

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

AN AFRICANIST PERSPECTIVE

Edited by
Ali A. Abdullahi, Ph.D. & Emmanuel M. Ajala, Ph.D.

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Ali A. Abdullahi, Ph.D.

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Ali Arazeem Abdullahi
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CHAPTER ONE

FOUNDATION OF SOCIOLOGY

Ali A. Abdullahi & Moshood Issah

The discipline of Sociology belongs to a body of knowledge conventionally known as anthropocentric, 'humankind-centred' or the Social Sciences (Gunaratne, 2009). The social science disciplines are poised to understand different dimensions of human behaviour in a scientific way. Among the most popular social science disciplines in this part of the world are Sociology, Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Psychology and Social Work. The social sciences operate within the scientific realm, hence, deploy scientific principles to explain why human beings behave the way they do. Each of these sciences, however, focuses on a specific aspect of human behaviour. For example, Economics studies the behaviour of consumers and producers within limited resources; Political Science studies how scarce resources are distributed or allocated in the society while Psychology studies the mental processes of individuals. Unlike other social sciences, Sociology focuses attention on several aspects of human behaviour. Among the interests of sociologists are how humans interact with one another and how this interaction influences their behaviours; how socio-cultural contexts affect human perception (particularly their ethnocentric tendencies) and how human actions affect the environment and vice versa (for instance, the climate change phenomenon).

From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that Sociology is a very diverse and multifaceted field of study; so diverse that virtually every social reality is believed could be studied through sociological lens: health and illness, human relations, social change, development, globalisation, crime and delinquency. The International Sociological Association (ISA) has identified about 50 specialised domains in Sociology (see the ISA website). However, these areas of specialisation often overlap. For example, there could be an overlap between Medical Sociology and Sociology of Development. There could also be an overlap between Criminology, Sociology of Development and Medical Sociology. There is also an organic interconnection between Industrial Sociology and Development Sociology. Some authors have even argued that there is always a thin line of difference between these areas of specialisation because issues of concern in the subfields do overlap. For instance, crime and environment are issues of concern not only to environmental sociologists but also criminologists.

In this chapter, therefore, we discuss the foundation of Sociology by examining some of the important concerns of Sociology as a profession and an academic field of study. The chapter examines different shades of definitions of Sociology and the major sociological theories that have dominated the sociological space over the years. A distinction is drawn between contemporary and classical Sociology as well as micro and macro Sociology, albeit briefly. The chapter also introduces the reader to the various sub-fields of Sociology as a discipline, perhaps, to justify why Sociology is often regarded as the 'Queen' of the social sciences. It also examines Sociology as a science. The chapter concludes with career prospects and opportunities for graduates of Sociology, both within and outside Africa.

WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

Different scholars have defined Sociology in different ways. Hence, there is no single, universally-acceptable definition of Sociology. In this chapter, we begin to describe Sociology from the etymological point of view. This is important because from this perspective, we can easily decipher what Sociology stands for and what sociologists do. Etymologically, Sociology is derived from one Latin word, *Socius* (which means 'companionship') and one Greek word, *logos*, (which means 'study of'). From these two words, Sociology is, thus, 'the study of companionship' or 'the study of social interactions or relationships'. As sociologists, we study group dynamics, human behaviours and social actions. We study the origin, evolution and organisation of human societies, whether simple or complex, primitive or modern, rural or urban.

There are different scholarly definitions of Sociology. George Simmel (1858-1918) sees Sociology as the study of human interrelationship (Turner, 2007). Max Weber, (pronounced 'Veber') sees Sociology as the imperative understanding of social actions (Calvert, 1995). Tischler (1996, p. 4) defines Sociology as 'the scientific study of human society and social interactions'. To others, Sociology is the study of social networks. It is an attempt to understand the strange and the familiar, social structures and processes, social institutions and social phenomena that are embedded in human societies and which determine its internal dynamics (Ashley & Orestein, 1995). Of recent, Amzat & Razum (2014, p.1), define Sociology 'as the scientific study of the dynamics of society and their intricate connection to patterns of behaviour'. For them, Sociology is concerned with understanding how social structures interact to

influence human actions and how the patterns of social existence engender social problems.

Similarly, Auguste Comte is regarded as one of the *founding fathers* of Western Sociology. He made an attempt to define Sociology and demarcate areas of interest to sociologists. He argues that Sociology studies two different but interrelated phenomena, also known as Sociology's dual mandate, which are *social static* and *social dynamics*. According to Comte, *social static* studies the forces that bind society together, while *social dynamics* studies the causes of social change (Ferrante, 2013). Explanations on social static suggest that social facts are timeless and have universal features. Examples of social static are basic social institutions such as the family, politics, and education. Social dynamics has to do with the specific cultural arrangements used in different societies to manage the social static. For instance, a political institution is static, but political arrangements such as militarianism, democracy and dictatorship are social dynamics because they are relative to time, context, period and place.

Therefore, it can be summed up from these definitions that Sociology studies human interactions in any given society or group and concerns itself with how these interactions influence human actions - from classroom lecture halls to race-courses and the markets. As a science of human society, Sociology has special interest in providing answers to ontological, epistemological and methodological questions. Ontological questions bother on the nature of social reality while epistemological questions centre on the nature of knowledge and the 'truth'. The methodological question is concerned with methods of investigation; how a sociologist goes about studying whatever he or she believes can be studied or known (i.e. the methodology of epistemology and ontology). Specifically, the methodological question bothers more on the strategies and plans of action behind the choice and use of particular methods, linking the choice and use of the methods to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 2003, p.3). In summary, epistemological and methodological assumptions revolve around step by step explanations of how someone that claims knowledge of the 'ontology' of a phenomenon came about such knowledge.

