**SOCI 5101**

**Introduction of Sociology**

**What is Sociology?**

[Sociology](https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/introtosociology/Documents/Etymology.htm) is the scientific study of society, including patterns of social relationships, social interaction, and culture.  The term *sociology*was first used by Frenchman Auguste Compte in the 1830s when he proposed a synthetic science uniting all knowledge about human activity.  In the academic world, sociology is  considered one of the social sciences.

**What Do Sociologists Study?**

Sociologists study all things human, from the interactions between two people to the complex relationships between nations or multinational corporations.  While sociology assumes that human actions are patterned, individuals still have room for choices.  Becoming aware of the social processes that influence the way humans think, feel, and behave plus having the will to act can help individuals to shape the social forces they face.

**The Origins of Sociology**

Sociologists believe that our social surroundings influence thought and action.  For example, the rise of the social sciences developed in response to social changes.  In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europeans were exploring the world and voyagers returned from Asia, the Americas, Africa, and the South Seas with amazing stories of other societies and civilizations.  Widely different social practices challenged the view that European life reflected the natural order of God.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Western Europe was rocked by technical, economic, and social changes that forever changed the social order.  Science and technology were developing rapidly.  James Watt invented the steam engine in 1769, and in 1865 Joseph Lister discovered that an antiseptic barrier could be placed between a wound and germs in the atmosphere to inhibit infection.  These and other scientific developments spurred social changes and offered hope that scientific methods might help explain the social as well as the natural world.  This trend was part of a more general growth in rationalism.

The industrial revolution began in Britain in the late eighteenth century.  By the late nineteenth century, the old order was collapsing “under the twin blows of industrialism and revolutionary democracy” (Nisbet, 1966: 21).  Mechanical industry was growing, and thousants of people were migrating to cities to work in the new factories.  People once rooted in the land and social communities where they farmed found themselves crowded into cities.  The traditional authority of the church, the village, and the family were being undermined by impersonal factory and city life.

Capitalism also grew in Western Europe in the nineteenth century.  This meant that relatively few people owned the means of production—such as factories—while many others had to sell their labor to those owners.  At the same time, relatively impersonal financial markets began to expand.  The modern epoch was also marked by the development of administrative state power, which involved increasing concentrations of information and armed power (Giddens, 1987: 27).

Finally, there was enormous population growth worldwide in this period, due to longer life expectancy and major decreases in child death rates.  These massive social changes lent new urgency to the deveopment of the social sciences, as early sociological thinkers struggled with the vast implications of economic, social and political revolutions.  All the major figures in the early years of sociology thought about the “great transformation” from simple, preliterate societies to massive, complex, industrial societies. All sociologists are interested in the experiences of individuals and how those experiences are shaped by interactions with social groups and society as a whole. To a sociologist, the personal decisions an individual makes do not exist in a vacuum. Cultural patterns and social forces put pressure on people to select one choice over another. Sociologists try to identify these general patterns by examining the behavior of large groups of people living in the same society and experiencing the same societal  
pressures.

Changes in the U.S. family structure offer an example of patterns that sociologists are interested in studying. A “typical” family now is vastly different than in past decades when most U.S. families consisted of married parents living in a home with their unmarried children. The percent of unmarried couples, same-sex couples, single-parent and single-adult households is increasing, as well as is the number of expanded households, in which extended family members such as grandparents, cousins, or adult children live together in the family home (U.S. Census Bureau 2013).

Some sociologists study social facts, which are the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and all of the cultural rules that govern social life, that may contribute to these changes in the family. Do people in the United States view marriage and family differently than before? Do employment and economic conditions play a role? How has culture influenced the choices that individuals make in living arrangements? Other sociologists are studying the consequences of these new patterns, such as the ways children are affected by them or changing needs for education, housing, and healthcare.

Sociology is the study of human behavior. Sociology refers to [social behavior](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_behavior), [society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society), patterns of social relationships, [social interaction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_interaction), and [culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture) that surrounds everyday life. It is a [social science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_science) that uses various methods of [empirical investigation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empirical_method) and [critical analysis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Critical_analysis)to develop a body of knowledge about [social order](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_order) and [social change](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_change). Sociology can also be defined as the general science of society. While some sociologists conduct research that may be applied directly to [social policy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_policy) and [welfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welfare), others focus primarily on refining the [theoretical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory) understanding of social processes. Subject matter can range from [micro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microsociology)-level analyses of society (i.e., of individual interaction and [agency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agency_(sociology))) to [macro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macrosociology)-level analyses (i.e., of systems and the [social structure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_structure)).

