast to Durkheim and later to Hirschi's control theory, Robert Merton (1910-2003) recognized the importance of shared goals and values but realized that everyone did not share in the opportunity to achieve them. In *Social Structure and Anomie* (1938), Merton challenged prior theories relatively popular at the time. These theories viewed crime as a result of biological and psychological traits, while Merton instead argued crime derives from societal conditions. While Durkheim's anomie was a feeling of isolation and normlessness arising out of the industrialization of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Merton's arose out of growing up through the economic depression of the 30's a poor Jewish minority. He expanded Durkheim's theory based on his studies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He felt it was the culture itself that taught that everyone could win and acquire wealth, when in reality the social environment greatly influences the success of the individual. He was the first to see the disjunction between the goals of society and the means to achieve them and the first to describe the strain between the two and labeling it anomie-strain theory. (Merton, 1996, p. 133) Although the theory fell out of favor for awhile, it is still considered a major concept in explaining criminal behavior and often studied in criminology as well as sociology. His theory on deviancy included five modes of social adaptation, or also called *anomic paradigm*, which he used to explain deviant behavior in society.

In Merton's theory, the *conformist*, is the most often found in society. The conformist maintains the desire for culturally prescribed goals, while using legitimate means for achieving those goals. The *innovator* attempts to achieve culturally approved goals, however, using unconventional means. Deviance then occurs when the innovator chooses illegitimate means to achieve the acceptable goals. White collar crime or drug traffickers would be examples of innovators. The *ritualist*, would place the means as more important as the goal, abiding by strict

adherence to what is proper in society, rather than what is desired. Ritualism is common among people of modest social standing, who have little interest in socially constructed goals. They are often not considered deviant although may seem eccentric. An example might be a wealthy person who chooses a non-material religious lifestyle. The least common in society is the *retreatist*. The retreatist rejects both the socially prescribed goals as well as the means to achieve them in society. An example might be a drug addict, homeless person, or alcoholic with a lack of desire to improve their life. The *rebel*, like the retreatist rejects both the accepted cultural goals and means. However, they often advocate or follow radical alternatives to the existing social order, proposing new, often disapproved, values or norms. An example might be a religious cult member or political extremist. (Gelles & Levine, 1999, p. 243)

**Merton’s Five Modes of Social Adaptation**

<b>Modes of Adapting</b>	<b>Accepts Socially Approved Goals</b>	<b>Accepts Socially Approved Means</b>
<b>Conformist</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Innovator</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Ritualist</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Retreatist</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Rebel</b>	<b>Creates New Goals</b>	<b>Creates New Means</b>



In his 1948 essay *Manifest and Latent Functions*, Merton discusses the difference between manifest and latent functions. He defines a manifest function as any element of social structure whose consequences are recognized and intended, in contrast to latent functions which are consequences which are largely unrecognized and unintended. Merton considers the latent functions as increasing the understanding of society and the distinction between the two exposes the sociologist to go beyond the obvious reasons for social behavior or for the existence of certain customs and institutions. Like Durkheim, Merton sees a function for deviance and crime in society. It offers employment specifically in the criminal justice system. It also defines boundaries and norms of acceptable behavior for society to follow, encourages change, and questions the status quo.

In his *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1957) Merton outlined the labeling process known as *Self-Fulfilling Prophecy*, which he defines as a false definition of a situation evoking a new behavior which makes the original false conception come true. (Merton, 1996, p. 185) He also discusses two types of deviant behavior, *nonconforming* behavior and *aberrant* behavior. Nonconforming behavior is that which challenges the legitimacy of social norms. In contrast, aberrant behavior acknowledges the legitimacy of the norms he violates.

As a functionalist, Merton's work failed to explain a few things, why does non-material crime occur and exactly where do the rules emerge from in society as the norm in the first place. It does not consider illegitimate opportunity and it assumes a consistent and agreed upon value system of wants and needs. Travis Hirschi was one upon many who followed Merton and expanded his work. Rather than try to explain deviance and ask why do people deviant from the norm, he asked the question, what makes people follow conformity.

