

BRANCHES OF SOCIOLOGY

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Summary

In comparison to many other areas of knowledge, Sociology is not subdivided into a clearly defined set of hierarchically organized separate fields and subfields, but rather constitutes a mosaic of many cognitive areas organized along several different axes and without a clear differentiation of levels. Whereas economics appears to have an agreed separation between macro- and micro-levels, a similar distinction pervades sociology but is far less clear-cut, and sociology includes an intermediate meso-level. Although the disciplinary core of sociology may be relatively secure, its subject-matter specialties impinge into overlap areas with all other areas of social science (and even humanities and natural science) study and so its borders are highly permeable. The classifications of different areas of sociology is only partly based on the subject-matter but also reflect different conceptual approaches and even ideologies or methodologies. As well as providing a conceptual framework for the overall subject-matter of sociology, different areas provide the basis for specialties (and subspecialties) within sociology which are very often the active units for the pursuit of sociological inquiries, with the level of the overall discipline sometimes receiving less attention as a result, or even worse, being subject to decomposition or melt-down as it is ripped apart or abandoned by seceding

specialties.

1. Classifications

This topic is framed by a review of various classification systems which are used to encompass sociological knowledge and its branches. The invention of Sociology by Comte brought with it a schema where it was placed within a hierarchy of sciences. Sociology (divided into statics and dynamics) was seen as crowning a sequence of earlier-developing disciplines on which it depended. Sociology, then became the Queen of the Sciences, not only at the apex of scientific development but also charged with coordinating the development of the whole of prior knowledge.

In both the widely used and now-venerable (they were developed in the mid-19th Century) library classification systems of Library of Congress (LOC) and Dewey, sociology is located within a broad Social Sciences classification. In both, some social sciences material is included in other categories as well. In LOC the Social Sciences follow from separate major classes devoted to philosophy and psychology and then history, geography and anthropology, and is followed by political science, law and education. After subclasses on Statistics and several on economics topics (including demography), Sociology is then followed by several related subclasses on 'societies', the family and communities etc. and then several social policy subclasses. The categories within anthropology are broadly similar to those in the sociology subclass. Closer examination of the Sociology subclass reveals that general, historical, theoretical and methodological topics are covered first, followed by a handful of sections devoted to various major sociological concepts (culture, groups, community etc.).

In the Dewey system sociology and anthropology (excluding the more 'scientific' physical anthropology) are combined. Treatment of sociological topics is crowded into a more limited range – with only 7 subcategories available. These lead the parade of other social sciences, being followed by statistics, political science, economics, law, public administration (including military), social services, education, commerce and customs. More recent classification systems might be expected to better represent the internal structure of Sociology. In particular, the main abstracting service for Sociology (*Sociological Abstracts* or *Sociofile*) has long attempted to play a part in the integration of sociology by providing a classification system of its subject-matters. As this is an evolving classification system there are some oddities as older and newer categorized are harmonized. This classification begins with core areas of sociology (methodology, teaching, history of the discipline, theory) and then covers general macro-sociological and then general micro-sociological topics. The main sequence of the classification covers various areas of society onto which sociological studies might be focused. The final sequence in the classification is to list various applied areas where more policy-relevant sociological research might be carried out. A reworked consolidation of the *Sociofile* classification is presented in Table 1. (The detailed classification is provided in Appendix 2).

| |
|----------------|
| General |
| Methods |
| Social theory |

| |
|---------------------------|
| Sociological Practise |
| Social Policy etc |
| Radical Sociology |
| Specific |
| Social Psychology |
| Cultural Sociology |
| Networks |
| Organisations |
| Social Change |
| Macro-sociology |
| Mass Behaviour |
| Opinions: communications |
| Leisure: sports |
| Transport |
| Political |
| Economic |
| Military |
| Group interactions |
| Stratification |
| Feminist: gender |
| Rural |
| Urban |
| Community: regional |
| Environmental |
| Language: arts |
| Education |
| Religion |
| Social Control |
| Violence |
| Knowledge |
| Science |
| Demography: Human Biology |
| Family: socialisation |
| Health: medicine |
| Applied |
| Social problems: welfare |
| Poverty |

Table 1: Fields within Sociology (based on *Sociological Abstracts*)

| | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|
| 300 | Social sciences |
| 301 | Sociology & anthropology |
| 302 | Social interaction |
| 303 | Social processes |
| 304 | Factors affecting social behavior |
| 305 | Social groups |