SOCIOLOGICAL THINKERS

Two kinds of sociologists have been delineated: classical and contemporary sociological thinkers. Classical sociological thinkers are the first generation of sociologists immortalised as the *founding fathers* of 'Western' Sociology. These individual thinkers are believed to have laid the foundation of sociological

discourses and theorising. They are seen as the pioneers of modern Sociology. Their theories and analyses of human society radiated and continue to do so more than a century after many of them had passed on. For instance, Auguste Comte (1798-1857) is seen as a pioneer founder of the *positivist ideology* and Sociology in general while Max Weber (1864-1920) is credited to have propounded one of the finest theories of bureaucracy, religion and capitalism. Weber's Theory of Bureaucracy and methods of investigation have continued to gain momentum even among modern social scientists. The name, Karl Marx (1818-1883), resonates when we talk about *historical materialism, class consciousness*, class struggle and his critical stance on religion as the *opium of the masses* as well as his criticisms of the capitalist mode of production.

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) also remains one of the most brilliant sociologists Europe has ever produced. He is credited to have established the first Department of Sociology in Europe and to have been a very strong advocate and founder of *structural functionalism* (Ashley & Orestein, 1995). Emile Durkheim was essentially concerned with how institutional arrangements are interconnected to maintain cohesion and stability in the society. His theories of anomie and suicide remain classic and admirable to social scientists of our time. His four types of suicide (egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic) are still very relevant to the understanding of suicide missions in terrorist attacks anywhere in the world, including Nigeria, where the *Boko Haram* group operates.

Also, Herbert Spencer, a foremost British social organist and a sociologist, made a significant contribution to *structural-functionalism*. He likened human society to a biological organism. As a functionalist, he compared societal evolution to biological evolution. Hence, he was a major contributor to the evolutionary theory. He believed that society moves from being the simple to the complex. This was contained in his theory of Social Darwinism, which he adapted from the work of a renowned biologist, Charles Darwin. Other classical sociologists were William Graham Sumner, Fredrick Engel, Lester F. Ward, W.E.B. DuBois, Vilfredo Pareto, Alexis de Tocqueville, Werner Sombart, Thorstein Veblen, Ferdinard Tonnies, Georg Simmel, Karl Mannheim and Fredrich Engels (Ashley & Orestein, 1995; Ritzer, 2011).

Now the contemporary sociologists. These are the most 'recent', 'modern' sociologists. Some of these theorists hold a very strong allegiance to classical sociological theorists. While some continued to preach the sociological gospels of the *founding fathers* of Sociology, others felt very strongly that classical

sociological theorising was obsolete and as such advanced a new path to modern sociological theorising. They have refined and redefined classical sociological theories to suit the 20th and 21st century experience. Some, however, jettisoned classical theories for new ones. Although controversies still surround the beginning of 'modern' sociological theorising, most sociologists believe that 'modern' sociological theorising might have gained prominence after the demise of *structural functionalism* around 1960s when functionalism was believed to have failed to provide answers to the realities of the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Ritzer, 2011). Prominent among contemporary sociologists are Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Anthony Giddens, Erving Goffman and Jürgen Habermas. Among other theoretical developments within this period were the different strands of feminism, the cultural theory, structuralism, post-structuralism and postmodernism, neo-Marxism, including the dependency theory and orthodox Marxist, as well as the Rational Choice theories. Other important developments were the new methods of scientific investigations such as ethnomethodology and phenomenology (Ritzer, 2011).

MAJOR SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

There are three dominant perspectives in Sociology. They are *structural functionalism*, *conflict perspective* and *symbolic interactionism*. This sub-section discusses these perspectives and how they are used to explain the workings of human society.

- **Structural Functionalism**

Structural-functionalism, also known as Functionalism, is a macro-level sociological tradition. It focuses on how social structures influence social actors (human beings). Structural-functionalists examine both social structure and social functions. They look at the society in terms of how the functions of its parts relate to the whole. They argue that social institutions are organically intersected and each contributes positively to the sustainability of the whole. In Europe, Durkheim and Spencer were leading structural-functionalists in Sociology. It was Durkheim who elevated the status of functionalism in the 19th century Europe. Talcott Parsons introduced structural-functionalism to the mainstream Sociology in America. Generally, structural-functionalism is based on these assumptions: (i) structure determines the condition of the whole; (ii) every system has a structure; (iii) there are structural laws governing and influencing co-existence; and (iv) structures are the tangibles that determine the viability of human existence (Assiter, 1984, p. 272).

Talcott Parsons, an American sociologist at Harvard University then, was one of the most influential pioneer of contemporary structural-functionalism. Parsons saw society as a system of interdependent parts working together to maintain stability. He argued that stability, harmony and slow change were the central assumptions of functionalism. He demonstrated this in his AGIL Schema where AGIL means Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration and Latency and Pattern Maintenance. He used the AGIL paradigm to analyse social systems and subsystems (McNeil, 1981). He opined that for a social system to survive and maintain equilibrium, it must have the capacity to adapt to its environment (Adaptation), attain its goals (Goal Attainment), integrate its components (Integration), and maintain its latent pattern (Latency and Pattern Maintenance). These are what he called *functional imperatives* or functional prerequisites of social systems and each of these functions is strategically and systematically allotted to each of the social institutions in the society. For instance, the function of adaptation is usually performed by economic institutions (i.e. the exploitation of natural resources and production of commodities for the survival of the members of the society); the function of goal attainment is performed by political institutions, which set the agenda and goals for the society; the function of social integration is allocated to religious and media institutions. For instance, most religions preach the importance of peaceful coexistence while media institutions are believed to broadcast and publish news and commentaries that are supposed to promote social unity and solidarity). The function of latency and pattern maintenance is performed by the family and educational institutions through the transmission of cultural norms and values from one generation to another. Through this interconnectivity, society maintains equilibrium and stability and, as a result, becomes predictable.

For many years, *structural-functionalism* was the dominant sociological theory (Ritzer, 2011). However, it started to wane from the 1960s to the 1980s (Chriss, 1995) and has attracted a lot of enemies. For example, Colomy (1990) describes *structural-functionalism* as a mere theoretical tradition, with little empirical relevance in analysing contemporary social phenomena owing to its failure to systematically analyse social change. For instance, rather than binding people together and promoting unity among them, experience has shown that the media and religion could be sources of disunity and restiveness. Recall that the media was instrumental to the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Other critics feel that functionalism supports the statusquo, e.g. the capitalist mode of production with its exploitative tendencies. For Moore (1966; 1978, p. 321) *structural-functionalism* had 'become an embarrassment in contemporary theoretical

sociology'. Efforts by disciples of Talcott Parsons such as Robert K. Merton to rescue *structural functionalism* were not sufficient to redeem the image of this theory. Nevertheless, some indigenous African theorists still believe, albeit wrongly, that functionalism is still relevant to understanding the interconnectivity in social arrangements despite its deficiencies.