***Travis Hirschi on Social Control & Deviance***

Travis Hirschi studied and refined and expanded upon both Durkheim's theory of anomie and Merton's anomie-strain theory, bringing it into the field of criminology, with his Social Control Theory in *Causes of Delinquency* (1969). Oddly enough, the theory blamed weak social bonds and the breakdown of the family, rather than social disorganization, which was running rampant at the time of his work with the civil rights movement, the Viet Nam War protests and heavy socio-political liberalism. However, it was a shift from previous studies in criminology which were often psychologically based focusing on personality traits.

The control theory of delinquency is a more sociological theory which attempts to explain why deviation from social norms might occur. Rather than asking the question "why do people commit crime" the social control theorists asked "why don't people break the law". The theory strongly stressed the power of attachment and social bonding identifying four controls which bind society together: psychological attachment to parents and others and the extent in which we care about others opinions and desires toward ourselves; the personal investment we put into our lives and the commitment to conventional values, morals, and ethics; integration and involvement with conventional activities; and belief that conventional lines of action work. Later Hirschi wrote *A General Theory of Crime* (1990) with Michael R. Gottfredson and shifted his focus more onto individual responsibility and personal self-control rather than strictly focusing on external forces to explain conformity and deviation. Hirschi followed Durkheim's anomie theory and studies on crime as an industrial problem linking it to his bonds of attachment and control theory trying to explain crime and delinquency in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Sub-Culture Theory***

Others who followed and expanded upon Merton's work banded together in trying to explain non-material crime and deviancy, as well as differing value systems in society, two areas in which Merton was criticized. The group which emerged, many of who rose out of Chicago University, attempted to explain the discrepancies using sub-culture group theory. One of the first to take a social psychological perspective of groups using a symbolic interactionist approach was Edwin Sutherland (1893-1950), a criminologist during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He argued that it was a cultural transmission, which emphasized the importance of locality, context, and culture which lead to criminal or deviant behaviors. He labeled his theory Differential Association Theory. Albert Cohen and Lloyd Ohlin, who are discussed later, studied under him and elaborated on Sutherland's work developing a major school of thought in today's criminal studies, the Sub-Culture Theory school. Differential Association theory states that through a processes of cultural and social interaction, transmission, and construction, criminal behavior is learned. This is similar concept to the *looking glass self* of Cooley, which was previously discussed, that when a person's self-image is continuously being reconstructed especially through interaction with others. The theory proposes a precise cause and effect arising from exposure to given stimuli over a significant period of time. However, it does not explain why some people who have never been in contact with established criminals also commit crimes, nor why people do not learn the behavior from reading or watching of violence or criminal fictional role models. Sutherland was the first to coin the term *white-collar criminal* in a speech to the American Sociological Association in 1939, in which he later defined as "a crime committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his occupation."

Richard Cloward (1926-2001) and Lloyd Ohlin followed Sutherland with their *Differential Opportunity Theory* which took into account that illegitimate opportunities may be more available in certain areas than others. The two disagreed with Merton that criminals share the same values and goals as the rest of society and they may have their own sub-culture values and therefore develop their own illegitimate career structure. According to Cloward and Ohlin, anomie theory assumes that access to conventional means is unevenly distributed, that some individuals, because of their social class, are offered advantages that are denied to others. The two argued that since there are variations which individuals are exposed to for acquiring values, knowledge, and skills to facilitate upward mobility, it would also be true that there are socially structured variations in the availability of illegitimate means as well. Their theory combined anomie, social disorganization, and differential association theories. Since legitimate opportunities in the economy are limited, so are illegitimate opportunities, and competition exists in both worlds. In their theory they identified three types of gangs. The *criminal gang* focused on crimes that will earn them money, similar to Merton's *innovator*. This structure is often offered in areas where established adult crime is already structured. The *conflict gang* focused on obtaining status through a hard or tough exterior, similar to Merton's *rebel*. When an illegitimate opportunity structure is not available, delinquents often form conflicting gangs out of frustration at the lack of any available avenue. The *retreatist gang* who does not have the skills of either the criminal or conflict gang, end up dropping out, similar to Merton's retreatist. However, Merton had proposed that the retreatist would not turn to illegitimate means due to an internalised mechanism. Cloward and Ohlin believed that the retreatists suffered from a *double failure*, and there was no acceptance or opportunity for them to succeed through either avenues.

