

# Introduction to Sociology

*This unit explores how sociology as a social science develops. In what way does it differ from other social sciences? As a field of study, sociology is extremely broad in scope. It also explains the works of pioneer social thinkers in the development of sociology and examines the theoretical perspectives that grew out of their works. The unit will study the nature, importance, and scope of sociology including its fields and subfields, and finally, the significance of sociology in nursing.*

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**On completion of this unit, the students will be able to:**

- Explain sociology as a social science.
- Discuss the historical perspectives, major theoretical perspectives and modern development of sociology.
- Define sociology.
- Develop understanding about relationship of sociology with other social sciences.
- Describe nature of sociology.
- Differentiate between sociology and anthropology.
- Identify the scope and significance of sociology in nursing.

## UNIT OUTLINE

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| ➤ Introduction                        | ➤ Relationship of Sociology with Other Social Sciences |
| ➤ Importance of Sociology in Nursing  | ➤ Importance of Sociology                              |
| ➤ Historical Perspective of Sociology | ➤ Nature of Sociology                                  |
| ➤ Modern Development of Sociology     | ➤ Scope of Sociology                                   |
| ➤ Sociology in Indian Context         | ➤ Sociology and its Fields                             |
| ➤ Major Theoretical Perspectives      | ➤ Significance of Sociology in Nursing                 |
| ➤ The Feminist View                   |  |
| ➤ Definitions of Sociology            |  |

## KEY TERMS

**Anomie:** Anomie refers to the loss of direction felt in society when social control of individual behavior becomes ineffective. The state of anomie occurs when people have lost their sense of purpose or direction, often during a time of profound social change.

**Applied sociology:** The application of sociological knowledge, principles, methods, concepts and theories to provide the solution to the contemporary social pathologies. Sociology plays practical roles to deal with social pathologies.

**Conflict perspective:** A sociological approach assumes that social behavior is best understood in terms of conflict or tension between competing groups.

**Dramaturgical approach:** A view of social interaction in which people are seen as theatrical performers.

**Dysfunction:** An element or process of a society that may disrupt the social system or reduce its stability.

**Feminist view:** A sociological approach that views inequality in gender is central to all behavior and organization.

**Functionalist perspective:** A sociological approach that emphasizes the way in which the parts of society are structured to maintain its stability.

**General sociology:** Studies the properties and uniformities common to all social and cultural phenomena in their structural and dynamic aspects.

**Ideal type:** A construct or model for evaluating specific cases.

**Interactionist perspective:** A sociological approach that generalizes about everyday forms of social interaction in order to explain society as a whole.

**Latent function:** An unconscious or unintended function that may reflect hidden purposes.

**Macrosociology:** Sociological investigations that concentrate on large-scale phenomena or entire civilizations.

**Manifest function:** An open, stated, and conscious function.

**Microsociology:** Sociological imagination that stresses the study of small groups, often through experimental means.

**Natural science:** The study of physical features of nature and the ways in which they interact and change.

**Science:** The body of knowledge obtained by methods based on systematic observation.

**Social morphology:** Contains primarily geographic subjects, like population and its size, density, distribution, mobility, etc. Social morphology investigates and studies the size, density, or quality of the population to know how these factors affect the relationships among people and social groups.

**Social physiology:** It is divided into a number of branches such as sociology of religion, morals, law, economic life, language, etc. each branch of these fields' deals with a set of social facts, that is activities related to the social groups.

**Social pathology:** Generally, it refers to the pathos of society "social diseases" that affect society.

**Social science:** The study of social features of humans and the ways in which they interact and change.

**Sociological imaginations:** Awareness of the relationship between an individual and the wider society.

**Sociology:** The systematic study of social behavior and human groups.

**Special sociology:** Study a specific sociocultural phenomenon which is selected for detailed study.

**Theory:** In sociology, a set of statements that seeks to explain problems, actions, or behavior.

**Verstehen:** The German word for "understanding" or "insight"; used to stress the need for sociologists to take into account the subjective meanings people attach to their actions.

## INTRODUCTION

The word 'sociology' is imitative from the Latin word **societus**, meaning 'society', and the Greek word **logos**, meaning 'study' or 'science'. Thus, sociology means the science of society. Sociology is the "science of companionship" which generally refers to the science of society.

When a patient seeks health care to a hospital or clinic, most of the time, he is accompanied by family member, relative or friend. Patient hardly remains alone in the hospital; he is always surrounded by family members, relatives or friends. People don't visit so frequently in wealthy days as much as they visit to a patient in hospital when he is on sick bed. This visiting history even continues at home too, after discharge of patient from hospital. Patient and his family, relatives, friends, hospital and their interconnection actually is a social science; and is and formally termed sociology.

## IMPORTANCE OF SOCIOLOGY IN NURSING

The study of sociology is extremely useful to all, more especially in medical and nursing and in the field of social welfare. Sociology will help us to study social problems, changing pattern of social institutions, and to plan future development of the society.

Sociology is essential for social planning and development. Sociology has interest in society, human relationships, groups, culture, laws, customs, structure of society and social system. Sociology just gives the knowledge about the problems and strategies of society. Sociology is the study of relationships between the different aspects of social phenomenon (Fig. 1.1).



Figure 1.1: Science of companionship

**Sociology** is very simple and systemic study of social behavior and human groups. It focuses on social relationships; how those relationships influence the people's behavior; and how societies, the sum total of those relationships, develop and change.

Sociology literally means to speak about society. We use sociology to investigate everyday life situations or even large social issues.

## Sociology is a Science

The term **science** refers to the body of knowledge obtained by methods based on systematic observation. Just like other disciplines, sociology involves the organized, systematic, study of phenomena (human behavior) in order to enhance understanding. As far as defining any science is concerned, it could be defined in two ways: firstly, science is a body of systematic, organized and tested knowledge which has been justified through scientific investigations. Secondly, science is a method of study which reveals a body of systematic, organized and verified knowledge.

The first definition puts emphasis on the fact that sociology is a science to some extent because it develops a body of systematic, organized, verified knowledge which is based on scientific inquiry.

The second definition clarifies that sociology is a method of study, and it's a science which takes the help of scientific methods of study. The scientific study of Nature is possible through application of scientific methods. All types of behaviors, such as atom, animal, or an adult, come under the scope of scientific study.

The science which helps us to understand ourselves, our relationship to significant others and our interactions with environment and how these three things, i.e., individual, significant others and environment, are interrelated, are the core components of sociology. It essentially and fundamentally deals with the network of social relationships we call 'society'. Sociology is one of the youngest social science obedience. Sociology is a part of family of social sciences which include anthropology, psychology, economics and political science, and parts of history; all social sciences are concerned with human behavior.

Sociology focuses on the study of human behavior. Like other social scientists, sociologists do not accept something as a fact because "everyone knows it." Instead, each piece of information must be tested and recorded, then analyzed in relationship to other data. Sociologists rely on scientific studies in order to describe and understand a social environment. However, there is a genuine difference between sociology and chemistry, between psychology and numerology.

Therefore, the sciences are divided into two, i.e., natural and social. **Natural science** is the study of the physical structures of nature and the manners in which they interact and transform. Numerology chemistry, geology and chemistry are natural sciences. **Social science** is the study of the social structure of humans and the ways in which they interact and transform. The social sciences consist of sociology, anthropology, economics, history, psychology, and political science.

The core value of social science is social behavior, however each has a distinct nature.

- Anthropologists generally study past cultures along with the origin of humans.
- Economists discover the traditions in which people create and exchange goods and services, along with money and other resources.
- Historians study events of past and their interconnection with present.
- Political scientists study worldwide relations, the workings of administration, and the exercise of supremacy and authority.
- Psychologists explore personality and behavior of individual.
- And sociologists emphasize on the impact that society has on people's attitudes and behavior and the ways in which people interact and structure society. As humans are social animals, sociologists scientifically study their interpersonal social relationships.

As compared with other sciences, sociology is a new science. Many people have some sociological knowledge and an understanding of some aspects of social life, but they lack the sociological imagination to see their own position in the society. The science of sociology helps us to make not only relationships within society but also a greater understanding of ourselves.

## The Sociological Imaginations

A Sociologist examines social behavior by using his creative thinking. A chief sociologist, C. Wright Mills, defined such thinking as the **sociological imagination**—a cognizance of the relationship between an individual and the society. This cognizance helps us to understand our immediate and remote social system. The ability of observing own society, as an outsider world rather than only from the perspective of personal experiences and cultural biases, is the key element in the sociological imagination.

Divorce, for example, is unquestionably a personal hardship for a husband and wife who split apart. However, C. Wright Mills advocated the use of the sociological imaginations to view divorce not simply as an individual's personal problem but rather as a societal concern. Using this perspective, we can see that an increase in the divorce rate actually redefines a major social institution—the family. The sociological imagination is an empowering tool. It allows us to look beyond a limited understanding of human behavior to see the world and its people in a new way and through a broader lens than we might otherwise use.



## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIOLOGY

Philosophers and religious authorities of ancient and medieval societies made countless observations about human behavior. In the beginning of the 19th century, European theorists made pioneering contributions to the development of a science of human behavior. There are various eminent social thinkers who contributed enough to term sociology as a science.