- **Conflict Perspective**

The Conflict Theory emerged, as an alternative analytical and theoretical construct to *structural-functionalism*, to provide answers to the unresolved sociological questions which the *structural-functionalist* perspective could not answer. It opposes virtually all the assumptions of the *structural-functionalist* theory, including value consensus and social equilibrium. The Conflict Theory has a very long history in Sociology. It is rooted in the works of early sociologists like Karl Marx, Max Weber and George Simmel (Sanderson, 2001; Turner, 2005). Marx's vision of society was informed by his preoccupation with the conflicts between social classes within changing social structures and productive relations based on historical materialism (Schaefer, 1989). The popular quotation by Karl Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*, that 'the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle' might have laid the foundation for the Conflict Theory and, specifically, Marxism. Marx argues that the relationship between the owners of the means of production (the bourgeoisies) and labour (the proletariats) has always been exploitative. Recent conflict theorists have used the theory to explain racism and the inherent conflicts between unequal entities or people such as men and women (feminism).

However, the Conflict Theory also has inherent limitations, which hampered its total acceptability and application to virtually all social phenomena. One basic problem with the theory is that it never succeeded in divorcing itself sufficiently from its structural-functional roots (Ritzer, 2011). Both the structural-functional and conflict theories put more emphasis on the system or society as determining human behaviour rather than the individuals. Nevertheless, the Conflict Theory and its variants, particularly Harry Braverman's thesis, has been useful in an understanding of the relationship among the state, capital and labour in contemporary times.

- **Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism is an alternative perspective to the system or evolutionary theories (i.e. both conflict and functionalism). A prominent proponent of symbolic interaction is Herbert Blumer. Blumer produced a corpus of academic literature and scholarly essays to convince the social science community of the need to accept Symbolic Interaction as an alternative to the

system theory. Incidentally, after many attempts and brainstorming, Symbolic Interactionism gained acceptance and recognition among social scientists, particularly sociologists. The theory offers a wide range of interesting and important ideas which previous theories and theorists did not offer (Sandstrom & Kleinman, 2005). Interactionist theorists like Blumer (1969), Manis & Meltzer (1978), Rose (1962) and Snow (2001) enumerated the basic principles of interactionism in order to remove the inherent ambiguities in the theory, occasioned by perceived contradictory contributions by some of the contributors to the theory. These principles include:

- The belief that human beings have the capacity for thought;
- That the capacity for thought is influenced by social interaction;
- That people learn the meanings and symbols that allow them to exercise their distinctively human capacity for thought in social interaction;
- That meanings and symbols allow people to carry on distinctively human actions and interactions;
- That people are able to modify the meanings and symbols they use in action and interaction on the basis of their interpretation of the situation;
- That people are able to make these modifications and alterations as a result, in part, of their ability to interact with one another, which allows them to examine possible courses of action, assess their relative advantages and disadvantages, and then choose one; and
- The belief that intertwined patterns of actions and interactions characterise groups and societies.

There are many symbolic interactionist theorists. Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929) was one of them. He was an iconic figure of symbolic interactionism and became prominent in the early 1900s (Gutman, 1958; Schafer, 1989). Cooley shared the desire of classical sociologists, such as August Comte, Max Weber and Karl Max, to learn more about society. But unlike them, Cooley preferred to use sociological perspective to look at smaller units, intimate, face-to-face groups such as families, gangs and friendship networks. These groups, according to Cooley, represent "the seedbeds of society in the sense that they shape people's ideals, beliefs, values and social nature' (Schaefer, 1989 p. 16). Symbolic interactionism became dominant at the Chicago School (see Ritzer, 2011). Despite its influence, Symbolic Interactionism has been criticised for putting too much emphasis on the social units than on the system. This, notwithstanding, Symbolic Interactionism has held sway in contemporary sociology, as it continues

to influence modern sociological thinking, including ethnomethodology and phenomenology.

MICRO- VERSUS MACRO-SOCIOLOGY

Modern Sociology has drawn a distinction between 'macro' and 'micro' Sociology or what in other climes is known as the 'structure' and 'agency' debate. Modern Sociology makes this distinction in order to comprehend how humans relate with their society. Micro-Sociology (the agency), on the one hand, argues that the human being is not a *tabula rasa*. Hence, Micro-Sociology studies individual agencies and the analysis of small groups within a social system. Micro-Sociology is concerned with how individuals influence the society; how individuals become active agents of change and are constantly changing the social system and the structure of the society. Instead of focusing on macro issues like culture, micro sociologists focus on micro matters such as groups of lesbians and gays or any other smaller group. Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead made very useful contributions to Micro-Sociology and are usually regarded as its founders. They were among the foremost micro-sociologists. They contributed very profoundly to the founding of Sociology as an academic field of study in America at the University of Chicago in 1894 (Miller, 2009). These two intellectual gurus were the brains behind the founding of *symbolic interactionism* as one of the dominant sociological perspectives.

Macro-Sociology (the structure), on the other hand, is an aspect of Sociology that deals with the analysis of the impact of the social structure on individual social actions or behaviours; how individual actions are shaped by culture, institutional and group norms. The structural/system theorists, who espoused functionalist and conflict perspectives, see human behaviour from this angle. They argue that human beings are constrained by societal dictates. For instance, Durkheim spoke about *social facts* as against *psychological facts*, as symbols of external constraints. According to him, "social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time, existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations" (Appelrouth & Edles, 2007, p. 99). For instance, people are usually constrained to behave or not behave in a certain way because they belong to a particular religious group or sect. A Muslim detests pork because it is against his or her religious doctrine. According to macro-sociologists, this is how the society constrains people.

