

Applied and Clinical Sociology

Joshua D. Reichard, PhD, EdS, CCS
President/CEO, Omega Graduate School

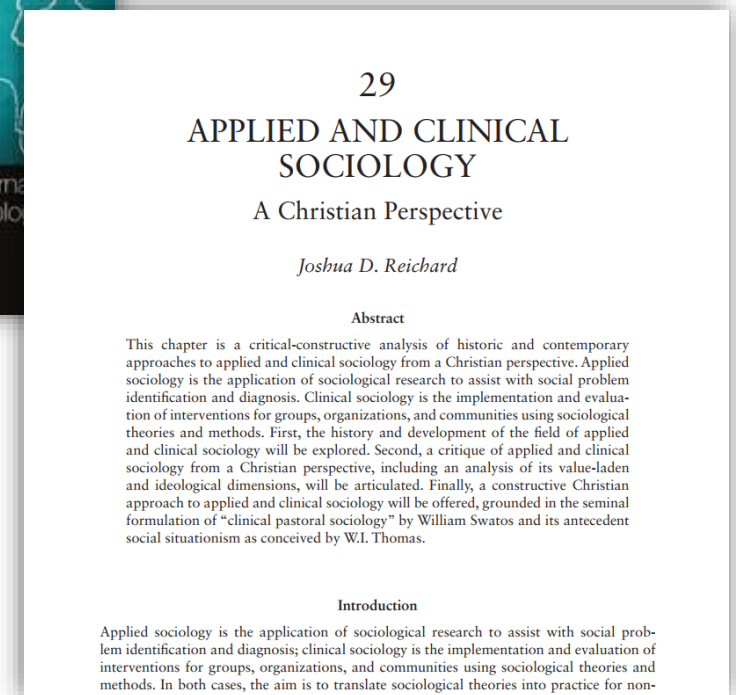
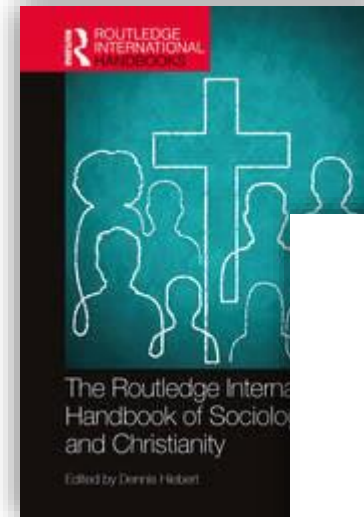


Essential Elements

- Applied Sociology and Sociological Practice
- Clinical Sociology
- Sociological Interventions
- Applications for Sociological Research

Handbook of Sociology and Christianity

Reichard, J. (2023). “Applied and Clinical Sociology” in *The Routledge International Handbook of Sociology and Christianity* (Dennis Hiebert, Ed.). Routledge.



What is Applied Sociology?

*“...the application of sociological research to assist with social
problem identification and diagnosis.”*

"Applied sociology uses sociological knowledge and research skills to gain empirically based knowledge to **inform decision-makers, clients, and the general public about social problems.**"

What is Clinical Sociology?

“Using sociological methods to design interventions that lead to social change”

Applied vs. Clinical Sociology

Criteria	Applied Sociology	Clinical Sociology
Focus	Applying sociological theory and methods to solve practical problems	Interventions and change in specific settings or communities
Main Goal	Informed decision-making, policy improvement, organizational development	Direct client service, community betterment, therapy and support
Approach	Research-oriented, providing data-driven perspectives	Hands-on, personalized, often therapeutic interventions
Methodology	Surveys, data analysis, consulting	Counseling, program development, direct engagement with groups
Application Areas	Public policy, corporate sectors, non-profits	Healthcare, family services, community development
Outcome	Policy design, organizational change, societal improvements	Social change, individual and community healing, improved quality of life