**Auguste Comte (1798–1857)**, a French philosopher, is considered the father of sociology. He is the most influential philosopher of the early 1800s, who believed that a theoretical science of society and a systematic investigation of behavior were needed to improve society. In 1839, Auguste Comte coined the term “sociology”. Sociology has been considered a recent modern science. The study of human society is not recent. It is as old as human social existence. The founder of modern sociology made a scientific approach to the study of society. Sociology is a modern social science recognized as an independent branch of knowledge. Comte defines sociology as the study of social dynamic and social static, the former signifying the changing, progressing, and developmental dimensions of society. Comte introduced a scientific approach to the study of human society and made it logical with an independent subject matter and methods of study.

**Harriet Martineau (1802–1876)** offered insightful observations of the customs and social practices of her native country Britain and also that of the United States. Martineau’s writings emphasized the impact that the economy, law, trade, health, and population could have on social problems. She spoke out in favor of the rights of women, the emancipation of slaves, and religious tolerance.

**Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)** was the early contributor to the discipline of sociology. Spencer applied the concept of evolution of the species to societies in order to explain how they change, or evolve, over time. Similarly, he adapted Darwin’s evolutionary view of the “survival of the fittest” by arguing that it is “natural” that some people are rich while others are poor. Spencer’s approach to societal change was extremely popular in his lifetime; he suggested that societies are bound to change eventually.

**Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)** developed the fundamental thesis to help explain all forms of society as well as growing division of labor in industrial societies. Durkheim’s main interest was the consequences of work in modern societies. In this view, the growing division of labor in industrial societies, as worker became much more specialized in their tasks, led to what he called anomie. *Anomie* refers to the loss of direction felt in society when social control of individual behavior becomes ineffective. The state of anomie occurs when people lose their sense of purpose or direction, often during a time of profound social change. Durkheim is concerned about the danger that alienation, loneliness, and isolation might pose for modern industrial societies. Other than social behavior, his thinking toward crime and punishment, religion, and the workplace is also mentioned. He advocated the creation of new social groups—mediators between the individual’s family and the state—which would provide a sense of belongingness for members of huge impersonal societies. He shared Comte’s belief that sociology should provide direction for social change.

**Max Weber (1864–1920)** studied legal and economic history, but gradually developed an interest in sociology. He pointed out that we cannot analyze our social behavior by the same type of objective criteria we use to measure weight or temperature. To fully comprehend behavior, we must learn the subjective meanings people attach to their actions—how they themselves view and explain their behavior. Weber taught his students that they should employ **Verstehen**, the German word for “understanding” or “insight”, in their intellectual work. He developed a key conceptual tool: the **ideal type**. An ideal type is a construct or model for evaluating specific cases. We will use the concept of ideal type to study the family, religion, authority, and economic system, as well as to analyze bureaucracy.

**Karl Marx (1818–1883)** shared with Durkheim and Weber a dual interest in abstract philosophical issues and the concrete reality of everyday life. In Marx analysis, society was fundamentally divided between two classes that clashed in pursuit of their own interests. When he examined the industrial societies of his time,



he saw the factory as the center of conflict between the exploiters (the owner) and the exploited (the worker). Marx viewed these relationships in systematic terms; that is, he believed that a system of economic, social, and political relationships maintained the power and dominance of the owners over the workers. Apart from political revolutions; he emphasized the group identifications and associations that influence an individual's place in society. This area of study is the major focus of contemporary sociology. This will also help to consider how membership in a particular gender classification, age group, racial group, or economic class affects a person's attitudes and behavior.

## MODERN DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology builds a firm foundation through the contributions of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Herbert Spencer. However, the field certainly has not remained stagnant; European has continued to make contributions to the discipline, sociologists from throughout the world, especially the United States, have advanced sociological theory and research.

**Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929)** was typical of the all sociologists who came to prominence in the early 1900s. Cooley preferred to use the sociological perspective to look first at smaller units—intimate, face-to-face groups such as families, gangs, and friendship networks. He saw these groups as the seedbeds of society, in the sense that they shape people's ideals, beliefs, values, and social nature. Cooley's work increased our understanding of groups of relatively small size.

**Jane Addams (1860–1935)**, a member of the American Sociological Society and other sociologists commonly combined intellectual inquiry, social service work, and political activism—all with the goal of assisting the underprivileged and creating a more democratic society. By the middle of 20th century, sociologists revolve their discipline to the aim of transforming society. A new organization, the Society for the Study of Social problems, was created in 1950 to deal more directly with social inequality and other social problems.

**Robert Merton (1910–2003)** made an important contribution to the discipline by successfully combining the research. Merton (1968) proposed a theory of deviant behavior. He explained various ways through which people try to achieve success in life. Merton also emphasized that to study society in true sense of the term, one should blend macro and micro level of sociology. **Macrosociology** focuses on wide phenomena or whole civilizations. Emile Durkheim's cross-cultural study of suicide is an illustration of macro-level research. In contrast, **microsociology** portrays the study of small groups, quite often through experiment. Sociological research on micro level has included studies of how divorced men and women separate from significance social roles; of how conformity can influence the expression of prejudiced attitudes; and of how a teacher's expectations can affect a student's academic performance.

The historical background for the emergence of sociology as an independent science is witnessed by the intellectual and social conditions prevailing in Europe during the latter part of the 18th century and the early part of the 19th century. Before the advent of sociology as an independent science, the study of human society was based on philosophical analysis and it was identified with social philosophy. Thinker like Morris Ginsberg observed that the backgrounds of sociology are of philosophical history, biological theory of evolution and social and political reform movements. The development of science during the last century is closely connected with its separation from philosophy and sociology reorganized as the science of society.

## SOCIOLOGY IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Sociology focuses on the urban-industrial groups, whereas anthropology focuses on tribes, castes and communities. Sociology as a discipline emerged as the contributions made by social thinkers, philosophers,

administrators, who worked for understanding the Indian society. M.N. Srinivas, Gail Omvedt, Andre Beteille, G.S. Ghurye, Yogendra Singh, Louis Dumont, A.R. Desai are some of the remarkable sociologists of India. The others who firmly contributed to the development of sociology in India are D.N. Majumdar and N.K. Bose.

**Govind Sadashiv Ghurye (1893–1984)** is an eminent figure in intellectual and academic circles for his unique contribution to the field of Indian sociology. He has often been acclaimed as the ‘father of Indian sociology’, ‘the doyen of Indian sociologists’ or ‘the symbol of sociological creativeness. Ghurye had been engaged in building up; almost single-handedly, the entire first generation of Indian sociologists in post-independence period.

Certain trends of development of sociology may be identified in the pre-independence period. Sociology was taught along with economics, both in Bombay and Lucknow. However, in Calcutta, it was taught along with anthropology, and in Mysore it was part of social philosophy.

In India, study of sociology started in 1919, at the University of Bombay, but the study of sociology as separate discipline was started in 1930. Some Indian writers, like G.S. Ghurye, R.K. Mukherjee, and H.T. Mazumdar have made true contribution toward sociological studies and these studies pertain to Indian villages, caste system, marriage, kinship, family and social disorganization.

Teaching of sociology got well established in the fifties. According to Rao (1982), three things manifest in the establishment of sociology as a teaching subject. First, sociology achieved greater academic status. Secondly, sociology established its identity as discipline by separating itself from psychology, anthropology, social philosophy and social work. Thirdly, diversification followed the lines of extension of sociological approach to different areas of social life. Sociology exists including such specialization as rural and urban sociology, sociology of kinship, sociology of religion, sociology of stratification, sociology of education, political sociology, medical sociology, social demography and sociology of economic development. It was related to the growing needs of development in independent India.

Sociologists think in terms of abstractions. Sociology has wrought a revolutionary change in man's assumptions and brought hope for a future harmony in human society.

The sociology is the science of human society. Sociology is one of the significant subjects in the way of describing human nature. Sociology is one of the oldest sciences, and it is most ambitious of all the social sciences. Although it is not very old in its origin, as Mack and Young have commented “Sociology is the youngest of social sciences”, even then it has assumed a remarkable place in the menu of the subject taught in the schools, colleges, and universities. It is an endeavor to lay bare the foundations of all living together, to illuminate the laws which lie at the basis of social communication. Sociologists put their sociological imaginations to work in a variety of areas – including aging, the family, human ecology, and religion. Thus, according to Seligman, “Sociology is the social science par excellence”.

Nowadays, it has become essential for every person to keep voluminous knowledge of the subject. Whether he is doctor, or manager, whether he works in a factory or in the laboratory; directly or indirectly he cannot shed his responsibility from understanding various social phenomena affecting human nature.

## MAJOR THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In sociology, a **theory** is a set of statements that seeks to explain problems, actions, or behavior. An effective theory may have both explanatory and predictive power. That is, it can help us to see the relationship among apparently isolated phenomena, as well as to understand how one type of change in an environment leads to other changes.

For example, suicide is very common unlawful act. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2002) estimated that a total of 815,000 people committed suicide in 2000. Why do people commit suicide? One traditional

commonsense answer is that people inherit the desire to kill themselves. Sociologists are more concerned with identifying the social forces that systematically cause some people to take their own lives. In order to undertake this research, sociologists develop a theory that offers a general explanation of suicidal behavior.

**Emile Durkheim (1897) developed a highly original theory about the relationship between suicide and social factors.**

He investigated deep routes of suicidal tendencies. He published his research findings on suicide in 1897. Durkheim rejected unscientific explanations regarding suicide, such as the beliefs that hidden power forces or inheritance causes such deaths. Instead, he put emphasis on social factors, like the strong or weaker bonds of religious, social, and occupational groups. He pointed out the influence of groups and societal forces on individual. Durkheim proposed a more scientific explanation for the causes of suicide than that of unscientific. His theory has predictive influence since it predicts that suicide rates will align with certain social and economic changes. Emile Durkheim, like many other social scientists, developed a theory to explain how individual behavior can be understood within a social context.

