

UE 1 Revisions

For this unit essay, the only feedback that I received about the clarity of my writing. I received 32 out of 33 and I lost a point due to my clarity so to revise this essay, I went through and tried to clear up my writing. I tried to make the points I was making easier to follow and I also tried to remove vague words such as thing and something where it was not appropriate. I also searched for any potential grammar errors and corrected those if I saw them. There were also some sections where I was jumping around the points I was making. The place I noticed this most is when I was writing about Comte, so I reworked the organization of my paragraphs in a few places as well. Overall, my main goal when revising this essay was to make my argument flow better.

Sociological Theory and Early Sociological Theorists

Samantha Gurney

Longwood University

Sociological Theory

Scott Grether

January 30th, 2025

In the field of sociology, there are early figures whose work helped to establish the discipline and the concept of sociological thought. However, despite their contributions, their work has been minimized and relatively unknown. One of these early figures is August Comte, who was the sociological thinker who came up with the word *sociology*. Comte created the beginning conceptual framework for sociology as a discipline. He was born in France during the French Revolution, a time of great instability where political upheaval and unrest was rampant. The social climate that he was raised in contributed to Comte's interest in society. He saw the social disorganization around him as a necessary step for the overall development of society (Allen and Daynes, 2017, Chapter 1).

Comte believed that the scientific model could be used to understand human behavior and how societies develop. Using this scientific method helped to explain past development and the future course of mankind. *Positivism* was one of the key concepts of Comte. It argues that data, logic, and science are the only way that the world can be understood and knowledge cannot be created through belief and experience. Comte can be credited for creating the foundation for observing and explaining society through a scientific process and this scientific approach to studying society would lay the groundwork for research methods in sociology. He also believed every society strictly moves through three stages of development. A society would begin looking to the supernatural to explain observable phenomena and ultimately end up at a stage where the supernatural is completely abandoned and science is used to explain phenomena. To Comte, these stages were stable and a society could not go back to one once they left (Coser, 1977).

Another figure who helped to establish the discipline of sociology is Harriett Martineau. Martineau was raised in a unitarian family where education was emphasized. For this reason, she was educated at home since at the time, women were barred from university. Similar to Comte,

she believed that the scientific method could be applied to society in order to better the human condition. Using Comte's idea of positivism, she focused her work on the United States to understand the state of societies born from the Enlightenment. Martineau's method of observing societies was by comparing morals, the stated beliefs of a society, and manners, how that society actually acts. Another important contribution of Martineau's was adding requirements to conducting social research. She believed that the researcher should be impartial, critical, and sympathetic, ultimately leaving behind any sense of superiority or ethnocentrism while offering an assessment to whether there is a discrepancy between morals and manners. Martineau's status as a woman and society gave her a unique perspective in comparison to other figures of her time. She knew first hand about the inequalities certain groups experienced. Due to this, she focused on how studying society can help work towards social progress (Allen and Daynes, 2017, Chapter 7).

A third figure important to the establishment of sociology is Herbert Spencer. Spencer was the sociological thinker who started the theoretical perspective of functionalism, a perspective that sees society as a system with unique but interdependent parts and when they function properly, they lead to the proper functioning of society. Spencer was largely inspired by Charles Darwin's idea of evolution. Spencer saw society as an organism, something that grows and evolves into something more complex (Allen and Daynes, 2017, Chapter 2).

Spencer also focuses on the structures within societies, specifically the economic system. He breaks it into two categories based on the amount of regulation from the government within a society. In a militaristic society, there is a higher level of regulation, specifically in areas such as religion, education, and economic structures. All these institutions are all in place to serve the interest of the state. In this type of society, everything is tightly controlled by the government and

focus is placed on the military rather than the people. Industrial societies are far less controlling with a focus on economic and individual freedom. Education becomes more scientific with a focus on knowledge rather than on promoting patriotism. When looking at these types of societies through the lens of evolution and survival of the fittest, a society becomes more militaristic when there is external conflict that threatens the society as a form of protection. In the absence of conflict the society can become more industrial (Allen and Daynes, 2017, Chapter 2).