It is imperative to mention that most macro sociologists are also evolutionary theorists. Evolutionary sociologists believe that society moves from the simple to the complex; Durkheim's distinction between *mechanical* or *organic* solidarity, Tonnies' distinction between *gemeinchaft* and *geselchaft*, Marx's analysis of societal development from slavery, feudalism to capitalism and his prediction of the communist system alluded to their evolutionary ideas. In a nutshell, while Micro-Sociology tries to understand how people shape the society, Macro Sociology focuses on understanding how society shapes people (Tischler, 1996).

However, instead of focusing on Micro and Macro-Sociology, most 'modern' or contemporary sociologists are of the view that Sociology has moved beyond the micro/macro debate. Hence, they have tried to fuse both macro and micro Sociology. For them, contemporary Sociology must engage in both local and global debates and invent sophisticated scientific instruments and 'not retreat into relativism' (Walby, 1998 cited from Abdullahi & Salawu, 2012, p. 25). A good example of a 'modern' sociologist who has made this attempt of fusing micro and macro Sociology is Anthony Giddens. Giddens (1984) tried to integrate both the structure and agent 'divides' in the social analysis of creation and recreation of social systems. He argued that neither 'structure' nor 'agency' is, independently, sufficient to understand social processes in the creation and recreation of social systems. He submitted that the combination or integration of the two 'divides' is essential for the holistic social analysis of social actions. Giddens was unequivocal in his argument that social practices, social behaviour and phenomena are products of the interplays of structures and agents. This, according to Stones (2005), is a balanced position in the sociological analysis of society that modern sociologists must try to emulate and practice.

SOCIOLOGY AS A SCIENCE

Sociology is believed to be a science. This is because sociologists use scientific investigation in the process of trying to understudy human behaviour. Sociologists are expected to follow the basic principles of science. In other words, they are expected to be objective and neutral, without any preconceived, judgmental premonitions about what they study. They are to study things the way they are and not the way they think they ought to be. But, over the years, the methods used by sociologists in conducting research has been refined and expanded. The contemporary research methods that sociologists use in conducting empirical studies are broadly divided into quantitative and qualitative research. The simplest way to distinguish between the two is that researchers

who conduct quantitative research collect and analyse data in the form of numbers while qualitative researcher collect data verbatim.

Thus, some authors have used the concept of the research onion to explain the research process, procedures and methods in Sociology. The research onion was developed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornill (2007). It gives an appropriate picture of the effective transition and progression within which a research can be planned and designed. According to Bryman (2012), the importance of the research onion concept cannot be over-emphasised. It is quite adaptable and applicable to a variety of research contexts. The research onion has six layers with specific research themes. Each of the layers is explained in terms of their adaptability and applicability to sociological research (Figure 1).

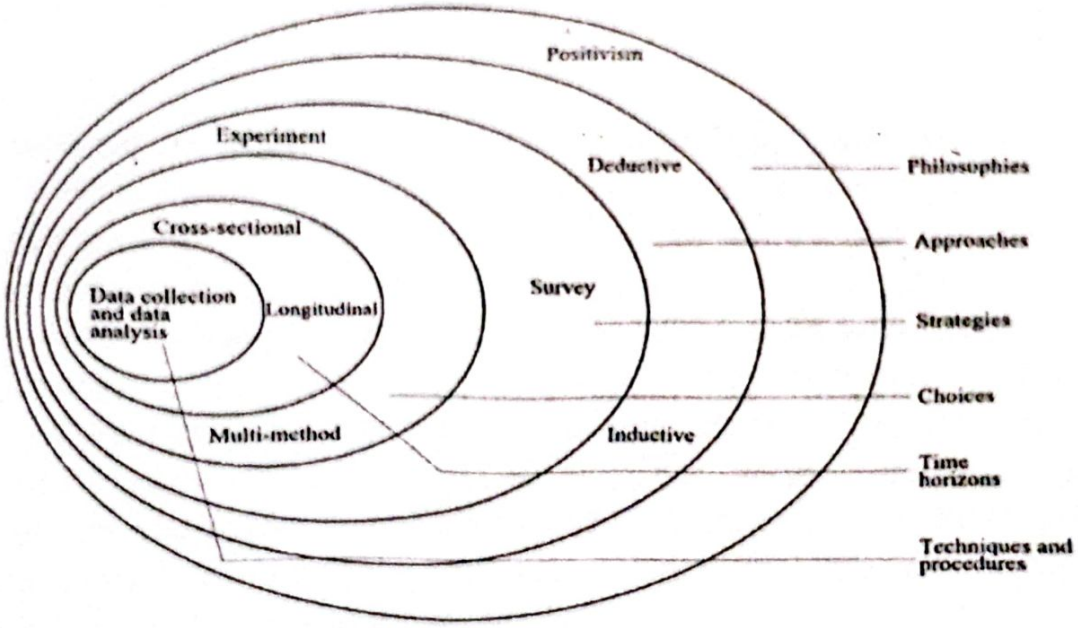


Figure 1: Research Onion

Source: Saunders, Lewis & Thornill (2007)

Layer 1: Research Philosophy

This is concerned with the researcher's view of the world or assumptions about human knowledge or the nature of realities. How a researcher views the world or realities determines the questions to be asked and the research design to be chosen. Specifically, this layer contains the philosophical underpinning of the research which deals with the ontology and epistemology of research. While ontology is the nature of the reality or phenomena, epistemology is the knowledge about the reality or phenomena. From the onion, three aspects of ontology are delineated. These are: objectivism, constructivism and realism. Objectivism, on the one hand, means that realities or phenomena and their

meanings exist outside the social actors. This implies that social phenomena are real and exist out there. Subjectivism, on the other hand, means that the phenomena or realities are constructed by actors. This means that laws, norms, values and other social phenomena are created and recreated by social actors within social groups. Lastly, realism is somewhat similar to objectivism in that both ontological approaches believe that social actors are independent of the phenomena under study. Thus, the possibility of biases occurring is extremely limited. However, where they differ is that realists doubt the authenticity and accuracy of scientific methods. To a realist, scientific methods are not as perfect as they think they are. Therefore, in order to arrive at the valid knowledge about reality, we have to continue researching and open our minds to new methods of research. Based on this orientation, realists are more likely to combine several research methods in order to arrive at a more valid and reliable research outcome.

