

Sociology Reading NOTES:

Week 1:

Chapter 2: Sociological Foundations: Early Theorists and Theories

August Comte and Positivism: Sociology As Science

- Comte considered that societies could be studied in a rational and scientific way and he wished to apply scientific methods
- Understanding the world through scientific and empirical study
- The first state or epoch was theological: supernatural beliefs were paramount and people believed that events were the result of God's will.
- The second was metaphysical: events were viewed as natural rather than supernatural and organised religion prevailed
- The third and final stage was scientific: people sought to understand their world based on science and scientific facts.

Herbert Spencer and Social Evolution

- Societies progress from the simple to the complex
- Simple organisms to highly complex and differentiated structures
- Superior groups are likely to be the most successful in society
- Spencer argued that the poor and the sick should be left to fend for themselves and should not receive assistance from governments.
- Complexity of modern societies was a key factor in their ability to adapt and to survive

Karl Marx: Class Conflict, Alienation and Marxism

- Social evolution
- Industrial revolution, he argued that the way in which goods are produced in society affect everything else.
- His interest was on one of the later stages — **capitalism**— as it was the mode of production of his own time

control over the labour process, exploitation, and alienation

- Two classes of people: the workers and the capitalists
- The capitalists supply the capital
- The workers sell their labour to capitalists for a wage

class inequality

- the bourgeoisie and the proletariat — was inevitable and would result in an overthrow of capitalism from which a new social order would arise.

Emile Durkheim: Social facts, Social Cohesion, and Anomie

- Durkheim agreed with Comte that society should be studied on a scientific basis, and he considered that the proper subject-matter of sociology should be the study of social facts.

- Sociology should not be the study of individuals or individual behaviour, but rather our actions as individuals — such as religion or the economy.
- He insisted that it was not possible to study human beings without studying the forces that construct and constrain them.

Division of labour:

- He assumed that social and moral solidarity was a prerequisite for any society
- He was interested in what he termed solidarity
- Social solidarity refers to 'how people get along together, how they cooperate with on another and ultimately how societies hold together without being torn apart by conflict'.
 1. Mechanical solidarity
 2. Organic Solidarity
- Societies change over time from mechanical to organic
- Durkheim expressed confidence in organic solidarity, he was aware that a condition he termed anomie could arise.

Suicide:

- Suicide is linked to social relationships and social integration
- 1. Egoistic suicide: Where levels of integration in society are low.
- 2. Altruistic suicide: It occurs when integration levels are high and an individual feels they are acting in common good or for shared goals.
- 3. Anomic Suicide: Occurs in times of social upheaval, and when people no longer know how to behave.
- 4. Fatalistic suicide: Occurs when the individual is over-regulated in society

Max Weber: Rationalisation, the Protestant Ethic, and Social Stratification

- Max Weber was interested in the development of modern capitalism and its impact on society
- Weber sought out the reasons for social change

Rationalisation:

- Weber correctly predicted that the 'future belong to bureaucratisation
- Weber felt that bureaucracies treated individuals in a dehumanising way

The protestant ethic:

- Weber considered that charismatic religious authority could be a potent force for social change, and could transform an economic system.
- Weber considered that idea, particularly religious ideas, also played a major role in the rise of the capitalist society

Social stratification: Class, Status, and Party

- According to Weber, markets rather than class were the basis for class stratification
- Weber saw class divisions, not just as a reflection of economic divisions, but also of social standing in society. He referred to this as *status*.

Georg Simmel and Social Interaction

- He is noted for introducing emphasis on social interaction as a central issue in sociology
- This had a major influence on the development of the sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism
- His view of society is not that of an external structure imposed on passive individuals, but rather the result of a patterned web of interactionism.

Harriet Martineau: An early (feminism) sociologist

- Harriet subscribed to the view that a science of society would be a 'key to understanding societal change and the uncertainties of the age'.
- One of the first sociologists to examine women and what she termed the 'domestic state'
- She believed that the way society treated women was one of the key measures for understanding the 'universal law of happiness' that she considered a basic and inalienable human right.

WEEK 2:

Abstract:

- Participants in focus groups are asked to nominate and account for what they thought of as 'UnAustralian' people, places, values, activities, groups and organisations.

Introduction:

- 'UnAustralian'. This word emerged into common Australian usage during the late 1990's.
- Attempts by moral arbiters to condemn 'the other' as 'UnAustralian' can be seen as part of a larger 'symbolic struggle over the production of common sense'
- The closest parallel to the 'UnAustralian' would seem to be the 'UnAmerican'
- Webster's dictionary defines this quality in the following terms: 'Not having characteristics of persons or things native to the United States; lacking in patriotism and national feeling toward the United States; not consistent with American ideals, objectives, spirit, etc.'
- The term entered the language with a distinctive political inflection
- Its initial narrow, technical definition was to tag persons, groups and activities which were deemed to threaten national security.
- 'UnAustralian' not inscribed in the official lexicon in a formal sense, it is sorely neglected as a subject for research and analysis.
- Early usage of the term 'UnAustralian' served primarily as a boundary-maintaining discursive player through which the right could allege sedition, subversion and disloyalty.
- Pauline Hanson, Donald Horne, Cheryl Kernot were interviewed for their views on the meaning and application of the label 'UnAustralian'.
- The majority of those asked were uncomfortable with the term, suggesting that it operated as a cloak for racism and social exclusion

Results:

'UnAustralian' People

- The individuals most consistently chosen as 'UnAustralian' were Pauline Hanson and Christopher Skase.
- You have to be 'Australian' in order to be 'UnAustralian'