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|-----|--|
| 306 | Culture & institutions |
| 307 | Communities |
| 310 | General statistics |
| 314 | General statistics Of Europe |
| 315 | General statistics Of Asia |
| 316 | General statistics Of Africa |
| 317 | General statistics Of North America |
| 318 | General statistics Of South America |
| 319 | General statistics Of other parts of the world |
| 320 | Political science |
| 321 | Systems of governments & states |
| 322 | Relation of state to organized groups |
| 323 | Civil & political rights |
| 324 | The political process |
| 325 | International migration & colonization |
| 326 | Slavery & emancipation |
| 327 | International relations |
| 328 | The legislative process |
| 330 | Economics |
| 331 | Labor economics |
| 332 | Financial economics |
| 333 | Land economics |
| 334 | Cooperatives |
| 335 | Socialism & related systems |
| 336 | Public finance |
| 337 | International economics |
| 338 | Production |
| 339 | Macroeconomics & related topics |
| 340 | Law |
| 341 | International law |
| 342 | Constitutional & administrative law |
| 343 | Military, tax, trade, industrial law |
| 344 | Social, labor, welfare, & related law |
| 345 | Criminal law |
| 346 | Private law |
| 347 | Civil procedure & courts |
| 348 | Law (Statutes), regulations, cases |
| 349 | Law of specific jurisdictions & areas |
| 350 | Public administration |
| 351 | Of central governments |
| 352 | Of local governments |
| 353 | Of U.S. federal & state governments |
| 354 | Of specific central governments |
| 355 | Military science |
| 356 | Foot forces & warfare |

| | |
|-----|---|
| 357 | Mounted forces & warfare |
| 358 | Other specialized forces & services |
| 359 | Sea (Naval) forces & warfare |
| 360 | Social services; association |
| 361 | General social problems & services |
| 362 | Social welfare problems & services |
| 363 | Other social problems & services |
| 364 | Criminology |
| 365 | Penal & related institutions |
| 366 | Association |
| 367 | General clubs |
| 368 | Insurance |
| 369 | Miscellaneous kinds of associations |
| 370 | Education |
| 371 | School management; special education |
| 372 | Elementary education |
| 373 | Secondary education |
| 374 | Adult education |
| 375 | Curriculums |
| 376 | Education of women |
| 377 | Schools & religion |
| 378 | Higher education |
| 379 | Government regulation, control, support |
| 380 | Commerce, communications, transport |
| 381 | Internal commerce (Domestic trade) |
| 382 | International commerce (Foreign trade) |
| 383 | Postal communication |
| 384 | Communications Telecommunication |
| 385 | Railroad transportation |
| 386 | Inland waterway & ferry transportation |
| 387 | Water, air, space transportation |
| 388 | Transportation Ground transportation |
| 389 | Metrology & standardization |
| 390 | Customs, etiquette, folklore |
| 391 | Costume & personal appearance |
| 392 | Customs of life cycle & domestic life |
| 393 | Death customs |
| 394 | General customs |
| 395 | Etiquette (Manners) |
| 398 | Folklore |
| 399 | Customs of war & diplomacy |

Appendix 1: The 300s in the Dewey Classification system

The regular publishing of encyclopedia, handbooks and other collectively-authored reference works reveals their editors' thinking about the organization of sociology and

so consideration of their tables of contents might be useful for revealing the changing organization of knowledge. However, many such publications provide individual entries in an arbitrary order (e.g. alphabetically by title) so that readers can assemble information themselves according to a variety of schema. Consideration in this article is confined to mainly Anglo-Saxon ways of organizing sociological knowledge and there may be different schema in play elsewhere.

