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Recommended Citation

Robert C. Bannister. (2001). "Sociology". *Oxford Companion To United States History*. 731-732.
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Sociology.

OUP oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195082098.001.0001/acref-9780195082098-e-1433

Sociology, the study of society, arose in the United States, as in Europe, in response to the problem of social order in modern society in the wake of the American and French revolutions and the rise of industrialization and market capitalism. Whereas Enlightenment theorists viewed society in terms of a “social contract” and a convergence of individual interests, early sociologists sought to identify sources of social order within the forms and structures of society itself.

In the Antebellum Era, the anomaly of chattel slavery in a “free” society inspired George Fitzhugh's *Sociology for the South* (1854) and Henry Hughes's *Treatise on Sociology* (1854). These critiques of northern industrial society were the first American works to employ the term “sociology,” coined by the Frenchman Auguste Comte a decade earlier. Comte also directly influenced various antebellum Utopian reformers in the North. Sociology reemerged after the Civil War in response to industrial conflict, immigration, and urbanization, drawing again on Comte and on the English social theorist Herbert Spencer. In 1875 Yale professor William Graham Sumner (1840–1910) offered the first course titled “Sociology,” assigning Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, then appearing in installments. In his seminal work *Dynamic Sociology* (1884), a synthesis of Comte and Spencer, Lester Ward called for the direction of social policy by state-appointed experts. Sociology also built on empirical and survey work supported by census bureaus, state agencies, and reform organizations, a tradition represented by Jane Addams and others in *Hull House Maps and Papers* (1895) and W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899).

The first departments of sociology were created at the University of Chicago under Albion W. Small in 1892, and at Columbia University under Franklin Giddings two years later. The most important studies written in this period, however, were by professors at Wisconsin, Michigan, and Yale: Edward A. Ross, *Social Control* (1901); Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1902); and Sumner's *Folkways* (1906). In 1895, Small founded the *American Journal of Sociology*, later the official organ of the American Sociological Society (ASS), organized in 1905.

Although prewar sociology was a victim of World War I, the University of Chicago led a major revival in the interwar years. Initially taking shape around the work of Robert Park (1864–1944) and his students, “Chicago sociology” eventually developed diverse approaches defined by individuals and generation. These included Park's urban ecology as outlined in *An Introduction to the Science of Society* (1921), written with Ernest Burgess; a rigorously quantitative sociology, introduced with the appointment in 1927 of William F. Ogburn, author of *Social Change* (1922) and head investigator for *Recent Social Trends* (1932), a report commissioned by President Herbert Hoover; and “symbolic interactionism,” so named in

1937 by Herbert Blumer, building on the work of Chicago philosopher George Herbert Mead. Symbolic interactionism continued to flourish into the post-World War II Era, for example, in Erving Goffman's popular study *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959).

Although the Columbia sociology department declined during the 1920s, its influence continued through the work of its graduates at Minnesota (F. Stuart Chapin), North Carolina (Howard Odum), Pennsylvania (James Lichtenberger and Stuart Rice), and Wisconsin (John Gillin). With Ogburn, also a Columbia graduate, all played important roles in the educational foundations that funded much of interwar sociology, including Robert and Helen Lynd's Middletown (1929), an investigation of Muncie, Indiana, and Gunnar Myrdal and others' An American Dilemma (1944), a classic study of race in America.

The Depression of the 1930s shifted sociologists' focus from the assimilation of immigrants (the Chicago school's specialty) to unemployment and poverty. The Depression also caused a decline in academic funding, jobs, and graduate enrollments. A revolt within the ASS in the mid-1930s effectively ended Chicago's domination of the profession, shifting the balance of power to the East. In 1931 Harvard belatedly created a department of sociology, with Pitirim Sorokin as head and Talcott Parsons as an instructor. In 1941, the arrival at Columbia of Parsons's student Robert Merton and the German émigré Paul Lazarsfeld laid the groundwork for an informal but powerful Harvard-Columbia postwar alliance. Other developments meanwhile sowed the seeds of a revival of sociology under American leadership: increased opportunities for government service; the articulation of the "classical" European sociological tradition in Parsons's *The Structure of Social Action* (1937); and the arrival of many distinguished émigré sociologists.

From 1950 through the mid-1960s, American sociology was dominated by Parsonian functionalism and "systems theory," a modification of Parsons's earlier "action theory" more suited to the consensus mood of the Cold War. Recognizing the weakness of Parsonianism for practical research, Robert Merton in *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1949) called for theories of "the middle range," effecting an influential theory/method compromise. Issues arising from World War II inspired such collaborative efforts as Dorothy S. Thomas et al., *The Spoilage* (1946), a study of the forced evacuation and detention of West Coast Japanese Americans during the war; Samuel Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier* (1949); and Theodore Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950). Sociology reached a wide audience in three critical examinations of the postwar social and economic order: David Riesman's The Lonely Crowd (1950), *White Collar* (1951), C. Wright Mills (1916–1962), and William Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956). As the discipline's influence spread, "status," "norm," "role," and other sociological terms entered the American vocabulary.

Parsonian hegemony, although never unchallenged, was shattered by the mid-1960s as Merton's compromise gave way to a politically charged humanist/positivist divide. Conflict theorists, notably Mills in *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) and Alvin Gouldner in *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (1970) attacked Parsons for ignoring the reality of force

and repression. Symbolic interactionists, phenomenologists, and exchange theorists, meanwhile, took aim at Parsons's rigid model of human behavior and his alleged obliviousness to the complexities of cognition and reality construction. A new breed of positivists, armed with computers and mathematical sophistication, insisted that Parsons's theories be tested empirically—thereby creating new power and influence for themselves. Feminists charged that functionalism reinforced existing gender roles. Outside sociology, sociobiologists raised a specter of biological determinism that most sociologists believed had expired long before. By the end of the 1970s, many within the profession lamented the fragmentation of sociology and spoke of an “interregnum” in the discipline's development. Despite proposals for a postmodern sociology, for example in Zygmunt Bauman's *Intimations of Postmodernity* (1992), these laments continued two decades later.

See also Anthropology; Boas, Franz; Education: The Rise of the University; Feminism; Fifties, The; Professionalization; Sixties, The; Utopian and Communitarian Movements.

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