Historical Overview

- Emergence in the late 19th century
- Early focus on societal issues and reform

Key Pioneers

- **Lester Frank Ward** - Promoted applied sociology for social reform
- **Emile Durkheim** - Emphasized the importance of social facts

Christian Influences

- Early Christian sociologists contributed to ethical discussions
- Integration of Christian morality in early sociological thought

Historical Overview

Development Through the 20th Century

- Shift towards empirical research methods
- Growing acceptance in academic and practical fields

Contemporary Relevance

- Revival of interest in applying sociology to real-world problems
- Influence on modern social policies and programs

Defining Applied and Clinical Sociology

- **Applied Sociology**
 - Empirical knowledge to inform decision-making
- **Clinical Sociology**
 - Focused on intervention and change

"The key to succinctly defining clinical sociology is the concept of *intervention* – that is, the act of facilitating social change."

Sociological Intervention Concept

Problem
Identification/Diagnosis

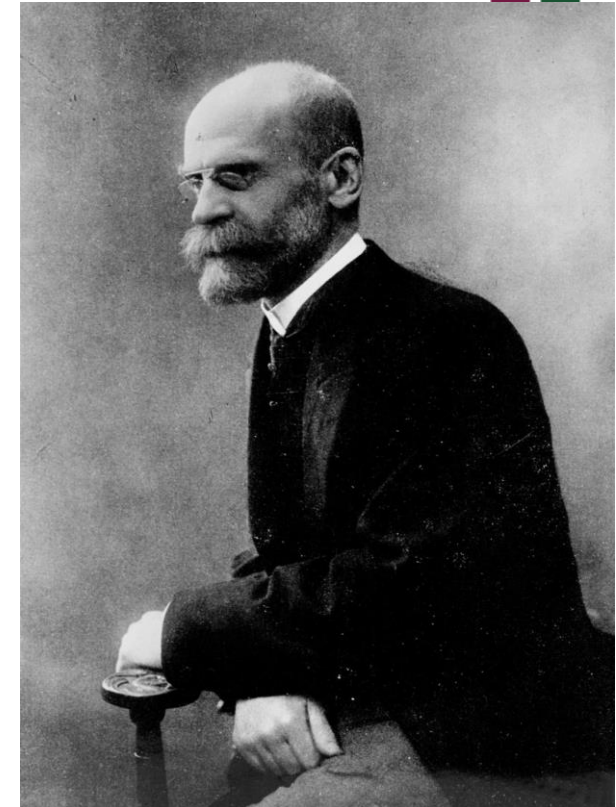
Intervention Design

Delivery

Evaluation

Structural Functionalism

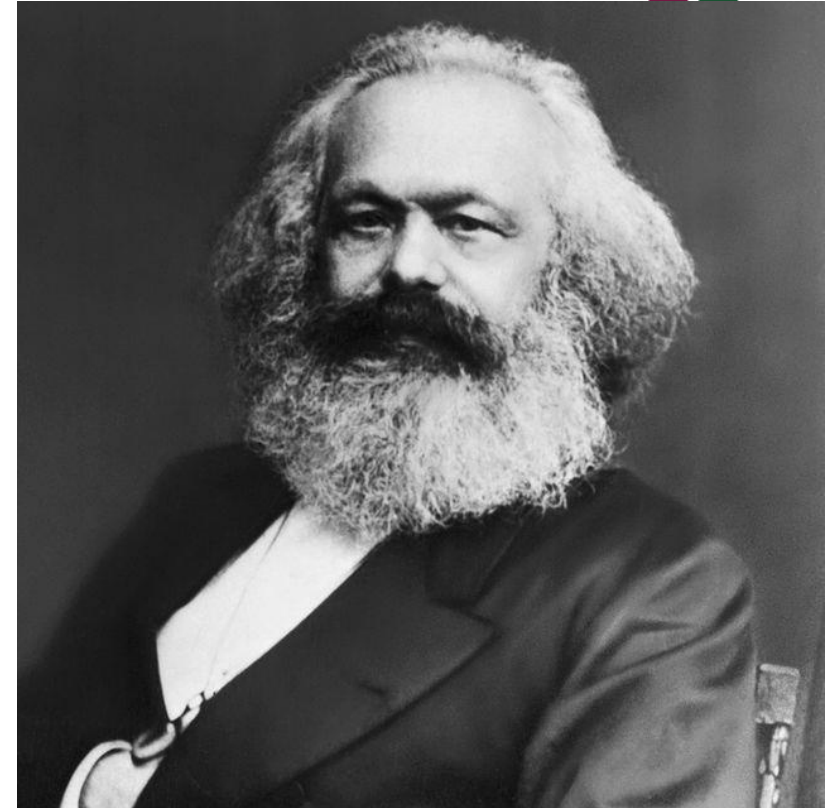
- **Structural Functionalism** views society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability (equilibrium).
- **Identifying Dysfunctional Elements**
Identifying elements within a society that are dysfunctional or disruptive.
- **Understanding Social Stability**
Designing interventions that maintain social order.



