

CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

perception - the way the brain interprets an image or event

perspective - a particular point of view - influenced by one's beliefs/values - draws your attention to some things, blinds you to others

sociology - the scientific study of social structure (human social behavior)
- concentrates on patterns of social relationships, primarily in modern societies
- sociologists are concerned with explaining behavior in terms of societal causes

sociological perspective - a view that looks at behavior of groups, not individuals (psychology)

social structure - the patterned interaction of people in social relationships
- sociologists try to understand why and how these patterns exist
- people's behavior within a group setting can't be predicted from their personal characteristics - examples: 1) civil disturbance in L.A. after Lakers NBA championship 2) death of 12 Texas A&M students preparing pregame bonfire - Texas rivals joined A&M fans/students in paying tribute to those killed

sociological imagination - the ability to see the link between society and self
- can help us understand the effects of events on our daily lives

conventional wisdom - what most people believe to be true
- questioning this wisdom is an important aspect of sociology

Origins of Sociology

Auguste Comte - 1798-1857 - France - the "father" of sociology

- his main concern: improvement of society - proposed that if societies were to advance, social behavior had to be studied scientifically

positivism - belief that knowledge should be derived from scientific observation

social statics - study of social stability and order

social dynamics - study of social change

Harriet Martineau - 1802-1876 - England - best known for her English translation of Comte's famous book, Positive Philosophy

- wrote Society in America - became a pioneering feminist theorist - spoke out against oppression of women and slaves

Herbert Spencer - 1820-1903 - England - introduced "Social Darwinism": evolutionary social change led to progress - if left alone, natural social selection would ensure the survival of the fittest society

Karl Marx - 1818-1883 - Germany - social scientist who stressed the importance of conflict in social change

bourgeoisie - "the haves" - class owning the means of production (factories, farms, RRs)

capitalist - person who owns the means of production

proletariat - "the have-nots" - working class

class conflict - ongoing struggle between the owners and the workers

Emile Durkheim - 1858-1917 -

France - first introduced the use of statistical techniques in his research on suicide

- said that suicide involves more than individuals acting alone, suicide rates vary according to group characteristics

- showed that human social behavior must be explained by social rather than psychological factors

Max Weber - 1864-1920 - Germany - has had the single most important influence on the development of sociological theory

- stressed the method of verstehen - understanding social behavior by putting yourself in the place of others

rationalization - the mind-set emphasizing knowledge, reason and planning

- this way of thinking marked a change from the tradition, emotion and superstition of pre-industrial society

Sociology in America

Jane Addams - 1860-1935 - U.S. - reformer/social worker who established the Hull House in Chicago in 1889 - provided refuge for immigrants, the sick, the poor, the aged

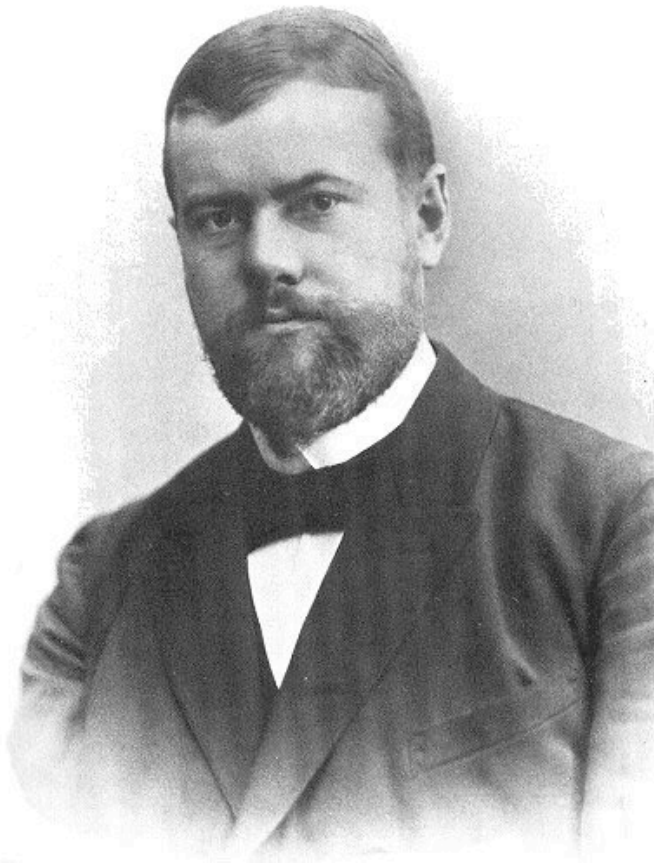
- focused on the problems caused by the imbalance of power among the social classes
- active in the women's suffrage movement
- won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931 (only sociologist to win one)

