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a sociological theory is a supposition that intends to consider analyze and or explain objects of social reality from a sociological perspective 14 drawing connections between individual concepts in order to organize and substantiate sociological knowledge learn about fifteen major theories in the field of sociology how to apply them and what makes some of these concepts controversial describe the ways that sociological theories are used to explain social institutions differentiate between functionalism conflict theory and symbolic interactionism figure 1 7 sociologists develop theories to explain social occurrences such as protest rallies a sociological theory seeks to explain social phenomena theories can be used to create a testable proposition called a hypothesis about society allan 2006 theories vary in scope depending on the scale of the issues that they are meant to explain sociological theory publishes work in all areas of theory including new substantive theories history of theory metatheory formal theory construction and synthetic contributions peer reviewed and published quarterly sociological theory is renowned for featuring the best international research and scholarship and is essential reading for a sociological theory seeks to explain social phenomena theories can be used to create a testable proposition called a hypothesis about society allan 2006 theories vary in scope depending on the scale of the issues that they are meant to explain social theory refers to ideas arguments hypotheses thought experiments and explanatory speculations about how and why human societies or elements or structures of such societies come to be formed change and develop over time or disappear a theory is a proposed relationship between two or more concepts often cause and effect sociologists develop theories to explain social phenomena sociological theory is developed at multiple levels ranging from grand theory to highly contextualized and specific micro range theories introduction to sociological theory 1 everyone theorizes about the social world and many other things natural events supernatural possibilities virtually all of the time most generally this means that people think about speculate on social issues sociological theory publishes work in all areas of theory including new substantive theories history of theory metatheory formal theory construction and synthetic contributions peer reviewed and published quarterly sociological theory is renowned for featuring the best international research and scholarship and is essential reading for sociology a social science that studies human societies their interactions and the processes that preserve and change them it does this by examining the dynamics of constituent parts of societies such as institutions communities populations

and gender racial or age groups browse all issues of sociological theory sociological theories may be broadly divided into macro approaches and micro approaches functionalism emphasizes the importance of social institutions for social stability and implies that far reaching social change will be socially harmful instead of a mere chronological account of sociological ideas with biographical notes and ad hoc commentaries the history of social theory aims to delineate how theory and theorizing have been profoundly shaped by changing historical contexts and social structures sociologists study social events interactions and patterns and they develop a theory in an attempt to explain why things work as they do in sociology a theory is a way to explain different this wide ranging handbook presents in depth discussions on the array of subspecialties that comprise the field of sociological theory prominent theorists working in a variety of traditions discuss methodologies and strategies the cultural turn in sociological theorizing interaction processes theorizing from the systemic and macro level sociological theory has developed in three phases classical postclassical and recent an influential postclassical synthesis effort by talcott parsons initially was based upon a thesis of convergence of certain classical theories especially those framed by durkheim and weber sociologists develop theories to explain social phenomena a theory is a proposed relationship between two or more concepts in other words a theory is an explanation for why or how a phenomenon occurs an example of a sociological theory is the work of robert putnam on the decline of civic engagement 1 for a nice introduction to the meaning of sociology with some attention to its historical context read norbert elias what is sociology 1978 for a counter history of sociology that sees its roots in radical activism read joe feagin and hernan vera s liberation sociology 2008 discussions in sociological theory often focus on ontological questions on the nature of social reality against the underlying epistemological realism i argue for a constructivist notion of theory theories are webs of concepts that we use to guide empirical observations and to make sense of them

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