Durkheim

Conflict/Critical Theory

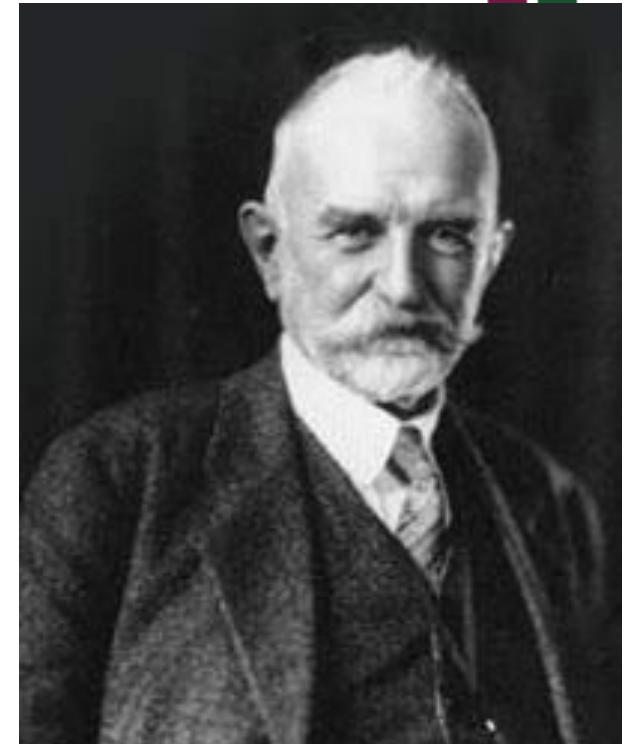
- **Conflict Theory focuses** on the social struggles between different groups and the inequality in the distribution of resources and power.
- **Exposing Inequalities**
Identifying areas where social change is necessary to address injustices and imbalances.
- **Empowering Disadvantaged Groups**
Developing clinical interventions that aim to empower disadvantaged or marginalized groups, challenging existing power structures and advocating for social justice.



