Within the theories in sociology, there are several contributors. Each sociologist devotes their own time and understanding into another sociologist’s theory. They all work together to build a more modern based theory based upon the current theories that develop over time. When looking back at history, the sociologists from the past has created a theory, devoted their time to explain what the theory is and how it relates to the society in that time period, then they are able to leave a more solid foundation for other theorist to build on them and explain the relevance in a more modern setting because of societal change. Some of these theorists, such as Harriet Martineau, Emile Durkheim, Auguste Comte, and Talcott Parsons, have shared the same views on theories. The way in which they describe the same theory is the same, just put into a more modern context that helps to date the time period in which they were studying. These theorists use the same base for the structural functionalism theory, but not all of them have the same meaning, just an adaptation of the meaning. They have each taken the structural functionalism theory and broaden the scopes of the theory to add on to the theory. Harriet Martineau, Emile Durkheim, and Auguste Comte developed the early sense of structural functionalism, and theorist like Talcott Parsons made it more contemporary to help fit into the correct time period as society as a whole change and so does the views of society.

Society is always evolving, and it never stays the same. As a society, the norms and expectations are evolving to ‘keep up with current times.’ In society, things are becoming more widely accepted that never was acceptable in earlier years. Since society is always changing and evolving, so does theories. If nothing changed and everything stayed the same, we would not live in the society that we do today. The same is for structural functionalism. When the term was first adapted, it did not keep the same structure that it did back then. Just like society, this theory is always evolving and adapting new terms and concepts. Structural functionalism is a term that is used to “theorizing of Durkheim and Parson because of their focus on how social structures determine, and are effective in maintaining, the social order, and society (Dillion, 2020).” Structural functionalism is when human societies evolve in a more specialized structure that they perform. Structural functionalism is the maintenance of social stability, such as when society remains dependable. This is important when it allows the people in society conduct plans and business without the interruption of other entities. Within structural functionalism is the collective functioning of society. This is a term that relates to an assorted synchronize behaviors in which society can function in how people engage in large systems. Another part of structural functionalism is the evolution of society. These are notions in which distinct cultures can develop in an invariable manner. When it comes to structural functionalism, Emile Durkheim laid out the primary structure of this theory in the late 19th century. Durkheim developed this theory, and the other sociologist helped to form the theory and the values of structural functionalism.

One of the theorists that helped work on the idea of structural functionalism is Harriet Martineau. Throughout Harriet Martineau’s life and career, she accomplished many different things. In the 1830’s, she focused and dedicated most of her time to two of her own writings. These titles are *Society in America* and *How to Observe Morals and Manners*. The “focus of this biographical sketch is on the intellectual and personal paths that led her to the project of founding a science of society (Lengermann, 1998).” These pieces helped to pave a foundation for Harriet Martineau’s future and her other remarkable works in the field and contribution to sociology. When adopting and changing this term, she used her life experience to help define them for society. She created a deep understanding the framework as society operates in a complex manner to promote stability in society (Lengermann, 1998).

Emile Durkheim is another contributor to the theory of structural functionalism. Emile Durkheim, born in France on April 15, 1858. Throughout his life, he had hardships that helped shape his theory. When his son died in battle, he felt a great loss. This loss allowed for change in his life and the way he saw society. Emile Durkheim became known for his work on solidarity and on social control. Another one of his famous works were his pieces on suicide. In this piece, he described four different types of suicide and what each one meant. He gave insight into what each type of suicide committed and why it was committed. During his time, each religion or group had their own rules and regulations on suicide. With this work, he was able to give a sense of understanding in the talk of suicide. Durkheim helped with the development of structural functionalism along the side of Harriet Martineau and Auguste Comte. From his work with structural functionalism comes from one of the essays that we wrote during his time. The essay gives insight into the theory and how Durkheim viewed how the theory could help and change society as a whole. In Durkheim’s work his “primary field of sociological research and that of structural functional theory provides the variables for an adequate theory of social change (Bellah, 2017).” But in Durkheim’s last essay, he stated “history is not only the natural framework of human life, but man is also a product of history (Bellah, 2017).” Emile Durkheim argues that parts of society are interdependent and that this interdependency imposes structure on the behavior of institutions and their members. In his work, his writing *The Rules of Sociological Method* had these theories of structural functionalism. Durkheim believed that society is made up of complex systems in which they are interrelated to one another, but they must work together to maintain stability within society.

Auguste Comte also had a say in the early structure of structural functionalism along with this peers, Harriet Martineau, and Emile Durkheim. Auguste Comte was born in France on January 19, 1798. His main study focus was the foundation of functionalism. He studied social evolution and sociology in his life. Auguste Comte lived through the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic period of time. When Comte focused on the modernization of science and the advancements in technologies for this time period were transforming to the best of their abilities from being so long ago. Within Auguste Comte’s work, he focused on the hypothetical framework that could be used when looking at different theories through a sociologist’s lens of view. Comte believed that society constitutes a separate level of reality, distinct from both biological and inorganic matter of society. The explanations of social phenomena had been constructed at this level of social roles. Within this philosophy, Comte started studying society as a whole and how they operate together despite the difference in backgrounds and paths of life. Auguste Comte would get his “inspiration from biological functionalism to develop a functionalist science of society which he later called sociology (Castro, 2009).” When first starting out on his journey to become a well-known sociologist, he first started with the study of society and that grew and developed when he decided to name this research sociology. Auguste Comte is known for this generation of the term sociology as he was the first one to define the study of society. In relation to structural functionalism, Comte’s main focus was to understand the principles that society had to keep the social order within that society despite the social transformations taking place in a particular society (Castro, 2009). Comte was the first sociologist to take a look at structural functionalism, and he deserves the credit to the beginning of the term. Other sociologists took the term structural functionalism and gave their perceptions on the term.

In a more modern text of the term structural functionalism, there is a focus on sociologists such as Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton. Talcott Parsons focused on society functioning as a bicycle wheel, this meaning that society is the wheel, and the different spokes on the bicycle is the individual groups in society working together to keep society as one functioning group that helps keep it moving. Talcott Parsons also focused on how things in society continues to change and how that change occurs. The other contemporary sociologist is Robert Merton. Robert Merton took a keen focus on the middle range theory. Middle range theory are the disciplines that are concerned with particular topics to narrow the scope on society. Another one of Merton’s focuses is on how society relates to having both intended (manifest) and unintended (latent) functions. With these contributions to a more modern outlook on society, the works of both Parsons and Merton have given insight that would have just stayed in the 19th – 20th century across the world.

Despite all of the research that goes into defining a theory and a theorist, there are still criticisms that need to be addressed. This is specifically looking into Talcott Parsons. “Wright Mills and many other critics argue that Parsons concentrates on the mechanisms of stability rather than the mechanisms of change (Ormerod, 2019. Pp, 1882).” When structural functionalism was first introduced, it was a theory that described the change in which society evolves and the role that society plays in this evolution. This is the side that most theorist focuses on in their works and academic careers. Talcott Parsons took a different approach to this. He maintained a focus on how stable society is despite the change that needs to take place in society. Several theorists have claimed that Talcott Parsons was trying to meet a status quo when he produced his work on structural functionalism and not actually creating a change to the term to create a more modern enhancement of this theory. The reasons that most theories have critiques within them, is because most theories were introduced in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, this leaves society the ability to change and to adapt to different lifestyles that help to shape society as the years move forward.

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