Albert Cohen's (born 1918) strain was not so much social structural, as it was interpersonal, located at a symbolic interactionist level. He argued that subcultures emerged out of *status frustration*, usually in poor urban environments, resulting in opposition to those of the dominant culture. The causes were rooted in class differences, parental motivation, family values, and school standards and expectations. Thus, *reaction formation* will result in adaption into either a corner boy, college boy, or a delinquent boy, while replacing societies norms and values with alternative ones. Cohen's theory explained the non-material crimes, such as vandalism, which Merton could not, but unlike Merton, Cohen held the view that the reaction to status frustration is a collective response rather than an individual one. However, neither Cloward & Ohlin's Differential Opportunity Theory, nor Cohen's theory on Status Frustration offered any explanation for white collar crime, nor did either consider the female gender.

Walter B. Miller (born 1920), also out of the Chicago University, followed the subculture route with his focus on youth gangs and activity. Merton's anomie theory assumes that a given society has a common value system, but Miller argued that society is not meshed together with one set of values and considers a multiple value system in his theory. He felt that delinquency was rooted in the rejection of the middle class value system, but is also rooted in the value system of the lower class. He concluded that each group had its own subculture, and used the term *focal concerns*, rather than *values*, to describe things that are important to the subculture. Miller then identified six focal concerns to which the lower class are continually aware of. These concerns included: *trouble with others* (teachers, police); *toughness* (strength and size, especially among males); *smartness* (possessing street smarts); *excitement* (need for risk, thrills, danger); *belief in fate* (lack of free will, deterministic); *desire for freedom, autonomy, independence* (expressed as hostility of authority).

### ***Marx on Alienation & Conflict Theory on Deviance***

Marx also studied society through the move from traditional to modernity and also developed a theory concerning the repercussions of the Industrial Revolution, similar to Durkheim's anomie theory. As Durkheim was focused on the change in the culture itself and the affect on society as a whole, Marx looked more at the affect on the individual. Durkheim's blame was placed on the lack of rules, norms, and values in place in the quickly changing society. He felt that society was too confused with the lack of cultural structure and therefore anomie set in and conflict within the individual to know right from wrong. Marx on the other hand looked specifically at the labor capital structure which was developing and focused more on the individual trauma rather than the social trauma. He called this personal trauma of the individual, *alienation*. Both men blamed the move to capitalism and industrialization however one focused on the structural importance of maintaining cohesion and the other blamed the structural system which developed from capitalism.

In Marx's view, social stratification was caused by the people's relationships to the means of production and one was either a property owner of the means of production or a wage laborer who worked for the owners of the means of production. Means of production could entail land, buildings, tools, or anything that was included in a business which produced an item. He felt that the move from the feudal system to the industrial capitalist system only replaced the players of the feudal system and did not help the lower class at all, which was opposite what the capitalist's claimed would happen, which was to offer social mobility to the lower class. The nobility of the old system was merely replaced by the new capitalists or *bourgeoisie*. The serfs became the new labor force who sold their time and effort for wages, and were called *proletarians*. Marx saw no mobility at all for this level of class in the new system.