Sociologists view society in three ways. These are the Functionalist, Conflict, and Interactionist perspectives. Together, they construct the sociological discipline.

## Functionalist Perspective

Society is a living organism in which each part of the organism contributes to its survival. The parts are structured in such a manner that it maintains stability in society.

**Talcott Parsons (1902–1979)**, a sociologist of Harvard University, has contributed immensely to the development of Functionalist Theory. Emile Durkheim, Marx Weber and other European sociologists had left huge impact on Parsons. Parsons saw any society as a vast network of connected parts, each of which helps to maintain the system as a whole. His functionalist approach holds that if an aspect of social life does not contribute to a society's stability or survival—if it does not serve some identifiably useful function or promote value consensus among members of a society—it will not be passed on from one generation to the next.

A societal institution plays many functions in the society, some of them are quite subtle. **Robert Merton (1968)** described two unique functions: **Manifest functions and Latent functions**. *Manifest functions* of institutions are conscious open ended functions. They involve the intended, rationalized consequences of an aspect of society, such as accreditation agencies' role in certifying credentials, competence and excellence. In contrast **Latent functions** are unconscious that may reflect hidden purposes of an institution. One hidden function of accreditation agency is to maintain universal standard. Another is to serve as a meeting ground for people seeking expertise in a professional relationship. Functionalist acknowledges that not all parts of a society contribute to its stability all the time. Sometimes dysfunctions may occur. A **dysfunction** refers to an element or process of a society that may actually disrupt the social system or reduce its stability.

## Conflict Perspective

Where functionalist see stability and consensus, conflict sociologists see a social world in continual struggle. The **conflict perspective** assumes that social behavior is best understood in terms of conflict or tension between competing groups. Such conflicts need to be violent; it can take the form of labor organization, party politics, competition between religious groups for new members, or disputes over the federal budget.

**Karl Marx (1848, The Communist Manifesto)** observes the struggle between social classes as inevitable and spontaneous. Expanding on Marx work, sociologists and other social scientists have analyzed that conflict is not merely a class phenomenon but as a part of everyday life irrespective of societies. While studying any culture, organization, or social group, sociologists investigate about who benefits, who suffers, and who

dominates at the expense of others. They study the conflicts between women and men, parents and children, cities and suburbs, White and Blacks, etc. Conflict theorists are interested in how society's institutions—including the family, government, religion education, and the media—may help to maintain the privileges of some groups and keep others in a subservient position.

**W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963)** made a major contribution to sociology through his in-depth studies of urban life, both White and Black. He contended, and had to draw on scientific principles to study social problems. Du Bois believed that knowledge was essential in combating prejudice and achieving tolerance and justice.

## Interactionist Perspective

Workers interacting on his job, encounter at public places, like bus stops and parks, behavior in small groups – all these aspects of microsociology catch the attention of Interactionists. Theorists who take the **Interactionist perspectives** generalize about everyday forms of social interaction in order to explain society as a whole. Interactionism is a sociological framework for viewing human beings as living in a world of meaningful objects. Those “objects” may include material things, actions, other people, relationships, and even symbols. Because Interactionist see symbols as an important part of human communication, the Interactionist perspective is sometime referred to as symbolic Interactionist perspective. Interactionists would be interested in the social significance of team mascots and symbols.

**George Herbert Mead (1863–1931)** is widely regarded as the founder of Interactionist perspective. His sociological analysis is often focused on human interactions in one-to-one situations and small groups. Mead keenly observed most tiny forms of human interactions—smiles, frowns, nods—and explored how such individual behaviors were influenced by the larger context of a group or society.

**Erving Goffman (1922–1982)** deliberated on a particular type of Interactionist method known as **dramaturgical approach**, in which people are seen as theatrical performers. The dramaturgist contrast everyday life to the setting of the theatre and stage. Just as actors project certain images, we seek to manifest particular features of our personalities while we suppress other qualities. Thus, in a class, we may feel the need to project a serious image; at an event, we want to look content and friendly.

## THE FEMINIST VIEW

Sociologists began applying the feminist perspective only in the 1970s. The **feminist view** sees inequality in gender as a reason to all behavior and organization. Since it clearly focuses on one aspect of inequality, it is often associated with the conflict perspective.

**Ida Wells-Barnett (1862–1931)**, she became an advocate in the women's rights campaign, especially the struggle to win the vote for women. Well-Barnett used her analysis of society as a means of resisting oppression. For example, a family's social standing is no longer defined solely by the husband's position and income. The feminist perspective has given sociologists new views of familiar social behavior (Table 1.1).

**TABLE. 1.1:** Comparing major theoretical perspectives

	Functionalist	Conflict	Interactionist
<b>View of society</b>	Stable, well integrated	Characterized by tension	Active in influencing and affecting everyday social interaction
<b>Level of analysis emphasized</b>	Macro	Macro	Micro, as a way of understanding the larger macro phenomena Symbols

*Contd...*

	Functionalist	Conflict	Interactionist
<b>Key concepts</b>	Manifest functions Latent functions Dysfunctions	Inequality Capitalism Stratification	Non-verbal communication Face-to-face interaction
<b>View of the individual</b>	People are socialized to perform societal function	People are shaped by power. Coercion, and authority	People manipulate symbols and create their social world through interaction
<b>View of social order</b>	Maintained through cooperation and consensus	Maintained through force and coercion	Maintained by shared understanding of everyday behavior
<b>View of social change</b>	Predictable, reinforcing	Change takes place all the time and may have positive consequences	Reflected in people's social positions and their communications with others
<b>Examples</b>	Public punishments reinforce the social order	Laws reinforce the positions of those in power	People respect laws or disobey them based on their own past experience
<b>Proponents</b>	Emile Durkheim Talcott Parson Robert Merton	Karl Marx W.E.B. Du Bois Ida Wells-Barnett	George Herbert, Mead Charles Horton, Cooley Erving Goffman

## DEFINITIONS OF SOCIOLOGY

Human beings are social animals creating various societies; living together by common pattern of interactions, institutions and means of social control. Social behavior arises from the fact that people live together and interact or communicate. The interaction of people and groups is the central subject for the social science.

Recent changes in world situation have transformed the attitude to the study of society. It is not easy to give a clear and comprehensive definition of sociology since it covers a wide variety of human relationships.

Several sociologists have defined the term sociology from their own perspective. The definition of sociology is based on interactions as it includes all types of human relationships and forms of social behavior.

### Different Definitions Offered by Different Sociologists

“Science of social phenomena, subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigations” Comte identified three basic methods for discovering these invariant laws, observation, experimentation, and comparison.

—Auguste Comte

- “Sociology is the study of human interactions and interrelations, their conditions and consequences”

—Morris Ginsberg

- “Sociology is a science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects”

—Max Weber

- “Sociology is the scientific study of society”.

—Giddings & Giddings

- “Sociology is the science of society or of social phenomena”.

—L.F. Ward

- “Sociology is the study of the relationships between man and his human environment”.

—H.P. Fairchild

- “Sociology is a science of social relationships”.

—A.W. Small

- “Sociology is a science of social institutions”.

—Emile Durkheim

- “Sociology is a science of collective behavior”. —Park & Burgess
- “Sociology is the study of interactions arising from the association of living beings”. —Gillin & Gillin
- “Sociology is the science that deals with social groups, their internal forms or modes of organization, the processes that tend to maintain or change these forms of organization and in which they change”. —Harry M. Johnson
- “Sociology is the special social science, concentrating on inter-human behavior” —Von Wiese
- “Sociology is the study of man-in-relationship-to men”. —Marshall Jones
- “Sociology is the scientific study of social life”. —Ogburn & Nimkoff
- “Sociology is on the whole of the theory of human living together.” —Tonnies
- “Sociology is the scientific study of the social aspects of human life”. —Kimball Young & R.W. Mack
- **Reuter** “the purpose of sociology is to establish a body of valid principles, a fund of objective knowledge that will make possible the direction and control of social and human reality”.

These definitions indicate the different methods of approach with an underlying common principle of human relationship. In simple words we can say that the essence of all definitions is that the human is a social being and interconnected with each other by means of different kinds of relationship to survive within the society.

## RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIOLOGY WITH OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCES

Social science is general term applied to all branches of knowledge dealing with different aspects of human behavior. Since the interacting individuals are the same in all these, it is but natural that all the social sciences should be closely linked to each other.

### Sociology and Social Anthropology

Anthropology refers to the study of what makes us human. Anthropologists take a vast approach to understand numerous aspects of the human experience, which is termed holism. Anthropologists study the past, through archaeology, to distinguish how human groups lived hundreds or thousands of years ago and what was significant to them. They judge what makes up our biological bodies and genetics, as well as our bones, diet, and health. Additionally, Anthropologists contrast humans with other animals.

Anthropology studies the physical, social, cultural, and evolutionary characteristics of people, especially pertaining to the primitive ones. ‘Anthropo’ means man; logy means study. Thus, Anthropology is the study of man. There is close relationship between sociology and anthropology, in the sense that their interests and field of study are similar. Kroeber has said that these two are “twin sisters”. Tyler has well-linked the anthropological approach to sociology. Physical anthropology deals with the physical characteristics of man, and is very helpful in understanding the concept, like race. The pre-historic anthropology deals with the characteristics of primitive man, sociology deals with the contemporary man, and the modern complex societies.