Just like ontology, epistemology also has three faces. These are positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism. Positivism, on the one hand, is based on the idea that phenomena are real and independent of the actors or the researcher. Consequently, knowledge about phenomena can be derived or obtained in the same way the natural scientists study physical objects. It follows the tradition of ontological objectivism, which states that phenomena are real and exist out there. Interpretivism, on the other hand, is based on the idea that phenomena are constructed, created and could be recreated by social actors. Thus, knowledge about phenomena can be obtained through the use of humanistic methods that would allow us to uncover the ways social actors create or construct a given phenomenon, and the meanings they attach to such phenomena. Finally, pragmatism regards both positivism and interpretivism as valid approaches to research. The implication of this research philosophy in sociological research is that epistemological positivists are more likely to adopt quantitative research methodology and epistemological interpretivists are more likely to adopt qualitative research methodology while epistemological pragmatists are more likely to apply mixed methodologies or methodological triangulation in their studies. Figure 2 describes the philosophy of research.

Layer 2: Research Approaches

The research approach can either be inductive or deductive. On the one hand, the deductive approach attempts to refine, confine or debunk a theory. A researcher adopting this approach moves through the following research sequence: theory - hypotheses formulation – observation or data collection –

confirmation – then confirmation, refinement, revision or rejection of the theory. On the other hand, inductive approach attempts to construct or build a new theory. In this approach, the research topic and the research questions are not derived from an established theory. A researcher adopting this approach moves through the following sequence (which may be derived through experience or any other sources other than an established theory): research questions – research hypotheses - observation or data collection – emerging patterns or themes from the data collected or phenomenon observed – development of new theory – then examination or evaluation of this theory in line with the observed phenomenon or data collected about the phenomenon.

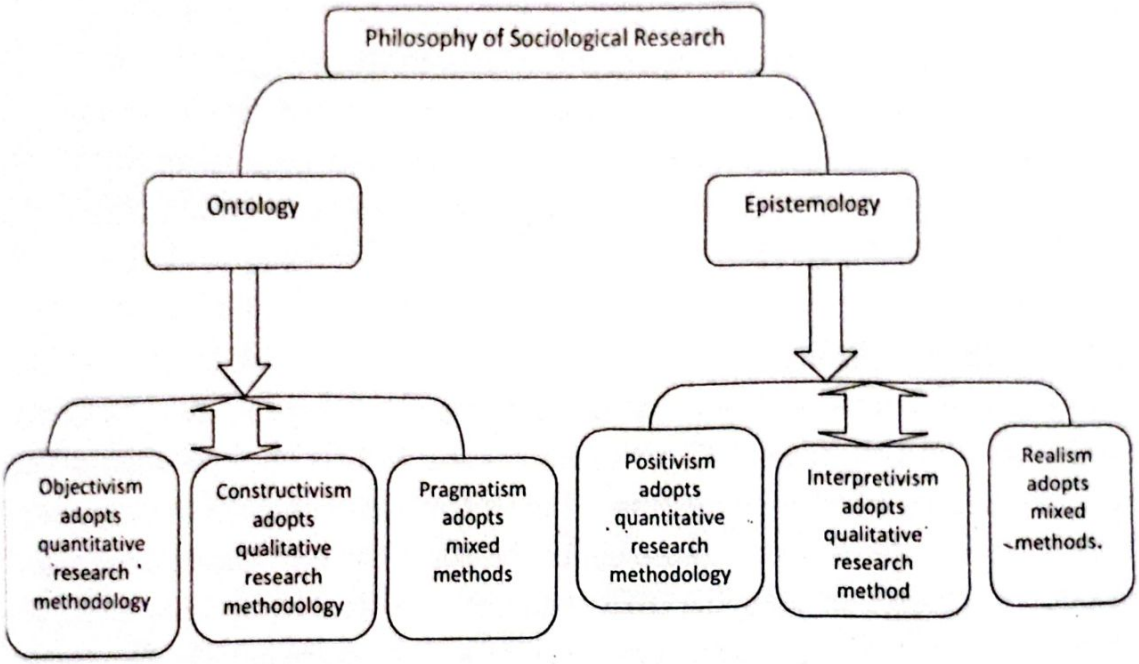


Figure 2: Philosophy of Research
Source: Developed by authors

Layer 3: Research Strategies

This layer deals with the strategies for collecting data about the phenomenon under study. Here, a sociologist can use a wide range of data collection strategies. These include the experimental method, survey method, action research and ethnography. It should be noted that the philosophical stance and research approach that the researcher chooses determines the research strategies that he or she will adopt. For instance, a researcher that adopts epistemological positivism is more likely to adopt the experimental method while a researcher that uses epistemological interpretivism is more likely to adopt grounded theory or ethnography as a research strategy. Also, a researcher working with the deductive research approach may use the survey method as

research strategy while a researcher working with the inductive research approach may use grounded theory or ethnography as research strategies.

Layer 4: Research Choices

There are three options from which a researcher can mchoose during data collection stage: (i) Mono-method; (ii) Mixed methods; and (iii) Multi-methods. The mono-method involves the use of either the quantitative (questionnaire) or qualitative method (focus group discussion) in a research. The mixed methods involve using both qualitative (Focus Group Discussion) and quantitative (questionnaire) methods in a research. The multi-method has to do with using several methods in a research. For instance, in a study, a researcher may use several methods such as archival, ethnography, observation, document analysis, interviews and questionnaire in order to answer his/her research questions. Usually, the research philosophy, research approaches and research strategies adopted by the researcher determine his/her research choices. For instance, ontological realists and epistemological pragmatists are more likely to adopt the mixed or multi method research option.

Layer 5: Time Horizons

There are two time horizons that a researcher can choose from: (i) Cross-section and (ii) Longitudinal. Cross-section research is for the short-term. This type of research is common because it can be concluded on time. In this type of time horizon, a researcher can use either the quantitative or qualitative method or both. A researcher using the cross-sectional time horizon can study an aspect of behaviour of many groups or individuals at a single point in time. Also, he or she can study a given phenomenon that affects many individuals or groups at a single point in time. A researcher using the longitudinal time horizon studies events, phenomena and behaviour using specific individuals or groups (sample) over a long period of time, say ten years.