All of these figures are important to sociology and the development of sociological theories. Sociological theories are systems of ideas that have been developed over time by different studies and theorists who are all working within the same theory. When one wants to conduct sociological research, they start with a theory that has been studied and developed by other scholars, they then conduct their own research within that theory so they can see how their own data adds to what others have said. Scholars work together to create the theories within sociology. For this reason, theories function like a conversation, where a researcher looks into what others have said to inform their own research. This also allows a theory to be tracked back to its creation, letting one see how it has grown and evolved over time along with the societies being studied. Studying past work within a theory also allows someone to know where their own data and ideas can be incorporated (Sternheimer 2020).

Sociological theories are used to explain certain aspects of society that one finds interesting. They are created with the purpose of studying a phenomena and providing potential explanations for why that phenomena might be occurring. They create a lens, or paradigm, to examine society through. Depending on the theory being used, a researcher could take different things away from the same set of data to understand what it means for society. Sociological

theories allow for the data of a study to be open to examination and interpretation (Edles and Appelrouth 2010).

While sociological theories share some similarities with scientific theories, there are still plenty of differences between the two. One difference is that theories within sociology have moral assumptions, something that is in stark contrast to the objectivity of scientific theories. Scientific theories believe research should be free of judgement without morals being inserted into the research being conducted. Research within scientific theories is looking for what is, while research within sociological theories is interested in finding ways society can be more just and equal for all the members of that society. This can sometimes cause sociology to fall short in the eyes of other researchers who believe the research should be purely objective, but it also allows for sociology to have a unique perspective and place within the scientific community (Edles and Appelrouth 2010).

Another large difference between the two is in the subjects that they chose to study. Unlike aspects of nature such as elements, societies are always subject to change and that change often happens rapidly. Forces such as war, population growth, technological advancements and many other factors can completely alter the previous status quo of a society. It is difficult to create universal laws that can explain the social dynamics within a society because that society is always developing and the previous dynamics are always subject to change. The constant shift in the subject is something that is often not a problem with scientific studies whose subjects tend to be more stable. Humans are also motivated by a complex variety of social and psychological factors that subjects of scientific theories are not, making them more unpredictable (Edles and Appelrouth 2010).

References

- Allan, K., & Daynes, S. (2017). *Explorations in classical sociological theory : seeing the social world* (Fourth edition). Sage.
- <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=2685435>
- Coser, L.A. (1977). *Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context*, 2nd Edition. Waveland Press, Inc: Illinois
- Edles, L.D. & Appelrouth, S. (2010). *Sociological Theory in the Classical Era: Text and Readings*. 3rd Edition. Los Angeles : Pine Forge Press
- Sternheimer, K. (2020, February 17). *Theories and Hypotheses*. W. W. Norton.
- <https://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2020/02/theories-and-hypotheses.html>

UE 2 Revisions

For this unit essay, the only feedback that I received was about the clarity of my writing and my APA formatting. I received a 31 out of 32, so I lost one point for clarity and one point for APA format. Like for my first essay, I went through and tried to clear up my writing. I tried to make my arguments easier to follow and I also noticed that I had written a lot of long and repetitive sentences, so I tried to rework my sentences to make them easier to read. Specifically when I was writing about some of Marx's key contributions, I tried to be more clear when discussing these concepts and how they inform Marx's sociology since I found some of these sections hard to follow upon a reread. I also searched for any potential grammar errors and corrected those if I saw them. I also played with the organization of a few of my paragraphs in order to make the overall organization better. For my APA formatting, the main issue I saw was in my in-text citations where I had included commas where I did not need them, so I went through and removed these commas from my citations.