Marx

Symbolic Interactionism

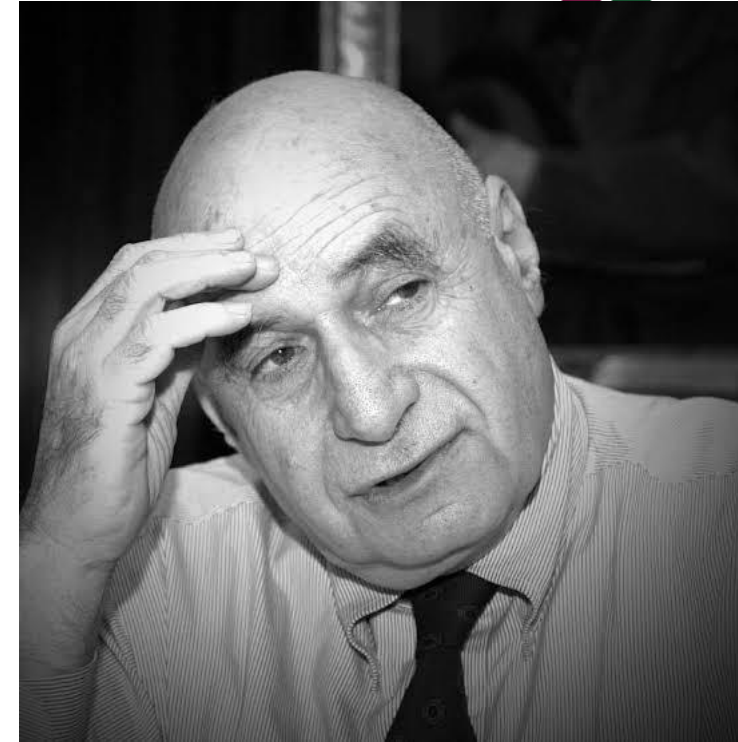
- **Symbolic Interactionism** emphasizes the role of symbols and language as core elements of all human interaction.
- **Interpreting Social Interactions**
Understanding individual and group behaviors and perceptions.
- **Tailoring Interventions**
Customization of interventions at an individual or group level, focusing on the symbolic meanings and everyday interactions that shape people's experiences and actions.



Meade

Social Construcitonism

- **Social Constructionism** argues that knowledge and many aspects of the world around us are not discovered but constructed by societies through language and communication.
- **Understanding Social Perceptions**
Understanding and deconstructing societal perceptions and norms.
- **Developing Contextual Interventions**
Development of interventions that consider the socially constructed nature of issues, allowing clinical sociologists to address problems in a way that is sensitive to the context and perceptions of the target community.



Berger

Social Situationism

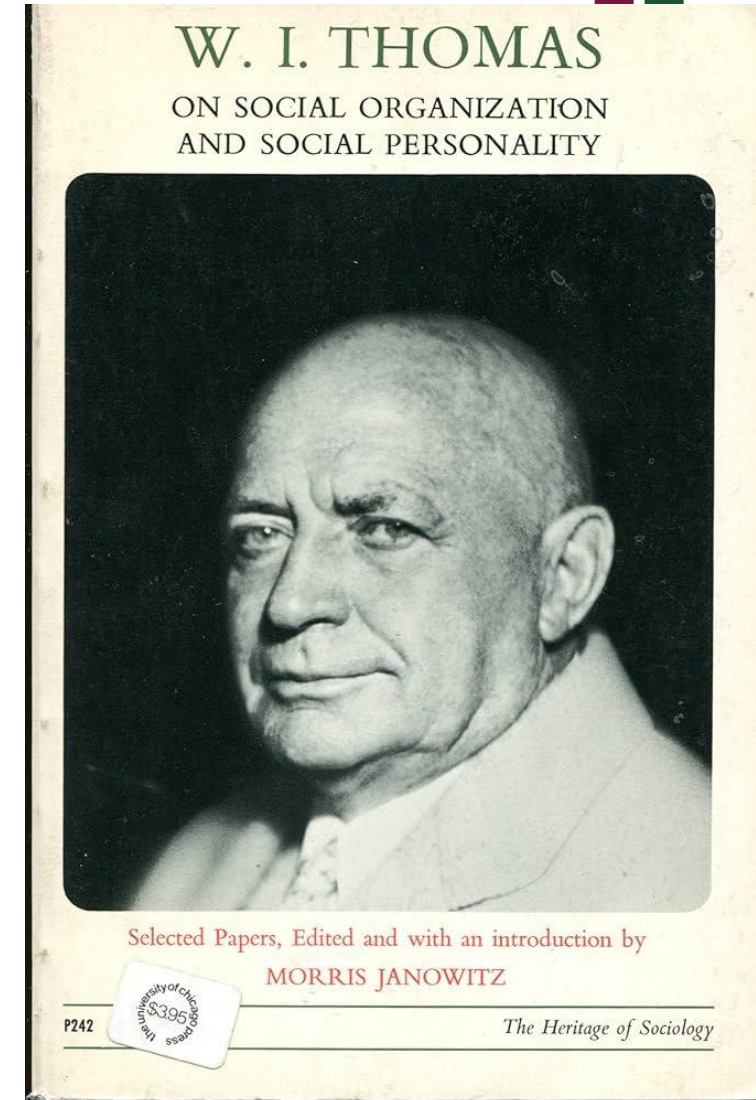
- *"If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."* – W. I. Thomas
- Emphasizes the subjective interpretation of social situations and its impact on behavior.