Layer 6: Data Collection and Analysis

Data for a study are gathered through the data collection instrument decided at layer 3, which in turn are influenced by the decisions that the researcher made at layers 1 and 2. These data may be quantitative or qualitative. Generally, data collection instruments may include questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, observation and experimentation. Usually, the method or methods of data collection used as well as the nature of the data determine the method of data analysis that will be adopted by the researcher. For instance, questionnaires, structured interviews and experimentation go with data analysis involving

descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentages, bar charts, pie charts, among others and inferential statistical tools such as correlation coefficient, regression analysis and ANOVA. On the other hand, qualitative data obtained through focus group discussions (FGD), in-depth interviews and unstructured or semi-structured interviews may be analysed using content or thematic analysis or both or any other qualitative analytical techniques or tools.

SUB-FIELDS IN SOCIOLOGY

As observed from the beginning of the chapter, Sociology is a multifaceted discipline. It covers a wide range of issues. The following are the sub-fields in Sociology:

- **Sociology of Work and Industrial Sociology**

Sociology of Work and Industrial Sociology's development has been traced to the 19th century Industrial Revolution that swept across Europe. The consequences of this revolution provided a wide range of interesting issues which experts in this sub-field had to contend with. Among issues of concern to both Sociology of Industry and Sociology of Work are "the direction and implications of trends in technological changes, globalisation, labour markets, work organisations, management practices and employment relations and how these trends intimately relate to changing patterns of inequality in modern societies and the changing experiences of individuals and families and the ways in which workers challenge, resist and make their own contributions to the patterning of work and shaping of work institutions" (Watson, 2008, p.392). Key areas in this sub-field are the history of industrialisation, the implications of the industrial revolution on industrial development, patterns of industrial relations, labour processes, classical and contemporary management theories and perspectives in labour processes, trade unionism and industrial conflicts.

- **Sociology of Education**

This is a sub-field of Sociology that deals with the educational institution. Specialists in this sub-field are concerned with how educational institutions determine or influence social structure and other social outcomes. According to Scott & Marshall (2005), educational sociologists are specifically concerned with the schooling systems and school patterns of modern industrial societies. They are more concerned with the socio-economic impacts on the educational performance of students. Important issues in this sub-field are educational institutions as agents of socialisation, education and cultural development, history and goal of education, sociological perspectives on education, manifest and latent functions of educational institutions, traditional and modern educational systems, education and racial and ethnic inequalities, gender and education, social class

and education, teaching as a profession and the state of education and educators in contemporary societies. Unfortunately, in most universities in Nigeria, educational sociologists are usually domiciled in the Faculty of Education, operating independent of the Department of Sociology within the same University without any form of interaction. Most people see this as an aberration.

- **Environmental Sociology**

This is a relatively new sub-field of Sociology. It is concerned with the study of human interactions with the natural environment. It emphasises how humans contribute to environmental problems, the social impacts of these problems and efforts at resolving them. Environmental sociologists examine the processes through which environmental problems become defined and known to humans. According to John Bellamy Foster, the Marx's analysis of 'Metabolic Rift' was quite seminal in the development of Environmental Sociology. Metabolic rift was developed by Marx to describe the "irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism" (Marx, 1981, p. 949). Social metabolism or socio-economic metabolism is the set of flows of materials and energy that occur between nature and society and between different societies. The flow of materials and energy involves five processes each of which has an environmental impact, depending on the manner in which they are performed, the amount of materials or energy appropriated, the area covered by the operations and the capacity of the area to regenerate after the appropriation of materials. Some of the important issues in Environmental Sociology include environmental problems and human populations, population growth and environmental degradation, environmentalism and the environmental justice movement, urbanisation and environment, environmental hazards, technology and biodiversity, mining and environmental collapse, forest management, climate change as well as theories on Environmental Sociology.

- **Criminology and Penology**

This sub-field of Sociology is concerned with the analysis of the nature, causes and control of criminal activities in human societies. Emile Durkheim's ideas on the social functions of punishment and Robert K. Merton's work on the Sociology of Deviance are considered seminal in this sub-field. Specialists in this sub-field usually focus on the action or behaviour that violates laws or societal norms. They are also interested in the informal violation of cultural norms and values. The fundamental questions they often ask are: Why do cultural norms exist? How did they evolve? How did they change over time? How are they enforced? Themes in this sub-field include typology of crime, deviance and delinquency, theories of crime, sociological perspectives of crime, measurement of crime, universality and relativity of crime, criminalistics and forensic

criminology, crime statistics, principles and application of criminal laws, criminal justice system, informal security structures, treatment and rehabilitation of offenders, theories of punishment, forms of punishment, prison systems and law enforcement agencies. The traditional practice in Nigerian universities is for Criminology to be subsumed under the Department of Sociology. However, many universities are beginning to move away from the old tradition by establishing departments of Criminology and Security Studies (the case of the University of Ilorin) or awarding B.Sc. Criminology and Penology within the Department of Sociology (the case of Bayero University, Kano).

- **Sociology of Law**

Sociology of Law is one of the major components of Classical Sociology. Durkheim did an excellent work in the description of law as the 'visible symbol' of social solidarity (Benakar, 2009). Sociology of Law is both a sub-field of Sociology as well as an approach in the field of legal studies. As a sub-field of Sociology, it examines the interplay of law with other components or elements of society. The key questions asked by sociologists of law are these: How and why do legal institutions evolve? What are their roles in the society? How do they influence society as a whole or its components? What are the influences of legal institutions on change? Key issues in Sociology of Law include the following: law as a mechanism of social control and as a field of knowledge, law and society, civil rights and fundamental human rights, gender and law, ethnic, racial groupings and laws and sociological perspectives of law.