W.E.B. DuBois - 1868-1963 - U.S. - African American educator/social activist

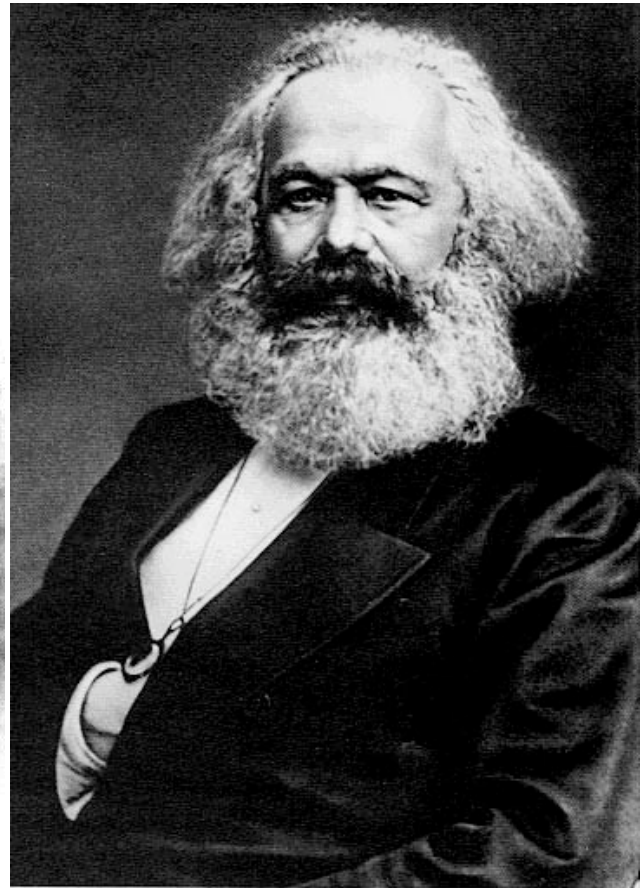
- 1st black man to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard in 1895
- analyzed the sophisticated social structure of black communities
- active in the "Pan African" movement (concerned with the rights of all African descendants)
- helped found the NAACP in 1909

The Three Theoretical Perspectives of Sociology

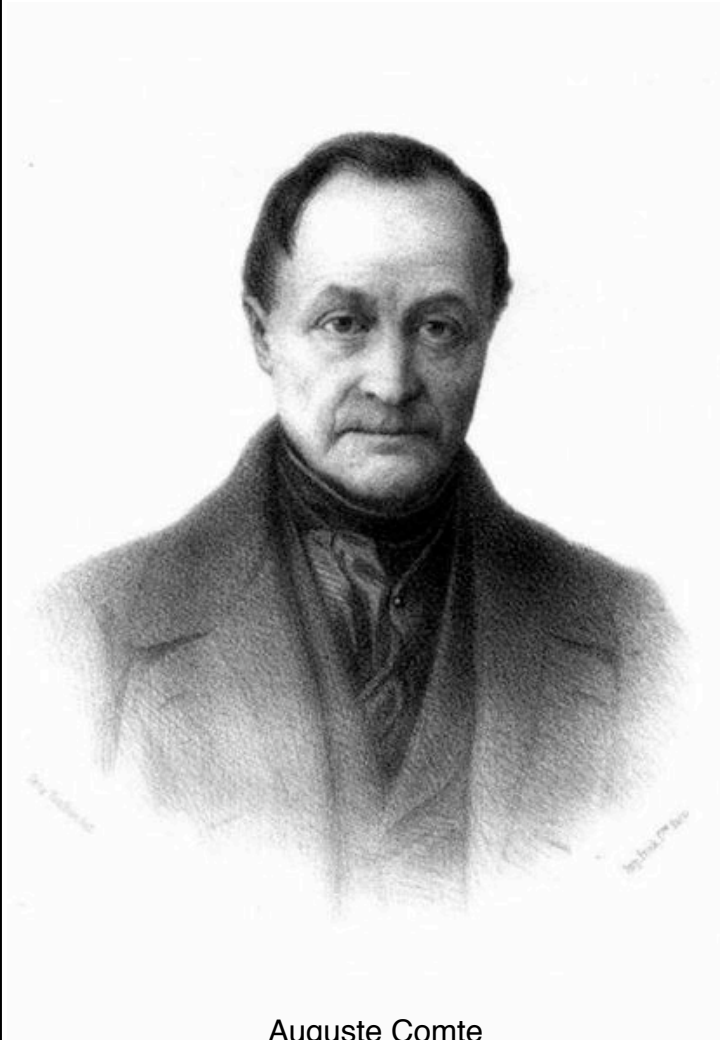
1. functionalism - a society holds a consensus on values
 - according to functionalists, consensus accounts for the high degree of cooperation in a society
 - economies, families, governments and religions serve to promote a society's survival and welfare
2. conflict perspective - supporters see social living as a contest
 - those with power (the ability to control the behavior of others) get the largest share of whatever is considered valuable in society
 - as the balance of power among groups shifts, change occurs (e.g., women's movement)
3. symbolic interactionism - we learn the meaning of a symbol (anything that stands for something else and has an agreed-upon meaning attached to it) from the way we see others reacting to it
 - once we learn the meaning of symbols, we base our behavior on them



Max Weber



Karl Marx





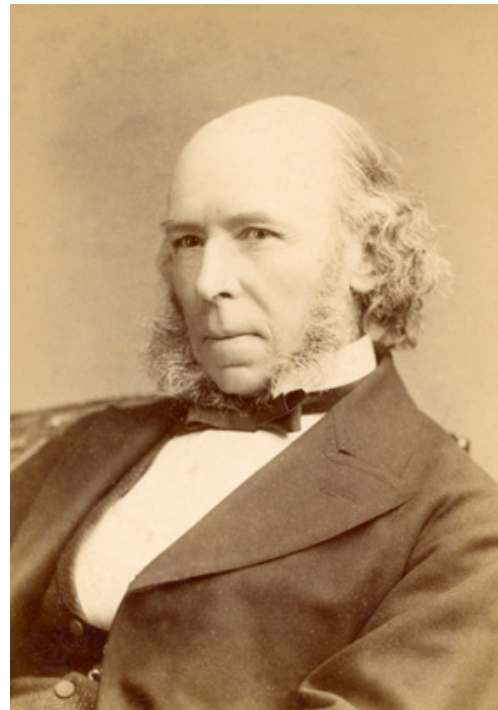
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