**Kluckhohn** stated that the sociological attitude has tended toward the practical and present the anthropological attitude toward pure understanding and the past”.

According to him, “Anthropology studies human behavior more at the individual level, while sociology focuses more on group behavior and relations with social structures and institutions.” Anthropologists conduct research using ethnography (a qualitative research method), while sociologists use both qualitative and quantitative methods (Table 1.2).

**TABLE: 1.2:** Differences between sociology and social anthropology

Features	Sociology	Social anthropology
Meaning	Sociology is the study of society and its process, like social class, caste, social institutions	Anthropology is the study of humanity which focuses on cultural practices, human behavior and environment and its changes as time passes.
Area of focus	Civilized society	Primitive society
Level	Macro	Micro
Approach	Specific aspect of society	Holistic toward primitive society
Method of study	Document collection through observation, survey, interview, and questionnaire.	Field work
Mode of study	Qualitative	Quantitative

## Sociology and Economics

Economics studies only the economic behavior of man, with regards to production, consumption, and distribution. Economics is study of man in relation to wealth. Sociology is related to economics in various ways. Social behavior is much conditioned by the economic aspects of life. Social customs, traditions, and values affect the economic life and institutions. The founder of sociology was an economist and also social thinkers (Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Veblen). In spite of close relations, both sociology and economics have separate existence.

## Sociology and Political Science

The political behavior of man is related to social behavior. Authority, power, and leadership are some of the main concerns of political science. The state and its organ the Government exercise maximum control over the behavior of man. While religion, family and other institutions exert informal control, the state exerts coercive control over individuals and groups. These are days of democracy. For the success of the democratic form of Government, the structure and function of the society are very important. Thus, sociology and political science are interrelated.

## Sociology and History

Howard has said that “history is the sociology of the past, and sociology is the history of the present.” It is very true because we get knowledge about past institutions and social life only from history and what we study in sociology today will be a part of history very soon. History helps us to understand the development of human society. To understand the present, a basic knowledge of the past is essential.

## Sociology versus Psychology (Table 1.3)

The internal mode of function of human behavior is studied in Psychology. To know about human behavior, the study of the internal aspects is absolutely essential. Almost all our actions are the overt expressions of our motives, desires, instincts, impulses, and emotions. At the same time, our actions are also guided or modified through external conditions and stimuli. Sociologists study these external conditions and this knowledge is helpful to Psychologists in their analysis of human behavior. To get knowledge about the changing aspects of social life which affect our thinking, attitudes, and values, psychologists have to depend upon sociologists.

**TABLE: 1.3:** Differences between sociology and psychology

Psychology	Sociology
Psychology is concerned with the mental process of an individual.	Sociology is concerned with the social process and social system.
Psychology studies the inter-relationship of different activities of an individual.	Sociology studies the interaction among different persons.
The subject matter of psychology is restricted, since it studies only mental process of an individual.	The subject matter of sociology is boundless, it studies the whole society, like social relationships; social interactions, etc.
Psychology is a formal or special science since it has limited subject matter.	Sociology is a common or general science, since it studies all aspects associated to society.
Psychology is the study of attitude of an individual toward cultural values and laws related to these attitudes.	Sociology discusses existing form of society, its structure and functions.
Psychology analyses the framework of social relationships.	Sociology studies the interaction of human being with the environment.
Psychology uses the experimental methods and psychological training and evaluation methods for its study.	Sociology uses historical method, structural and functional methods, sociometry method for its study.

Sociology is a social science which is concerned with group life, whereas psychology is related to human being only as an individual. Sociology mainly deals with the external aspects of behavior, while psychology analyzes the internal aspects. The methodology of the two sciences are also different. If psychology applies experimental method and testing, sociologists rely on survey and statistical method in general.

Sociologists view society in different ways. Some see the world basically as a stable and ongoing entity. They are impressed with the endurance of the family, organized religion, and other social institutions. Other sociologists see society as composed of many groups in conflict, challenging for scarce resources. In the view of other sociologists, the most fascinating aspect of the social world is the everyday routine interactions among individuals that we sometimes take for granted. Today sociology reflects the diverse contributions of earlier theorists. Contributions from the discipline now come from sociologists studying and researching human behavior in other parts of the world.

Social psychology helps us a great deal in tackling several social problems. As they are inseparable from normal social processes and normal social behavior, the knowledge of social psychology should be brought to bear on the solution of these problems.

According to **MacIver and Page** “When we study nature the individual consciousness which expresses itself in social relationship, we are taking the psychological point of view. When we study the relationship themselves, we take the sociological point of view. Both sciences are concerned with different aspects of an invisible reality. Individuals cannot be understood apart from their relations with one another; the relations cannot be understood apart from the units of relationships.

## IMPORTANCE OF SOCIOLOGY

Society is a complex structure as well as largest organization of individuals. Society has its own problems in every field. Study of society contributes to the formulation of social policies; Sociologists seek to provide

analysis of the human society with sociological perspective. Sociology studies the primary unit of social life, such as social acts, relationships and individual personality, etc. It studies the development, structure and function of a wide variety of basic social institutions, such as family and kinship, religion and prosperity, economics, education and science, recreation and welfare. It studies the social processes, such as cooperation, accommodation, assimilation, conflict and competition, etc. It studies the scientific methods by collecting the data and establishing the connection between them, as well as specialization on the explosion of knowledge on history, literature, art, culture, religion family, etc. (Fig. 1.2).

- **Sociology is the science of society:** Sociology is important for understanding and planning of society. It helps us to understand society; sociology describes multiple dimensions of society in relation to individual, social group and process, community and its type, social organization, social problems, social control and entire social systems.
- **Sociology studies the social relationships:** It acts as a liaison between individual and society; man is a social animal and society has a profound impact on shaping the personality of individual. Our family, peer, school, teacher, religion and mass media are integral part of our individuality and all these collectively reflect society.
- **Sociology helps in study of human behavior in group situation:** Sociology helps person's to behave in a controlled or systematic ways. It helps students to overcome their prejudices, misconceptions, egoistic ambitions, class and religious conflicts. It made our life richer, fuller and meaningful. The study of societies has made people to become broad-minded. Sociology helps us to understand how social forces influence our goals, attitudes, behavior and personality.
- **Sociology has made great contribution to enrich human culture:** It contributes to understand human culture in a better way, to make good citizens.

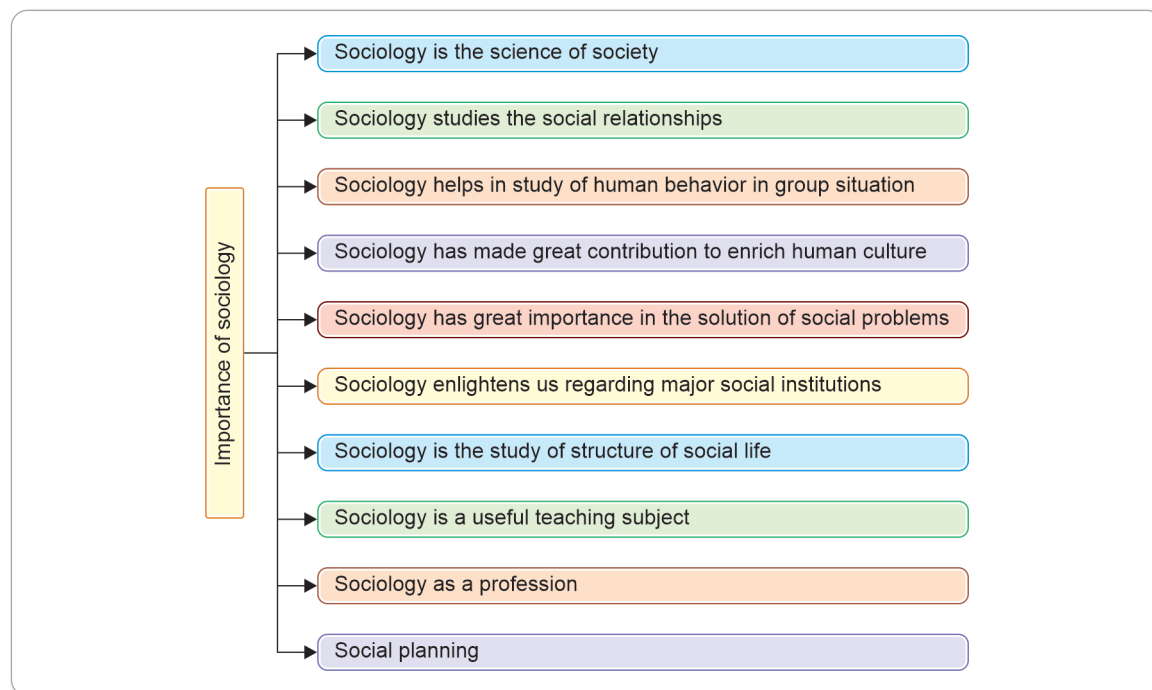


Figure 1.2: Importance of sociology



- **Sociology has great importance in the solution of social problems:** It deals with social actions. It is a tool for management of social problem; sociology helps to assess nature and intensity of social problems and guide different ways to resolve them. Sociology has changed outlook with regards to the problem of crime, etc. sociology is also helpful in formulating the law by knowing both formal and informal means of social control.
- **Sociology enlightens us regarding major social institutions:** Sociology studies the role of the institutions in the development of an individual. It helps in keeping updated information on modern institution. Social institutions, like school, college, temple, church and work place act as an agent of society. These social institutions strengthen social environment and society. Sociology draws our attention to the institutional worth and dignity of man.
- **Sociology is the study of structure of social life:** Social groups, social institutions, their function and change in trends, etc. All these help us to lead an effective meaningful social life. Sociology identifies good government with the community. With the help of sociology many government organizations undertake various social welfare measures to promote the wellbeing of tribal people.
- **Sociology is a useful teaching subject:** The study of sociology has a great value, especially in modern multifarious society. Scientific knowledge about human society is needed in order to achieve progress in various fields.
- **Sociology as a profession:** Sociology is not confined to social sciences, it has become popular in other subjects also, such as medical sciences, law and engineering. Several international and national research organizations recruit social scientists in most of the researches. After having a degree in sociology, students are hired in several public and private organizations of repute.
- **Social planning:** Social planning has been made easier by sociology. Sociology is often regarded as the vehicle of social reform and social reorganization. Sociology is of great importance in the solution of international problems.