This concept of alienation or estrangement first originated with not only Hegel, but also with a Ludwig Andreas von Feuerbach (1804-1872). Marx and Engels had known of his work from the University of Berlin and the group called the Young Hegelians, also followers of Hegel. The thinking was that history under modern capitalism was seen as man's alienation in his life as producer, and communism was presented as the final transcendence of alienation but only after a workers revolution against private property. (Tucker, 1978, p. 66) The alienation of the worker in his product, Marx felt, meant not only that his labor became merely an object of external existence and that it existed outside of him independently, but it became something alien and hostile with a power of its own. (Tucker, 1978, p. 72) He felt that under capitalism, because the complete process of manufacturing was taken from the worker, work would only produce dehumanization, isolationism and powerlessness over one's destiny, which would lead to a state of alienation or estrangement from oneself. The term "alienation" actually originated in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* writing which in German meant two distinct terms, *entfremdung*, meaning estrangement and *enttauberung*, meaning externalization. Marx first referenced the term in his manuscripts of 1844. Marx and Engels first jointly written piece was written in Paris of that year and published the next year, called *The Holy Family: A Critique of Critical Criticism*. It was in this writing that the doctrine of alienation was set forth. (Tucker, 1978, p. 133) This writing provided a link between his economic theory and his philosophy on human nature. The idea was that an entity or agent would give rise to a product or an expression that was distinct but at the same time essential to itself. The secondary product is eventually cut off from its origin and in consequence, the agent suffers a loss of identity. Thus for the agent to fully realize itself, it needs to remove the separation between itself and its own product. If not the consequence is to alienate man from what he calls his *universal free species-being*. (Craig, 2005, p. 621)

Marx did not write very much specifically on deviance or crime in society and never really directly related his alienation concept to such behavior as Durkheim related anomie to crime and suicide. However the conflict school of thought does have opinions on today's situation concerning crime. Steven Spitzer and Richard Quinney are two current day conflict theorists who follow a Marxist tradition concerning theories to explain crime and deviancy in society. Their thought is that the norms and laws of any society reflect the interest of only the elite and powerful; and those that threaten the wealthy are considered political radicals, thieves, or deviants. The wealthy have the resources to resist consequences of crime and labels of deviance when laws and norms of society are violated. Crime and deviancy are merely products of the conditions of the social structure produced by capitalism; and criminal laws have evolved to become the form of control used to oppress, dominate, and exploit the underprivileged in society. In general, the capitalist structure is developed and retained only to legally exploit the profits of labor, and often requires a surplus of labor to sustain shifts and changes in the economy. Conflict theory focuses more on those that make the rules to their advantage, rather than those that break the rules due to anger and frustration over inequality in the system, as the previously discussed functionalist or interactionist theorists had done.

Spitzer wrote about the bourgeoisie control over social junk and social dynamite, coining both terms. The former term describes those who have either fallen or jumped through the cracks of our social system, and are now dependent on others for the provision of their basic needs. The later term describes those who have either fallen or jumped through the cracks of our social system, but who are rebellious and potentially violent over this perceived failure.



Max Weber (1864-1920) agreed with Marx that social stratification caused conflict in society. However, as Marx argued that two classes existed, the bourgeoisie and the proletarians, Weber argued that there were three distinct conflicts of inequality, *class* or position, *status* or prestige, and *power* or party. He took on an anti-positivist approach, while coining the term, also known as humanistic sociology. He argued against Comte that the tools to study the natural and social sciences using the same methodological approach of science could exist. He argued that the positivist approach to understand causality exerts control and if this succeeded in sociology, those with knowledge would be able to control the ignorant which could lead to social engineering, efforts to influence popular societies on a large scale. Although there are several strands of phenomenology, the anti-positivist approach, runs in a similar line arguing that positivism's three goals of *explanation*, *control*, and *prediction*, are incomplete, since they lack the goal of *understanding*. In his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) Weber talks about his *stahlhartes Gehäuse*, later translated by Talcott Parsons to mean *iron cage*, which refers to the increasing rationalization of human life, trapping the individual in an excessive rule-based, over-bureaucratic social order. This almost seems like a polarization to Durkheim's anomie where a lack of social controls and norms are in place. In either case it causes an uncomfortable state in the human condition. Unlike Marx and Durkheim he felt that capitalism excelled as a result of the Protestant ethic influencing the masses to engage in the capitalist philosophy of secular commerce and trade which strives for an accumulation of wealth. Like Marx though, Weber did not follow his theory through as a way to explain anomie, crime, or deviancy, as Durkheim did. However, it was worth mentioning in this section as Weber will be covered in much more depth in the next section concerning religion in society, with his studies of Protestantism and Catholicism. .

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