| Code | Field |
|-------------|--|
| 101 | Methodology |
| 103 | Conceptual: Epistemological |
| 104 | Research tools |
| 105 | Statistical methods |
| 161 | Models |
| 188 | Computer methods |
| 200 | History & Theory |
| 202 | Teaching Sociology: Professional Sociology |
| 206 | History: Present State of Sociology |
| 207 | Theory, Systems |
| 267 | Macrosociology |
| 285 | Comparative: Historical |
| 300 | Social Psychology |
| 309 | Small Groups |
| 312 | Personality: Social Roles |
| 322 | Social Psychology: leadership |
| 364 | Deviance: soc psychology |
| 373 | Cognitive: interpretative |
| 394 | Life Cycle: Biography |
| 400 | Group Interactions |
| 410 | Intergroup Relations |
| 491 | Group interactions; refugees |
| 508 | Culture and social structure; social organizations |
| 513 | Culture & Social Structure e.g. kinship |
| 514 | Culture and Social Structure |
| 600 | Complex organization |
| 621 | Jobs, Work Organisation, Workplace, Unions |
| 623 | Military Sociology |
| 624 | Organisations, Bureaucracy |
| 665 | Social Network Analysis |
| 671 | Business & Entrepreneurship |
| 674 | Voluntary Associations: Philanthropy |
| 686 | Division of Labour in employment etc |
| 700 | Social Change: Economic Development |
| 749 | Market Structures: Consumer behaviour |
| 770 | Capitalism: Socialism: World systems |
| 800 | Mass Phenomena |
| 826 | Social Movements |

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|------|--|
| 827 | Public Opinion |
| 828 | Communication |
| 829 | Collective Behaviour |
| 842 | Leisure: Tourism |
| 850 | Popular Culture |
| 868 | Transport |
| 869 | Sports |
| 900 | Political |
| 911 | Interaction Societies: Nations: States |
| 925 | Politics, Power |
| 989 | Welfare state |
| 995 | Internationalism |
| 1000 | Social Differentiation |
| 1019 | Social stratification: mobility |
| 1020 | Occupations: Professions |
| 1022 | Generations: intergenerational relations |
| 1116 | Rural |
| 1218 | Urban |
| 1300 | Language: Arts |
| 1330 | Language: sociolinguistics |
| 1331 | Art |
| 1332 | Literature |
| 1432 | Education |
| 1535 | Religion |
| 1600 | Social Control |
| 1636 | Law |
| 1653 | Police: corrections |
| 1734 | Science |
| 1772 | Technology |
| 1837 | Demography: Population |
| 1844 | Human biology: Socio-biology |
| 1864 | Genetic engineering |
| 1900 | Family: Socialisation |
| 1938 | Child |
| 1939 | Adolescence |
| 1940 | Sexual Behaviour |
| 1941 | Family, Marriage, Divorce |
| 1976 | Socialisation |
| 1977 | Birth Control |
| 1978 | Death & Dying |
| 2000 | Health: medicine |
| 2045 | Medicine |
| 2046 | Social Psychiatry |
| 2079 | Substance Use: Compulsive Behaviour |
| 2100 | Social Problems: Welfare |

| | |
|------|-----------------------------------|
| 2143 | Social Gerontology |
| 2147 | Crime |
| 2148 | Social work: welfare |
| 2151 | Juvenile delinquency |
| 2187 | Social service programs: delivery |
| 2190 | Victims |
| 2192 | Sociological Practise |
| 2233 | Knowledge |
| 2252 | History of Ideas |
| 2317 | Communities: Regions |
| 2454 | Planning: forecasting |
| 2460 | Social Indicators |
| 2462 | Policy sciences |
| 2496 | Negotiation: disputes |
| 2499 | Ethics: ethical decision-making |
| 2555 | Marxist: radical |
| 2580 | Critical |
| 2600 | Environmental |
| 2656 | Environmental interaction |
| 2681 | Disaster Studies |
| 2682 | Social Geography |
| 2697 | Famine, hunger, malnutrition |
| 2757 | Poverty |
| 2793 | Homelessness |
| 2858 | Violence |
| 2884 | Terrorism |
| 2898 | Genocide |
| 2959 | Feminist Studies |
| 2983 | Gender: Gender relations |
| 3063 | Marxist Sociology |
| 3166 | Clinical Sociology |
| 3200 | Business Sociology |
| 3371 | Visual sociology |
| 7240 | Social Planning |

Appendix 2: The Sociofile Classification in Detail

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TO ACCESS ALL THE 22 PAGES OF THIS CHAPTER,
Visit: <http://www.eolss.net/Eolss-sampleAllChapter.aspx>

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Biographical Sketch

Charles Crothers is Professor of Sociology in the Department of Social Sciences at AUT, after previously serving as a Professor of Sociology at the University of Natal, Durban, South Africa. Prior to this position Charles had lectured in the Departments of Sociology at the University of Auckland, and

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