## Importance of Sociology in Nursing

Most of the illnesses have social causes and consequences. Sociology is included in the curriculum of nursing because health is a fundamental right of each and every individual. Sociology imparts knowledge to deal with the patient and to understand their culture, habit, behavior, customs, traditions, norms, etc. The nurses need to understand the necessity of changing environment. Sociology helps the nurses to understand demographic factors and approach the patient in a comprehensive manner; this is important to avoid prejudice and discrimination. To understand community, the knowledge of sociology is must. Sociology helps the nurse to understand social position, status and responsibilities.

## NATURE OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology at personal level deals with individuality, beliefs, value, customs, gender, family and conflict.

Sociology at societal level examines social control, social problems, social disorganization and social institution.

Sociology at Global level describes global population, global harmony and peace.

Thus, sociology is a general science; the areas of investigations of sociology are general, such as study of human life and human interactions. Sociology is a systematic and objective study of human society.

The nature or characteristics of sociology (Fig. 1.3) are as follows:

- **Independent social science:** Sociology is an independent science; not a branch of any other science. Sociology is a social science and not a physical science and is different from astronomy, physics, and chemistry.
- **Individual branch:** Sociology is individual branch; it is not included with any other science. It is abstract not a concrete science.

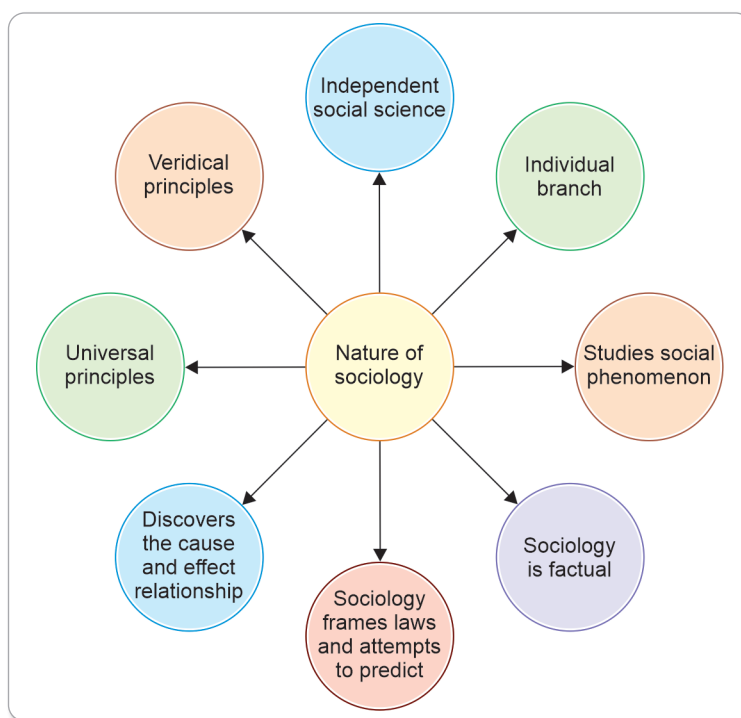


Figure 1.3: Nature of sociology

- Studies social phenomenon:** Sociology is a social science; and deals with individual in relation to his social surroundings. When a social scientist investigates any social phenomena, he utilizes scientific method. It is a systemic way of dealing with ideas, careful observation of recording of the factual data, which is classified, analyzed and organized in a systematic way by logical basis through which generalization can be made. It studies the human social relationship. Man cannot exist in vacuum. Man has to interact and establish relationship with significant other and with environment. Sociology focuses upon the interconnection of man with his environment. It is the study of social life. Sociology enables us to view social world from society perspective. It illuminates light on social life of individual group and society.
- Sociology is factual:** It deals with facts only. Sociology uses scientific principles to solve the problems. Social scientist deals with the social facts. Sociology is rationale and empirical science; Empiricism emphasizes on the observations and experimentations. Rationalism emphasizes on the logical inferences. It passes some important information based on theoretical knowledge with practical experience. It makes the individual to organize society by solving certain social problems. Sociology observes the society in a theoretical way but excluding in practical way.
- Sociology frames laws and attempts to predict:** It can make predictions on the basis of universal and valued laws relating to the problem-solving approach. It supplies the information about the elements of social system to facilitate the introduction of any described changes. To construct society by observing existing problems, customs, traditions, institutions, etc. It can make the people understand the changing situations.
- Discovers the cause and effect relationship:** It structures the cause and effect relationship in its subject matter and in this connection; it provides universal and valid laws. Sociology helps to develop a selfless

tendency and understands the society in a well-planned manner. In India, each individual comes across different religion and culture. We have to understand all the social institutions to develop a feeling of universal brotherhood.

- **Universal principles:** The law of sociology proved to be true at all time and places, as long as the condition does not vary. Sociology is generalizing and not particularizing science.
- **Veridical principles:** The laws of sociology proved true at every verification and reverification. Anyone can examine their validity. Sociology is based on pure or theoretical basis and is not an applied science.

Robert Bierstedt in his book 'The Social Order' mentioned the following characteristics of sociology:

- Sociology is a social not a natural science.
- Sociology is a categorical or positive and not a normative science.
- Sociology is a pure or theoretical science and not an applied science.
- Sociology is an abstract science and not a concrete one.
- Sociology is generalizing and not particularizing science.
- Sociology is both rational and empirical science.

### Some Limitations about the Nature of Sociology

Sociology is the science of human interaction or relationship, social behavior, social activities and social life. There are some limitations about scientific nature of sociology.

These are:

- **Lack of experimentation:** Sociology deals with human relationships which can neither be measured or weighed nor can be seen or analyzed.
- **Lack of objectivity:** The sociologists cannot preserve complete objectivity in order to understand its external action. Objectivity is necessary to get an accurate explanation of how things work in the world.
- **Lack of exactness:** The law and conclusions cannot be expressed in precise terms. True findings are often restricted within time and space.
- **Inability to measure subject matter:** Suitable criteria are not available for all of the underlying issues. Human response to their surroundings and the presence of the researcher could affect the behavior of the subject. Some changes that occur naturally in people's behavior because they know they are being studied.
- **Inaccurate predictions:** Sometimes predictions may be inaccurate. It is very difficult to predict individual actions accurately because human behavior is dynamic and very complex. It is difficult to reorganize and control personal values.

### SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY

Meaning of scope is the subject matter or the areas of the study. Every science has its own field of inquiry. It becomes difficult to study a science systematically unless its boundary or scope is determined precisely. Sociology as a social science has its own individual scope or boundaries.

There is no single opinion concerning the scope of sociology. **Calverton** describes sociology as an elastic science. It is difficult to determine where its boundary begins and where it ends. It is impossible to decide as it studies human interactions, interrelations, their conditions and consequences.

### Two Different Views about the Scope of Sociology

There are two schools of thought with different viewpoints regarding scope and subject matter of sociology—formalistic school and synthetic school as shown in Figure 1.4.

- One group of writers led by German sociologists, George Simmel distinguish sociology clearly from other branches of social studies and confine it to the inquiry into certain defined aspects of human relationships.
- The other group maintains that the field of social investigation is too wide for any individual science and that if any progress is to be made, there must be specialization and division of labor.

### Formalistic School of Thought

According to formal school, sociology was visualized to be a social science with a specifically defined field. Formal school argues in support of giving sociology a specific area under discussion to make it a distinct discipline. It emphasized the study of forms of social relationships and considers sociology as independent science.