Traditional focuses of sociology include [social stratification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_stratification), [social class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_class), [social mobility](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_mobility), [religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology_of_religion), [secularization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularization), [law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology_of_law), [sexuality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexuality), [gender](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender), and [deviance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deviance_(sociology)). As all spheres of human activity are affected by the interplay between [social structure and individual agency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Structure_and_agency), sociology has gradually expanded its focus to other subjects and [institutions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institution), such as [health](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology_of_health) and the [institution of medicine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_sociology); [economy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_sociology); [military](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_sociology); [punishment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology_of_punishment) and systems of [control](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Control_theory_(sociology)); [the Internet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology_of_the_Internet); [education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology_of_Education_(journal)); [social capital](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_capital); and the role of social activity in the development of [scientific knowledge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sociology_of_scientific_knowledge).

**Fields of Sociology**

A sociologist is one who has earned advanced degrees or pursued other advanced studies in sociology and is engaged in teaching, research or other professional work in the field of sociology. The careless use of the term sociologist is very common. Magzine and newspaper writers, social workers, labor leaders, government officials, social critics etc may be described incorrectly as sociologist. Sociology concentrates its study upon the group life of human beings and the product of their group living.

The sociologist is especially interested in customs, traditions and values which emerge from group living and in the way group living is in turn affected by these customs, traditions and values. Sociology is interested in the way groups interact with one another and in the processes and institutions which they develop.

Sociology is subdivided into many specialized fields of which some of are:

* Applied sociology
* Collective behaviour
* Community
* Comparative sociology
* Crime and delinquency
* Cultural sociology
* Demography
* Deviant behaviour
* Formal and complex organizations
* Human ecology
* Industrial sociology
* Law and society
* Marriage and Family
* Medical sociology
* Military sociology
* Political sociology
* Sociology of Religion
* Urban sociology
* Social psychology
* Social control
* Rural sociology
* Sociological theory
* Sociology of Education

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Sociology is only one of the social sciences and other disciplines share its interest in many topics. Its interest in communication and public opinion is shared by psychology and political science, criminology is shared with psychology, political science and law and police science. Sociology is especially close to psychology and anthropology and overlaps them constantly.

**Sociology and other social sciences**

Sociology is a science of society. As a social science it attempts to study social life as a whole. But for the understanding of social life as a whole sociology requires the help of other social sciences which studies a particular aspect of society. Economics studies the economic aspects whereas political science studies political aspects.

**Sociology and political science**

1. Sociology is a science of society and social relationship whereas political science is a science of state and government.
2. The scope of sociology is very wide but scope of political science is limited.
3. Sociology is a general science but political science is a special science.
4. Sociology studied organised, unorganized and disorganized society whereas political science studies only politically organised society.
5. Sociology studies the social activities of man whereas political science studies political activities of man.
6. Sociology is a new or young science but political science is an older science.
7. Sociology studies man as a social animal whereas political science studies man as a political animal.
8. Sociology studies both formal and informal relations whereas political science studies only formal relations.
9. Sociology analyses both conscious and unconscious activities of man whereas political science analyses only conscious activities of man.
10. Sociology deals with all forms of association whereas political science deals with only one form of association named state

### Sociology and Economics

1) Sociology is a science of society and social relationships whereas economics is a science of wealth and choice.

(2) Sociology is a much younger science which has very recent origin whereas economics is comparatively an older science.

(3) Sociology is an abstract science whereas economics is concrete in nature.

(4) Sociology is a general social science whereas economics is a special social science.

(5) The scope of sociology is very wide whereas the scope of economics is very limited.

(6) Sociology is concerned with the social activities of man whereas economics is concerned with the economic activities of man.

(7) Society is studied as a unit of study in Sociology whereas man is taken as a unit of study in economics.

(8) Both Sociology and economics differ from each other in respect of the methods and techniques they use for their study**.**

**Sociology and psychology**

(1) Sociology is a science of society but Psychology is a science of mind.

(2) Scope of Sociology is wide whereas scope of Psychology is limited.

(3) Society is the unit of study in sociology but individual is the unit of study in case of Psychology.

(4) Sociology studies social processes whereas Psychology studies mental processes.

(5) Sociology studies and analyses human behavior from Sociological angle whereas psychology studies and analyses human behavior from Psychological angles.

### Sociology and Anthropology:

(1) Sociology is a science of society whereas anthropology is a science of man and his behavior.

(2) The scope of Sociology is very wide whereas the scope of Anthropology is very limited. Because anthropology is a part of Sociology.

(3) Sociology studies society as a whole whereas anthropology studies man as a part of society.

(4) Sociology studies civilizations which are vast and dynamic on the other hand Anthropology studies cultures which are small and static.

(5) Sociology studies modern, civilized and complex societies whereas Anthropology studies ancient and non-literate societies.

(6) Sociology is concerned with social planning whereas anthropology is not concerned with social planning. On the basis of social planning sociology make suggestion for future but anthropology do not make any suggestion for future.

(7)In the words of Kluckhon, “The Sociological attitude has tended towards the Practical and Present, the anthropological towards pure understanding of the past.”