- **Digital Sociology**

Digital Sociology is a sub-field of Sociology that focuses on the understanding of the use and application of the digital media in everyday life and how digital technologies influence or contribute to the patterning of human behaviour, social interactions and relationships as well as self-concepts. Ruppert, Law & Savage (2013) argue that digital technologies influence the mediation and configuration of social institutions, social relationships as well as sociological research. The ultimate interests of digital sociologists are the analysis and examination of the influence of digital technologies on key social institutions like the family, education and politics. Wynn (2009) authored the first academic article on'Digital Sociology'. He entitled it "Digital Sociology: Emergent Technologies in the Field and the Classroom". In this article, Wynn examined ways through which digital technologies can influence both teaching and research. Also, Richard Neal extended the focus of Digital Sociology in his book entitled "Expanding Sentience: Introducing Digital Sociology for moving beyond Metrics in a World of Growing Online Socialisation" published in 2010.

Another important dimension in Digital Sociology is the Sociology of the Internet. Interestingly, the Internet serves several purposes for sociologists. It is a tool for research and a discussion platform (Wilson, 2004). The interest of sociologists of the internet is usually on the analysis of the online communities such as newsgroups, social networking sites as well as the virtual worlds. Sociologists of the Internet may use network analysis (quantitative methods) or virtual ethnography or cyber ethnography or online ethnography to study online communities. It is fundamentally concerned with the study of how communities and cultures are created through social interaction on the Internet known as netnography.

- **Architectural Sociology**

This is one of the emerging sub-fields in Sociology. It is concerned with the study of built environment and the roles of architects in modern industrial societies. Sociology studies people while architecture has to do with the design of structures for the people to live. However, creating and designing structures for people to live in usually depend on their choices and culture. Architecture has aesthetic, engineering and social dimensions. Thus, architectural sociologists are more concerned with the social dimension of architecture. This is because the built environment consists of designed structures and the activities of people. These two constituents are interrelated and inseparable. So, the goal of an architectural sociologist is to understand this interrelationship and interdependence. Architectural Sociology is built on the idea that social institutions need functional and conducive buildings in order to ensure that the people using them perform their social roles efficiently. The major concern of architectural sociologists is that buildings should be designed in such a way that they meet the needs of their occupants as well as the society within which it is situated.

- **Visual Sociology**

Visual Sociology was first established in 1983 when the International Visual Sociology Association (IVSA) was created. Visual Sociology is the application of images and other visuals in the analysis of society and culture. It has two fundamental aspects: i) it involves the use of visual methods in social research and ii) it is concerned with the meanings and denotations of a culture's visual representations. The first aspect is the use still and moving pictures to substantiate the researcher's arguments or data obtained from the field. Social researchers tend to use photographs as data to complement other data sources. The importance of using photographs as alternative data source was reflected in the work of Becker (1974) in his paper entitled "Photography and Sociology".

- **Medical Sociology**

This subfield of Sociology is one of the most popular areas of specialisation in Sociology in Nigeria. Medical Sociology focuses on the inner workings of medical organisations. The ultimate interests of medical sociologists are the nexus between socio-cultural factors and human health. Other areas include medical pluralism, personal and social determinants of health and illnesses, doctor-patient relationships, nurse-patient relationship, social relationship and stratification in health institutions, socio-cultural components of women's health, the hospital as a social institution, technology and the sociology of health care, traditional versus modern health care delivery systems, sociological perspectives on health institutions, mental health, differences between illness and disease, illness behaviour, social effects of, and public attitude towards illnesses, diseases, mental health and disabilities.

- **Military Sociology**

Military Sociology is concerned with a systematic study of the military as a social group, rather than as an organisation. It is a highly specialised sub-field of Sociology. It became an academic field of study after World War II and the Cold War, even though the relationships between the society and the military predate these two global events. The key areas in this sub-field include civilian-military relations, relationship between military organisation, military and government agencies, homosexuality in the military, minorities in the military, women in the military, religion in the military, political control of the military, the military as a social institution, the military and the society, the military as a total institution, functions and organisation of the military, the origins of modern military organisations, the role of the military in diplomacy and internal relations, war and peace, modern and traditional war systems, the social effects of war, peace-keeping organisations and peace projects and rules of engagement in warfare.

- **Sociology of Terrorism**

This is an emerging sub-field of Sociology that attempts to understand terrorism as a social phenomenon. It also seeks to study how individuals or nations respond to terrorism. The main issues being addressed by specialists in this sub-field include the following: understanding who the real terrorists are and who the real 'freedom fighters' are, the causes and consequences of terrorism, a review of the activities of terrorist organisations, the roles of international organisations in combating terrorism, the role of the military in combating terrorism, sources of finance of terrorist organisations, the mass media and terrorism, religion and terrorism, globalisation and terrorism, case studies of terrorist activities across contexts, the roles of nation-states in combating terrorism and theoretical underpinning in terrorism.

- **Political Sociology**

This is a sub-field of Sociology that deals with relations between the state, power and the citizens. The fundamental questions that most political sociologists often ask are: Why do some people choose to vote and others choose not to? What are the voting patterns and behaviour of people in relation to socio-demographic characteristics of the voters? What are the socio-political formations of the modern state? How social inequality between groups influence politics? What are the power relations between and within social groups?

It is important to note that this subfield of Sociology has moved beyond 'methodological nationalism'. Political sociologists now analyse the role of non-governmental organisations and the role of stateless entities in the modern world. Important topics in Political Sociology include inter-state interactions and human rights, diplomacy, socio-political movements (such as the Civil Rights Movements, Movements for Gay and Lesbian Rights, Anti-AIDS activism), power, authority and legitimacy, political culture and socialisation, political participation and the mass media, political ideologies, evolution and development of modern states, nationalism, post-colonial politics, economic and power elites and international diplomacy.

- **Demography**

Demography is the science of population. It is a sub-field of Sociology that is concerned with the study of population, its composition, size and changes. The important areas in Demography include Social Epidemiology (the study of the spread of disease within a given population), sources, uses and limitations of population data, population census, sample surveys, vital registration, population registers, non-traditional sources of data, international sources of data, availability of population data, basic demographic methods, population growth, population compositions, assumptions, types and functions of the life table, the conventional life table, introduction to migration analysis, population policy, population size, composition and change and how these characteristics impact or are impacted by socio-economic, political and cultural systems. Issues on the Diaspora also concern demographers.