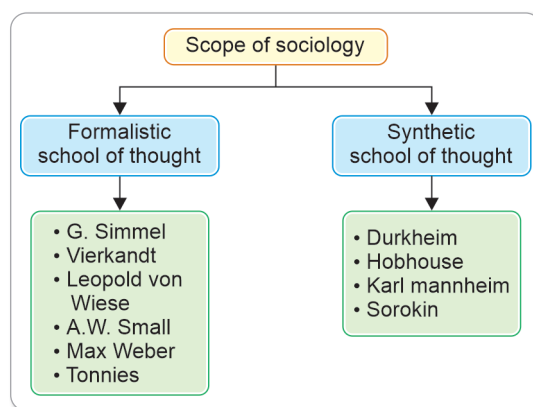


Figure 1.4: Scope of sociology

- According to **G. Simmel**, the distinction between sociology and other social sciences is that sociology is a specific social science which describes, classifies, analyses and delineates the forms of social relationships or in other words social interactions should be classified into various outline or form and analyzed. Simmel argued that social interactions have various forms. He approved the studies of such formal relationships as cooperation, competition, sub and super ordinate relationships and so onward.
- **Vierkandt** maintained that sociology should be concerned with crucial forms of mental or psychic relationship which bind the people together in a society. Sociology is a special branch of knowledge concerned with the ultimate forms of mental relationships which link man to one another in society.
- **Leopold von Wiese**, describes there are two kinds of fundamental social processes in human society. Firstly, the associative process concerning contact, approach, adaptations, etc. and secondly, disassociate processes, like competition and conflict. Separately from these two processes a mixed form of the associative and dissociative also exists.
- **A.W. Small's** view; according to the Small's view, sociology does not undertake to study all the activities of society. Every science has certain limitations and sociology is not an exception. He describes sociology as the study of the generic forms of social relationships, behaviors and activities.
- **Max Weber** also makes out a distinct field for sociology. According to him, the aim of sociology is to interpret or comprehend social behavior. But social behavior does not cover up the whole field of human relations. Indeed, not all human communications are social. Sociology is concerned with the investigation and categorization of types of social relationships.
- **Tonnies** alienated societies into two categories, namely community and association; on the basis of degree of intimacy among the members of the society. He distinguished on the basis of forms of relationship and tried to differentiate between community and society.

### Criticism of Formal School

- The most prominent criticism of formal school of thought is that it focuses upon the abstract aspects of social life rather than the concrete. Abstract forms are distinct from concrete relations; and concrete form cannot be explored. Ginsberg states that a study of social relationships would remain invisible if it is conducted in the abstract without the base of reality.
- Sociology doesn't alone study the forms of social relationship. Political science, International law also study forms of social relationship.
- Social science is attached to other sciences, it can't survive in isolation.

## Synthetic School of Sociology

Synthetic school desired sociology to be the synthesis of the social sciences and thus intended to broaden the scope of sociology.

- In view of **Durkheim**, the scope of sociology can be alienated into three divisions or fields of study. They are as social morphology, social physiology, and general sociology. Emile Durkheim used the word in sociology in order to classify the basis of the society, the structural relationship among people. This categorization was based on how the different types of human populations are distributed and organized across the world. This is known as social morphology and it is one of Durkheim's moves toward studying society.
- **Social morphology** contains primarily geographic subjects, like population and its size, density, distribution, mobility, etc. Social morphology investigates and studies the size, density, or quality of the population to know how these factors affect the relationships among people and social groups. For an individual, or corporate groups, or organization, the aim of social morphology is to measure their nature, number, the way they are arranged, and the nature of their interrelations.
- **Social physiology** is divided into number of branches such as sociology of religion, morals, law, economic life, and language, etc. each branch of these fields deals with a set of social facts—the activities related to the social groups.
- **General sociology** discovers the general character of social facts and determines whether there are any general social laws which differentiate by special social science.
- **Hobhouse**, considered sociology as a science which has the whole social life of man as its sphere. It has a mutual nexus with other social sciences.
- **Karl Mannheim** classified sociology into two main sections—systematic and historical sociology. **Systematic sociology** describes in sequence one by one the reasons behind living together in different types of society. The **historical sociology** deals with the historical features and reality of the general structure of society. It is further divided into two types—comparative sociology and social dynamics. **Comparative sociology** pertains mainly to the historical variations of the same phenomenon. **Social dynamics** pertains to the interrelations between the various social factors and institutions in a certain given society, for instance, in a primitive society.
- According to **Sorokin**, the subject matter of sociology includes, the study of relationships between the different aspects of social phenomena; the study of relationship between social and non-social; and study about general features of social phenomena. According to Sorokin, Sociology can be of two types—General sociology and special sociology. **General sociology** explains the properties and uniformities common to all social and cultural phenomena in their structural and dynamic features. The nexus between the sociocultural and biological phenomena. In the structural aspect sociology studies varieties of groups and institutions as well as their nexus. In the dynamic aspect sociology studies various social processes, like marriage, social contact, social gathering, socialization, conflict, social control, subordination, etc. **Special sociology** studies a unique sociocultural phenomenon which is selected for in-depth study. According to Sorokin, some of the most developed branches of sociology are: sociology of population, rural sociology, sociology of law, sociology of medicine.
- As per to **Ginsberg**, sociology studies the types and forms of social relationships. It determines the relation between different factors of social life, social change and to discover sociological principles governing social life. Thus the scope of sociology is very wide. It studies the various aspects of society. For example, it studies about social process, traditions, social control, social morphology, etc. Ginsberg has analyzed the main tasks of sociology as it provides a classification of types and forms of social relationships, especially of those which have come to be defined institutions and associations. Study of sociology attempts to evaluate the relation between different parts of factors of social life, for instance, the religion and political, the moral and the legal, the intellectual and the social elements. It tries to find out the basic conditions of social change and identifies the sociological principles governing social life.

## **SOCIOLOGY AND ITS FIELDS**

Sociology explores all aspects of social life such as economic, political, religious, cultural, moral, legal, and historical and many more.

### **General Sociology**

It is a general social science not an individualize science. According to **Albion W. Small** “General sociology is the study of the condition (physical and psychical), elements, forms, forces, processes, results (at given stage), and implications of human association.”

### **Historical Sociology**

Historical sociology is a branch of sociology focusing on how societies develop through history. It studies that how social structures that many regard as natural are in fact twisted with complex social processes.

### **Juridical Sociology**

Relating to the administration of justice; used in court. Within this field, it is key to consider legal structures (i.e., the legal system), legal process (how law is made) and the interaction of the law in societal change and social control. It is essential to critically analyze the impact, positive and negative, of law on race, class, gender and other social differential values, as well as highlighting that:

- Law needs to be understood by each and every individual as a component of social institutions.
  - It is highly important to examine critically how law and society interplay with each other.
  - Legal categories and legal reasoning interplay by means of social hierarchies based on race, class, gender and sexuality.
  - It is quite essential to examine relations between law and social control and social change.
- Application of sociology enhances interpretation of law in social context.

### **Moral Sociology**

Moral sociology deals with the moral values of the family and society. Sociology of morality is a branch of sociology which deals through the sociological exploration of the nature, causes, and consequences of people's ideas about morality.

### **Criminal Sociology**

Sociology changed our outlook towards crime and punishment. Criminal sociology studies about all those physical and social conditions of life that are responsible for originating the criminal act, and deals with remedies to the various causes of crime.

### **Religious Sociology**

Religious sociology deals with religious history of family and society. Sociology of religion is the study of the beliefs, practices and organizational forms of religion by means of the tools and methods of the discipline of sociology. Traditionally the study of religion was central to the discipline of sociology with early influential figures, such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber writing extensively on the role and function of religion in human society. The discipline of sociology of religion has to a great extent to teach about how religion functions for the individual and in society.



## Economic Sociology

Economic sociology deals with the economic status of the society and nation. It is concerned with how technologies and cultures of expertise shape institutions, cultures, money and markets. Economic sociology focuses on the economic activities and how they are structured into organization.

## Social Morphology

Social morphology is concerned by way of geographical basis of the life. **Emile Durkheim** was one of the pioneers of the synthetic school of thought. The synthetic school of thought arose in response to the formalist school of thought. Social morphology explicitly denotes structure of sociology. Synthetic school of thought also used the term social morphology. Synthetic school of thought considers sociology as a general science. It endorsed sociology as a whole and hence the scope of sociology is wide and open.

## Social Psychology

According to psychologist **Gordon Allport**, social psychology employs scientific methods to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of an individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied the presence of other human beings. Essentially, social psychology is about understanding how each person's individual behavior is influenced by the social environment in which that behavior takes place. Social psychology mainly deals with wide range of social problems such as group behavior, social perception, leadership, non-verbal behavior, conformity, prejudice, and aggression. The researches social psychologists perform have a powerful influence on our understanding of mental health and well-being. These can help teenagers resist potentially harmful behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and substance use.

## Family Sociology

Families are the basic structure of society. Different families offer different values and upbringing to their child. In this branch, we study different methods of parenting found in families. How different families can bring different changes in a child is studied under this branch.

## Demography Sociology

Sociology is a study of society and society is made up of a population. Demography determines the population rate. It deals with every aspect related to the population, like the number of people residing in a particular area, increment or decrement of the population in past years.

## Subfields of Sociology

### Industrial Sociology

Industrial Sociology is a fairly young branch of sociology. Industrialization brought a lot of development alongside class divisions among the people, however, social problems have arisen with all the complexities. According to J. H. Smith, "Industrial Sociology is concerned with industry (or any form of work organization) as a social system, including those factors (technical, emotional, political) which affect the structure, the function and the changes in that system".

## **Rural Sociology**

Rural Sociology is a field of sociology traditionally linked with the study of social structure and conflict in rural areas while topical areas such as food and agriculture or natural resource access transcend traditional rural spatial boundaries.

## **Urban Sociology**

Urban Sociology is the sociological study of life and human interaction in metropolitan cities. It is a normative discipline of sociology that studies the structures, environmental processes, changes and problems of an urban area and by doing so provides inputs for urban planning and policy making. Besides, it is the sociological study of cities and their role in the development of society. Similar to the majority areas of sociology, urban sociologists exercise statistical analysis, observation, social theory, interviews, and other methods to study a range of topics, including migration and demographic trends, economics, poverty, race relations and economic trends. Urban sociology is single of the oldest sub-disciplines of sociology dating back to the mid-nineteenth century.