Karl Marx

Samantha Gurney

Longwood University

Sociological Theory

Scott Grether

March 25th, 2025

Karl Marx was an influential and important sociologist who lived in Germany during a time of rapid industrialization and changes to modernity after previously falling behind other European countries politically, economically, and socially. During his life, Germany shifted from being an agricultural society to a society of industrialization that was riddled with political and economic strife and wars (Grether 2025). The new economic climate of Germany led to the rise of Capitalism, an economic system that had unintended consequences that worried Marx and informed his sociology. While Capitalism had benefits and helped to improve things such as technology and medical care and in theory was meant to be a mechanism to bring about social equality, Marx recognized a dark side of Capitalism. He believed that it negatively affects an individual's ability to think about the world around them. He believed that by nature, Capitalism creates conflict between the bourgeoisie, the people who control the means of production, and the proletariat, the people who sell their labor. This conflict creates tension between the classes that ends up leading to exploitation and overproduction that allows for there to be a small class of wealthy capitalists and a much larger class of workers who are deprived. For Marx, his sociology is concerned with understanding how the undesirable parts of Capitalism came about and how humanity can move from one economic system to another that would be more humane and fair for all (Allen and Daynes 2017, Chapter 3).

Marx's work within sociology is vast and he had many theoretical contributions to the discipline throughout his life. Historical materialism is one of the key concepts of Marx and it states that all institutions in human society, such as government and religion, are created through economic activity. According to historical materialism, social institutions are structured around the economy and production and when there are changes in productive forces, there is social conflict. Marx's ideas are intrinsically linked to production and to understand his thoughts

surrounding production, it is important to understand Marx's concept of species being.

According to Marx, people by nature want to produce goods for themselves and those around them. When people are fully engaging in and enjoying the process of making things, they are able to realize their true essence and find meaning. Marx believed that making things through the act of labor is an essential part of being human that distinguishes humans from other animals. Society is formed due economic relations created through the act of people creating, selling, and buying things and this base form of society ends up evolving to a point where there comes to be noneconomic relations (Grether 2025).

Class theory is another key concept of Karl Marx and it refers to the social classes that are formed within a particular mode of production depending upon who controls that mode of production (Grether 2025). In Capitalism, the means of production are largely in private hands and the main incentive for economic activity is to make a profit. Because of this, Capitalism creates alienation for workers in three ways. Workers are alienated from the production process and the products of their labor since the labor is no longer for them, but for others. They are alienated from other workers since workers are pitted against one another. The third way that workers are alienated is from their species being since workers are no longer engaging in labor that brings them meaning and value, but rather the labor they do is just a way to get by and they lose their connection to their labor (Social Sciences - UvA 2015). Another problem with workers being cut off from their labor and the products that they make is Marx's idea of commodity fetishism. The exchange value of that commodity is valued while the labor of the people who worked to create it are ignored. Commodities seem to be separate from the people that produced them even though commodities have no value in themselves (Allen and Daynes 2017, Chapter 3).

Marx saw society as divided into two social classes based on where they stand in the means of production: the bourgeoisie who are the capitalist class that controls the means of production and the proletariat, the class that sells their labor in order to get paid and survive. Marx believed that the relationship between these two classes is inherently exploitative and conflict-ridden. For this reason, he believed that the proletariat will eventually revolt after gaining class consciousness that allows them to understand how they are being exploited. This can be difficult for the proletariat to realize however, since the bourgeoisie creates a dominant ideology within the society that makes the proletariat believe what the bourgeoisie wants them to think. This dominant ideology can lead to workers having false consciousness, meaning that the attitude held by members of the proletariat do not reflect their objective position within society. When this happens, workers are not aware that they are being exploited and they believe that the shortcomings in life are the fault of the individual and not the Capitalist society (Allen and Daynes 2017, Chapter 3).