- **Sociology of Religion**

This is the branch of Sociology that is concerned with the backgrounds and developments of religious practices as well as the roles of religion in human society. Sociologists of religion are not concerned with the validity of religious truthfulness. What they are concerned with are the roles of religion in human society. They adopt what Peter L. Berger described as 'Methodological Atheism' (see Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Durkheim was famous for his study on suicide among Roman Catholic and Protestant populations and other social groups in

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1897. In this study, he found that religious ideals, principles and practices played significant roles in the increase or decrease of the rate of suicides. His findings showed that the rate of suicide was higher among the Protestant than Catholic Christians. On the basis of this, he concluded that the causes of suicide are neither psychological nor biological. Rather, they are social, which is where religion comes in. Themes in Sociology of Religion include secularisation and civil religion, the intersection between religion and economics, the roles of religion in a context of globalisation and multi-culturalism, religious conflicts across contexts, liberation theology, the roles of religion in social change, religion and other social institutions as well as religion and exploitation.

- **Urban Sociology**

Urban Sociology is the branch of Sociology that deals with the study of urban or industrial societies. It is concerned with the development of cities as well as its attendant socio-economic and psychological consequences. It also deals with the processes and consequences of industrialisation and urbanisation. George Simmel's work on the 'Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903) is considered relevant and seminal in Urban Sociology. Themes in Urban Sociology include basic structures of urban life, the processes and consequences of urban growth, industrialisation and urbanisation, social problems in industrial societies and theories of urban societies and urbanism.

- **Rural Sociology**

Rural Sociology is the branch of Sociology that deals with the study of rural or non-industrial societies. Specialists in Rural Sociology are concerned with issues such as social organisation at community levels, basic structure of rural societies, settlement patterns in rural communities, social changes in rural communities, social inequality and poverty in rural societies, approaches in rural developmental initiative, rural and urban exchanges, rural migration, the economic, social and political arrangement of rural societies, demographies and demographic transitions in rural societies, women in rural areas, elders in rural areas, agricultural practices in rural areas, ritualism and religions in rural areas. Several chapters in this book examines rural issues in detail.

CAREER PROSPECTS IN SOCIOLOGY

Quite a number of students have no idea of why they study Sociology and what to do after graduation. This often becomes a source of worry not only to the concerned students but even their parents who expect returns from the investment they have made in their children and wards over the years. This section gives an idea of career prospects in Sociology. Prospects and careers in Sociology may however depend on the interest of the student or area of

specialisation. However, let us not forget that, generally, the goal of Sociology is to pique students' curiosity about the social world and then give them the academic tools to understand that world, analyse it and, probably, change it (Chambliss & Eglitis, 2017).

It is evident that graduates of Sociology can work in virtually all areas of the universe where humans are involved. This is because they are supposed to be experts in human relations. Since students of Sociology are trained in human relations, they can work in virtually all sectors in contemporary society. For instance, those Sociology graduates trained in Industrial Sociology and Sociology of Work can work as human resource experts or public relations officers in most organisations such as the banking and manufacturing sectors. Some are employed as supervisors or managers in some of these organisations. By virtue of their training, it is believed that they will be able to efficiently manage workers for the purpose of achieving efficiency in organisations. The employment of Sociology graduates in formal organisations is understandable given the fact that they are taught different organisational and management theories and their applicability. They also know various leadership models, recruitment processes and models of performance appraisal, labour relations, human resource theories and practices and labour laws. They can bring such knowledge to bear on their duties when they are employed as human resource personnel or managers in these organisations.

Graduates of Sociology, particularly those that specialise in Medical Sociology, can also be employed as family planning specialists, HIV educators, rehabilitation officers, substance abuse councilors and social and human services assistants. Their capacity to work in these positions is understandable, given the fact that they are trained in areas such as social medicine, social psychiatry, indigenous medicines, and comparative healthcare delivery systems. They are also grounded in the health belief model and cultural competence theory. They apply these theories/models while helping a patient who needs the professional assistance of medical sociologists (Brook, 2018). Furthermore, medical sociologists can work in the social services departments/units/agencies as rehabilitation counselors, case management workers, youth/elderly services, recreational services, social workers, immigration specialists, migrant workers advocates, advocates of victim of domestic violence, sexual assault response coordinators, worker's rights representatives, peace corps workers, waste management and recycling specialists, communication directors, housing specialists, social and community service managers, education administrators, transportation planners, among

others (see Brook, 2018). However, with the increasing number of social workers in Nigeria, graduates of Sociology may need an additional qualification in Social Work to be able to perform more effectively in the social services departments/units/agencies as rehabilitation counselors, case management workers, youth/elderly services managers, recreational services managers and social workers.

Furthermore, graduates of Sociology who specialise in demography also work as social demographers. These graduates are supposed to be grounded in the techniques of analysing the sources, uses and limitations of population data, population censuses, sample surveys and vital registration. Those who specialise in this sub-field are mostly employed by the National Population Commission (NPC) and Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). They often bring their expertise in population and demographic theories/models to bear on their duties when employed in these agencies. Also, a graduate of Sociology can work in research institutes or government departments/units as a full-time social researcher, data scientist and programme evaluator. However, before they may be employed in these institutes, post-graduate degrees (such as Masters in Sociology or Ph.D. in Sociology) may be required. For instance, Sociology graduates who have higher degrees may be hired by the Ministry of Defense or at Health or health-based non-governmental organisations.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we examined the foundation of Sociology and argued that Sociology is concerned with the scientific study of human interactions and relationships in a society (social structure). The chapter also discusses the major sociological perspectives, the distinction between classical and contemporary sociology and engages in micro-macro sociology debate. It also examines Sociology as a science and discusses the sub-fields of Sociology. Unlike what many students think of Sociology, the chapter argues that Sociology is a very lucrative social science discipline, as graduates of Sociology can work in virtually all sectors of human society because they have the skills and expertise to better understand the diversity in human behaviour. Sociologists can function in industries, ministries, parastatals, governmental and non-governmental organisations. But more importantly, Sociology graduates can decide to be independent consultants in a specific thematic area, which may include environmental sustainability, population and reproductive health and social policies. The onus is therefore on the students of Sociology to decide which area

of Sociology he or she can excel but not forgetting that some areas of Sociology are sometime organically intertwined.

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