## **Educational Sociology**

Educational Sociology is also referring to as sociology of education. Educational sociology is the study of the social aspect that influence and are influenced by all educational structures and processes, both within and between societies.

## **Political Sociology**

The study of power and the relationship among societies, states, and political conflict is political sociology. It overlaps political science and sociology, with “macro” and “micro” components. At macro level, it deals with the reasons of big political changes and its attachment with social life and at micro level it deals with the impact of social identities and group influence at individual political behavior such as decision on whom to vote.

## **Medical Sociology**

Medical Sociology deals with medicine in modern society. Medical sociology is the sociological study of medical organizations and institutions; the production of knowledge and selection of methods, the actions and interactions of healthcare professionals, and the social or cultural (rather than clinical or bodily) effects of medical practice. The field commonly interrelates with the sociology of knowledge, science and technology studies, and social epistemology. Sociologists have made imperative contributions to public health research and practice in a variety of areas, such as the link between the individual, community, institutions, and social systems (Quah, 2015). Most remarkably, sociological research on the social determinants of health, health inequalities, social class and stratification, the organization and utilization of services, health policy, and family health has dominated sociological studies of population-based health. Medical sociology is extremely useful for the entire health service. According to Suchman (1968), the knowledge of sociology can prove helpful in implementation of public health programs.

## **Clinical Sociology**

Clinical Sociology is an applied practice that is the center of attention on health intervention, such as working with medical practitioners, community health services, and social policy and public health campaigns.

**Glasser and freedman** stated that “Clinical sociology is the application of a variety of critically applied practices which attempt sociological diagnosis and treatment of groups and group members in the community”. The three main features of Clinical Sociology are:

1. The focus of the investigator is on a “case,” i.e., on a person presenting concrete problems;
2. It is a cooperative enterprise.
3. Clinical procedure has an immediate therapeutic aim and it is, therefore, not merely a study of the “case,” but the formulation of a program of adjustment or treatment.

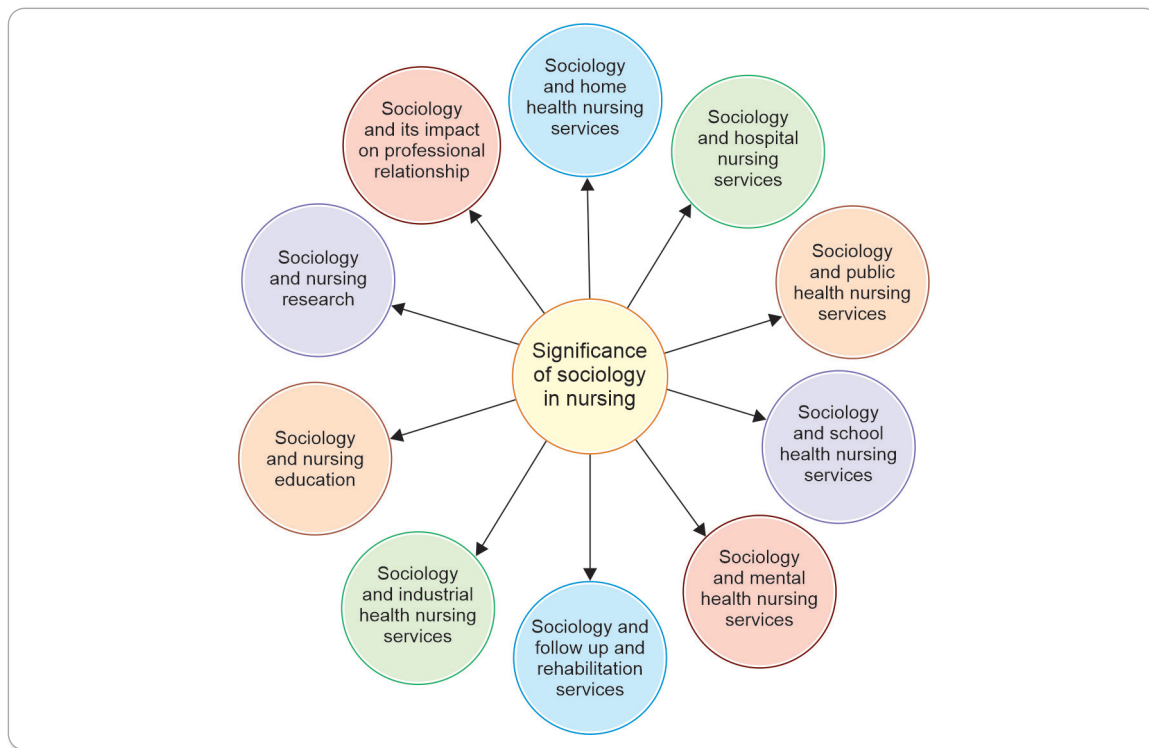
Clinical sociology is a kind applied sociology which involves intimate, sharply realistic investigations correlated with efforts to look for the problems and to form the strategies to tackle these problems. Clinical sociology denotes a sociological perspective to intervention and action for change.

Sociology has a very wide scope. It is both general and special science. The viewpoint of study distinguishes the science from one another. As a special study, sociology studies human behavior in a society and social relationship, as a part of general science, sociology automatically studies all aspects of social life that directly or indirectly affect human behavior. It is both general and special science.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIOLOGY IN NURSING**

The study of sociology helps nurses recognize the psycho-social problems of patients, which helps them in deciding the quality of treatment. Sociology helps understand those forces and pressures which affect patients adversely. Nursing plays a vital role in healthcare profession. Sociology helps the doctor and nurses to know the social life of the patient. In India, people have different religions, caste, tribes and communities. It is essential to know the culture of the group; for this, knowledge of sociology is essential as well as the knowledge of society is extremely useful (Fig. 1.5).

Nurse will act as an effective person between the patient and health team members. The knowledge of sociology helps the nurse to identify and analyze different social situations which are responsible for the



**Figure 1.5:** Significance of sociology in nursing

incidence and prevalence of morbidity and mortality conditions of the individuals. Treatment of diseases; mental or physical is a cooperative attempt in which a united effort of various medical, paramedical and non-medical personnel are required, because nurse acts as a key person in a hospital situation. Sociology is the science of human society, can play an important role in the understanding the importance of community life.

Programs like public health, industrial health, school health, military health nursing, etc. The nurse has to work very close with different sections of the society.

Significance of sociology in nursing are:

- Sociology and home health nursing services:** Sociology helps us to understand human behavior, interpersonal relationship and social interactions in context of family, community and society. A nurse who understands social dimensions of home and family environment can render effective health care at home. To meet the needs of the patient adequately, it is essential that the nurse develops self-understanding. The nurse must strive constantly to become emotionally, mentally, morally and socially mature. Good observation, communication and guidance skills are essential to understand the behavior of the patient. For example, if a nurse advises to antenatal women about diet and if she is aware of cultural practices related to diet and antenatal status she can customize her nursing care plan.
- Sociology and hospital nursing services:** Hospital is an integral institute of any society. Hospital witnesses several social scenes in everyday affairs ranging from outpatient department to inpatient department. A powerful nexus of social relationship exists among health team members. An efficient nurse must collaborate with all the components of sociology in her services to patient and for effective interpersonal relationship. The most important person who can help in the recovery is the patient himself, unless he is desirous to heal and cooperative in the process, treatment and nursing care become very difficult indeed. The nurse must be able to gain full confidence of the patient. In this process knowledge of social systems and social relationships is very vital. Medical sociology is extremely useful for the entire health care services. For example, if a nurse understands process of socialization, individualization, diversity and uniformity of culture, mob, crowd, public reactions, etc. How health is related with caste, class and race; what are of role of family in disease condition; nurses possibly will upgrade her nursing care accordingly. Similarly, if nurse understands and implement sociological concepts like social groups and social processes, such as cooperation, accommodation and assimilation, conflict and competition, theories of social change, social system, and social control then possibly will be an active and remarkable health team member.
- Sociology and public health nursing services:** Public health nurses serve to community in their social surroundings if a public health nurse understands and integrates social dimensions like primary group, secondary group, individualization, socialization, and type of community such as rural, urban, regional community, etc., then nurse can improve health-seeking behavior of community. The study of sociology helps the nurses to improve the quality of family welfare programs and the community health services with the government. Knowledge of sociology helps the nurses to understand social structure. In a country like India, where people have their affiliation with different religions, caste, tribes and communities, it is essential to know the culture of these groups. For example, local geographical health care worker is more acceptable in community. Nurses who speak native language can communicate effectively and perceive health need effectively. This will help nurses to gain patient's confidence and provide holistic care in an efficient way. The primary role of the nurse is to carry out the health education activities in the community along with the participation and involvement of local people in planning and implementation of health care programs for their attainment of good quality of life, prevention of diseases and disability and promotion of health.
- Sociology and school health nursing services:** School is the elementary institution of socialization. Children learn values, custom and tradition from their teachers and peers. If a school health nurse applies

principles of socialization; this will enhance psychosocial development of children. For example, a nurse who works in school as school health nurse are capable of early identification of physical or mental illness in children. School health nursing services play vital role in treatment, follow up and rehabilitation of children in society.