Karl Marx's criticism of Capitalism is still relevant to this day in a time where prominent capitalist societies exist and the system seems to be rigged to keep the elite in power while workers are fed a narrative that if they work hard enough, they can obtain social mobility (Menand 2016). His ideas and concepts still resonate with people and hold importance. Marx's concerns about the exploitation of the proletariat can be seen today by the many movements and protests that occur over the rights and working conditions of workers who feel that they are being ignored, harmed, and unappreciated by the capitalist company they work for. One specific example of action being taken against exploitation that echoes the beliefs of Marx is the Writers Guild of America strike that took place in Hollywood during 2023. Creatives Believed that they were increasingly being devalued and not appreciated by production companies. Focus was

placed specifically on the impacts of streaming culture and how streaming services have been gaining more and more money while writers have been making less and less. Writers wanted higher pay and a more stable pay structure, as well as fair contracts and provisions regarding artificial intelligence (Lowe & Kaplan). The concerns of these writers reflect the issues that Marx believed Capitalism would cause such as commodity fetishization. The work of writers is not being recognized and valued by corporations due to the labor that these writers put into it, but rather in the amount of profit it can make on a streaming service. Consumers and corporations are worshipping the product itself rather than the writers who created it.

Works Cited

Allan, K., & Daynes, S. (2017). *Explorations in classical sociological theory : seeing the social \ world (Fourth edition)*. Sage.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&>

Grether, S. (2025). *Marx* [PowerPoint presentation]. Canvas.

<https://longwood.instructure.com/courses/1316404/pages/lectures>

Lowe, L., & Kaplan, A. (2023, May 10). *The 2023 writers' strike, explained — and how it will affect your favorite TV shows*. TODAY.com.

<https://www.today.com/news/hollywood-writers-strike-2023-explained-rcna83508>

Menand, L. (2016, October 3). *Karl Marx, Yesterday and Today*. The New Yorker.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/10/10/karl-marx-yesterday-and-today>

Social Sciences - UvA. (2015, August 4). *5.4 Alienation*. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTzFwnk8CIQ&list=PLdqh3iVhzW1TmjpjwhIysgljsjGeup9Y33e&index=4>

UE 3 Revisions

For this essay, I got a 33 out of 34 and I lost a point for my APA formatting and I believe this essay had the same issue of there being unneeded commas in my in-text citation, I was also missing a running head. For this reason, I went through and removed all the commas that were not needed from my in-text citations. I was also missing an in-text citation for my section where I wrote about the different waves of feminism, so I added a citation to that section. Finally, I went through and cleared up any of my wording where I felt it was needed just to make this essay as clear as possible.

Feminism

Samantha Gurney

Longwood University

Sociological Theory

Dr. Scott Grether

April 24th, 2025

Feminism is a theoretical tradition in sociology that is based on the idea that women and men should be given the same opportunities and amount of respect within society. This theoretical tradition recognizes that gender differences are culturally produced and socially constructed. It is used to understand the inequalities between women and men that exist within society. There are distinct waves of feminism that are recognized that have each addressed different concerns surrounding gender inequalities (Grether 2025).

The first wave of feminism was organized due to the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, which advocated for women to have equal rights to vote, own property, have full access to education, and equal compensation. Suffrage was the central concern of feminist activists of this time. This wave of feminism was exclusionary, and resentful of the fact of the rights that had been obtained by black men, specifically suffrage. They were fighting only for the rights of white women. The second wave of feminism, Also known as the women's liberation movement, took place during the 1960s to the 1980s and grew out of the civil rights movement. The wave was concerned with pay equity, equal access to jobs and higher education, as well as the bodily autonomy of women such as sexuality, reproduction, and the reduction of violence and rape. Like the first wave of feminism, this wave was exclusionary (Grether 2025). The third wave of feminism took place during the 1990s to the 2010s. This wave's main concerns were about issues of diversity as well as the variety of identities that women can hold. It also worked to acknowledge the past inequalities within feminist movements. Workplace sexual harassment and sexuality were some of the main topics of interest for activists of this wave (Allen and Daynes 2017, Chapter 7). The fourth wave of feminism is hard to define due to the fact it is taking place within the present and its origins can be drawn to the #MeToo movement. This wave is

concerned with addressing patriarchal norms, holding men accountable, and embracing intersectionality and the diversity of femininity (Grether 2025).

One theorist who utilized feminism as a theoretical tradition is Jane Addams. She was a successful social theorist and reformer and she was the most prominent prominent women in America during her lifetime. Her sociology focused mainly on the idea of reform and achieving ameliorative social change. She believed that people needed to learn to identify their own interests with the common good and the common good should be defined in a way that an injury to one is an injury to all. The contribution that she is probably best known for is Hull House, which served as a meeting place for marginalized groups in Chicago and it had a goal of creating social change. Addams built her work upon her relationship with other women and their experiences as women. This helped her to have the confidence to speak with *auctoritas* in a society dominated by men. When she studied society, she believed it was important to understand the lived-experiences of individual actors in order to understand the social world. To her, it is the duty of the sociologist to be sympathetic and understanding of their subject (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2007).

Another theorist of the theoretical tradition is Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Gilman was a leading feminist thinker of her time who highlighted the dynamic relation between gender and social structure. She grew up in a time where there was lots of debate surrounding the place of women within society and she recognized the inequalities that women faced. She believed in the critical and ameliorative abilities of theories, so her work focused on human pain and the factors in society that create that pain. Her work also focused on patriarchy, otherwise known as androcentric culture. This refers to a common consciousness in society that is concerned not with human understanding, but with masculine interests and experiences that lead to inequalities and

women feeling isolated. While her work towards feminism is important, it is also clouded by the fact that she strongly believed in social darwinism and excluded black women from her feminism (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2007).

One aspect of Jane Addams' work that reflects the theoretical tradition of feminism is her focus on the factors needed for social change. One of the major concerns of feminism as a theoretical tradition is transforming the inequalities between men and women and Addams's factors for social change layout how that transformation could come to be. She believed that changes in ethical standards could lead to reversal and social change. Her first suggested change was identifying individual interests with the common good and people learning to see themselves not as individuals struggling for good things, but as participants in a group effort for good things. The second change was to invent sites of association such as the Hull House where marginalized individuals could meet and stand together to work towards social change as a unit. The third change suggested by Addams was that the people should use these associations to urge the state to act responsibly towards all of its citizens in order to counter exclusive concentrations of wealth and power. According to Addams, these factors could bring about social change, including equality between men and women (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2007).

An aspect of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's that reflects the theoretical tradition of feminism is her idea of sexuo-economic relations which she used to understand the basic arrangement of inequality within society. This idea refers to how one sex, females, are economically dependent on the other sex, males. With this structure, women have no economic independence and are restricted to serving men in order to have their needs met. This creates an inherently unequal relationship (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2007). Since one of the concerns of feminism is to understand the inequalities between men and women, Gilman's idea about the sexuo-economic

relationship is important because it addresses a potential reason for the inequalities experienced by women.

Works Cited

Allan, K., & Daynes, S. (2017). *Explorations in classical sociological theory : seeing the social \ world (Fourth edition)*. Sage.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&>

Grether, S. (2025). *Feminism* [PowerPoint presentation]. Canvas.

<https://longwood.instructure.com/courses/1316404/pages/lectures>

Lengermann, P. & Niebrugge-Brantley, J. (2007). Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935)-

Gender and Social Structure. *The women founders : sociology and social theory*

1830-1930 (pp. 105-148). Boston : McGraw-Hill

Lengermann, P. & Niebrugge-Brantley, J. (2007). Jane Addams (1860-1935) Ethics and Society.

The women founders : sociology and social theory 1830-1930 (pp. 65-104). Boston :

McGraw-Hill