- **Sociology and mental health nursing services:** Primary cause of mental health lies in society. Family conflict, workplace pressure, personal disorganization all yield mental sickness. In these conditions mental health nursing services are vital. Role of environment modification in the treatment of mental health is crucial. Better social context promotes better mental health.  
For instance, if a nurse doing psychotherapy should also consider social network of the patient and give equal importance to social relationships.
- **Sociology and follow up and rehabilitation services:** When a patient gets well and discharged from hospital; he goes back to the same society to live as normal as he can. Many time disease relapses because of various social and personal reasons. Positive sociological environment is the key for effective rehabilitation services. The patient suffering from permanent disabilities; in this very deep understanding of human behavior is very essential. The sociology as well as psychology is very useful in handling such situations.  
For example, a nurse who takes care of a patient in rehabilitation unit must assess and analyze social setting of patient for better prognosis. If a young drug addict after de-addiction treatment, rehabilitates in same social environment then he is at risk for relapses.
- **Sociology and industrial health nursing services:** Nurses who works in factory as a health care provider mainly responsible for safety and prevention from occupational health hazards, maintenance and promotion of worker's health, improvement of working atmosphere. Every work-play has its own social dynamics. Industry success depends upon devotion of its employee and the good social atmosphere.  
For instance, industrial sociological dimensions help to understand social component in industrial worker.
- **Sociology and nursing education:** Significance of sociological concepts in education is vital. It helps educators and teachers to accept and understand each other's differences and similarities. It dilutes boundaries of caste, class and religion. Knowledge of sociology helps students to adjust with fellow students, patients and co-worker. For instance, if a student nurse has critical understanding of social circumstances in teaching and learning—such as how competition, cooperation, conflict can affect his/her education—can develop positive attitudes toward nursing education.
- **Sociology and nursing research:** Studying sociology helps nursing student to analyze data and generate theories. Knowledge of sociology helps nurses to promote research and evidences-based nursing care. Understanding health and health care in perspective of social context can help us to promote research and its utilization. Sociology helps in updating of skills and knowledge, monitoring and evaluating activities. It also helps in analyzing health conditions of people and bringing about changes and innovation in health care based on research.
- **Sociology and its impact on professional relationship:** Effective professional relationship is the core of any organization. Wherever nursing professionals work, the knowledge and application of sociological concepts can promote their interpersonal relationship. Sociology not only facilitates understanding of self and guides social networking but also helps to understand the behavioral pattern of others. For instance, a nurse manager who considers individual and group dynamics could utilize best of every employee and in conflict situation she can manage any crisis with guidance of sociological principles thus she promotes professionalism. Nurses has to study the broader issues of the community involvement in service development requiring the knowledge of cultural aspects of health services; political organizations; distribution of power; modes of prediction; social structure; mobilization of resources and pattern of their uses within the community. Nurses will develop discipline and sensitivity that give the meaning of compassion and understanding in order to study the stress in social relationships.



The horizon of sociology is expanding and the possibilities are endless. Gradually, it will cover man's entire life. Thus, sociology is helping nurses in:

- Understanding human behavior
- Planning nursing process
- Maintaining continuity of patient care
- Providing evidenced-based health care
- Providing quality care through holistic approach
- Maintaining effective interpersonal relationship with patient, patient's relatives and among health care team members.
- Understanding cultural value identification and clarification
- Enhancing health promotion activities in community
- Adopting preventive and remedial approach in all levels of disease prevention
- Analyzing social situations
- Performing as effective liaison
- Professional development and career advancement
- Effective collaboration with other health care agencies

The study of sociology is extremely useful to all, more especially in medical and nursing and the field of social welfare. A thorough knowledge of the social interactions, and the culture of the people as a whole, is imperative for nurse. Today, nursing is no longer merely an effort to cure illness rather preventive services and promotion of health are also important aspect of nursing. To be an effective agent of health promotion, knowledge of community and facilities and resources available therein are essential. Sociology, which is called the science of human society, can play an important role in the understanding of community.

Nursing skills important for identifying and managing social issues are enlisted in case study 1:

### Case Study 1 Nursing Skills Important for Identifying and Managing Social Issues

*Rani is a 28-year-old young Indian female admitted in oncology ward for chemotherapy treatment as she has been diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia recently. She is having AB negative blood group. Her blood report suggested severe anemia. Doctor advised blood transfusion. She had no history of blood transfusion in the past. One of her relatives (male) was ready to donate blood for her. She asked one question that gender of the donor and recipient should be matched, and she is worried about transfusion reaction.*

**Applied sociology:** Social inequality

**Nursing skills required:** Effective listener, evidenced-based knowledge impartation.

**Explanation:** Nurse can explain that over 60% of patients treated with chemotherapy develop anemia. Blood transfusion mandates matching of the blood types so that the donor and the recipient are compatible in their blood types. There is no other matching between the blood components and the recipient such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. Matching the donor product to the recipient is crucial in avoiding serious transfusion reactions. Provide assurance that she will be monitored throughout the procedure. She is also advised for dietary modification with appropriate supplemental therapy with folic acid, vitamin B<sub>12</sub> and iron supplementation to correct nutritional deficiencies. Nurse also explains that if anemia is not managed early what serious complications it will lead to.



## SUMMARY

*Sociology is the systematic study of social behavior and human groups. It focuses on social relationships; how those relationships influence the people's behavior. In this unit, we studied about the nature of sociological theory, the founder of discipline, theoretical perspectives and relationship of sociology with other social sciences, definitions of sociology by different sociologists and nature, scope of sociology according to formalistic and synthetic school of thought, importance and significance of sociology in nursing. Besides, we also learned about the following:*

- There are various eminent social thinkers who contributed enough to term sociology as a science. In 1839, Auguste Comte, a French philosopher coined the term “sociology”. Sociology has been considered a recent modern science. Other 19th century thinkers who contributed to sociological insight include Harriet Martineau, an English sociologist; and Herbert Spencer, an English scholar. In the 20th century, the roles of Charles Horton Cooley and Robert Merton are important.
- Govind Sadashiv Ghurye is a well-known figure in intellectual and academic circles for his unique contribution to the field of Indian sociology. M.N. Srinivas, Gail Omvedt, Andre Beteille, G.S. Ghurye, Yogendra Singh, Louis Dumont, A.R. Desai are some of the remarkable sociologists of India. The others who firmly contributed to the development of sociology in India are D.N. Majumdar and N.K. Bose.
- Sociologists make use of all three perspectives, since each offers unique insight into the same issue: The *functionalist perspective* emphasizes the way in which the parts of society are structured to maintain its stability. The *conflict perspective* assumes that social behavior is best understood in terms of conflict or tension between competing groups. The *Interactionist perspective* is primarily concerned with fundamental or everyday forms of interaction, including symbols and other types of non-verbal communication.
- Auguste Comte defines sociology as “Science of social phenomena, subject to natural and invariable laws, the discovery of which is the object of investigations”.
- Sociology is general social science: The areas of investigations of sociology are general such as study of human life and human interactions. In contrast to other social sciences, sociology emphasizes the influence that groups can have on people's behavior and attitudes and the way in which people shape society.
- Importance of sociology: It is the science of society; it studies social relationships; study of human behavior in group situation; enriches human culture; important for solution of social problems; social planning, etc.
- Nature: It is an independent social science; individual branch; it studies social phenomena; it is factual; frames law; discovers the cause and effect relationship; its principles are universal and veridical.
- Most of the illnesses have social causes and consequences: Sociology is included in the curriculum of nursing because health is a fundamental right of each and every individual and is a social component. Sociology gives knowledge to deal with the patients and to understand their culture, habit, behavior, customs, traditions, norms, etc. The nurses need to understand the necessity of changing environment. Sociology helps nurses to understand demographic factors and approach the patient in a comprehensive manner; this is important to avoid prejudice and discrimination. The study of sociology is extremely useful to all, more especially in medical and nursing and in the field of social welfare.

## ASSESS YOURSELF

### Short Answer Questions

1. Write any two definitions of sociology.
2. What do you understand by the nature of sociology?
3. Differentiate between sociology and social anthropology.
4. Define sociology as a social science.
5. Write about the application of sociology in nursing.

### Long Answer Questions

1. Discuss sociology and its significance in nursing.
2. Define sociology and explain its nature.
3. Describe sociology as social science.
4. Explain the importance of study of sociology.
5. Discuss the scope of sociology in our society.
6. Explain the meaning and importance of sociology in nursing.

### Multiple Choice Questions

1. **The science which helps us to understand ourselves, our relationship to significant others and our interaction with environment and how these three things, i.e., individual, significant others and environments are interrelated is known as:**
  - a. Anthropology
  - b. Sociology
  - c. Ecology
  - d. Psychology
2. **Who is considered the Father of Sociology?**
  - a. Morris Ginsberg
  - b. Auguste Comte
  - c. Max Weber
  - d. Emile Durkheim
3. **The study of humanity which keeps focus on cultural practices, human behavior and environment and its changes is:**
  - a. Sociology
  - b. Psychology
  - c. Ecology
  - d. Anthropology
4. **Sociology at societal level mainly deals with:**
  - a. Social institutions
  - b. Global population
  - c. Individual beliefs
  - d. Environment
5. **Sociology is a:**
  - a. Natural science
  - b. Applied science
  - c. Social science
  - d. Physical science

### Answer Key

1. b      2. b      3. d      4. a      5. c

## FURTHER READINGS

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