Relevance to Applied Sociology

- Guides sociologists in understanding how individual and group perceptions shape social realities.
- Aids in the development of policies and programs that consider these subjective realities.

Relevance to Clinical Sociology

- Informs therapeutic interventions by acknowledging the subjective experience of social issues.
- Helps tailor strategies that resonate with the perceptions and experiences.



Example: Youth Delinquency

Situation

- Youth in a community are perceived as delinquent based on their attire and gatherings.

Applied Sociology Approach

- Conduct community surveys to understand perceptions.
- Develop community programs that alter negative perceptions and promote positive engagement.

Clinical Sociology Intervention

- Work with youth to understand their self-perception and societal views.
- Offer workshops and group sessions to address stigma and improve social perceptions.

Outcome

- Shift in community perception leading to reduced stigma.
- Improved social dynamics and self-esteem among the youth.



Situationism in Religious Communities

- Recognizes that religious beliefs, while subjective, have real and significant impacts on the behavior and social structures of believers.

Shaping Interventions

- Interventions must respect and work within these perceived realities to be effective and respectful.

Applying the Thomas Theorem

- Designing interventions that acknowledge and incorporate the values and beliefs of religious communities.
- Gaining acceptance and fostering collaboration by acknowledging the reality of these beliefs for the community members.

Christian Critique of Applied and Clinical Sociology

Humanistic Optimism in Sociology

- Emphasis on human agency and potential
- The belief in societal progress through scientific knowledge

Critique from a Christian Perspective

- The potential for humanistic approaches to overlook spiritual dimensions (divine image vs. sin dimension in human beings)
- Concerns about moral relativism

Christian Critique of Applied and Clinical Sociology

Ideological Dimensions

- Differences in worldview - Secular humanism vs. Christian theism
- The challenge of integrating faith with empirical social sciences

The Role of Values

- Sociology's traditional focus on value-neutrality
- The Christian call for value-laden research informed by biblical principles

Christian Critique of Applied and Clinical Sociology

Social Intervention and Christian Ethics

- Dilemma of social change strategies that may conflict with Christian teachings
- Importance of aligning sociological interventions with traditional Christian moral frameworks

Balancing Sociological Methods and Christian Beliefs

- Challenges in research objectivity while adhering to faith-based principles
- Examples of successful integration of Christian ethics in sociological research and practice

Example: Christian Community Development Organizations

Research and Analysis

- Utilizing sociological tools to assess community needs and resources.
- Gathering data on socioeconomic challenges, family dynamics, and community structures.

Christian Ethical Framework

- Programs are guided by principles such as compassion, justice, and stewardship.
- Emphasis on holistic development, including spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being.

Example: Christian Community Development Organizations

Practical Applications

- Creation of job training and employment programs to address poverty.
- Implementing family support initiatives that align with Christian values of care and community.

Outcomes and Impact

- Measurable improvements in community well-being and individual lives.
- Strengthening of community bonds, with a focus on mutual support and ethical leadership.

Transcending Political Persuasions in Sociology

Resisting Political Labels

- Understanding sociological issues beyond conservative-liberal dichotomies.
- “transcending” is not “neutrality”

Christian Perspective in Sociology

- Offering a unique lens that focuses on ethical and moral values.
- Advocating for social justice, compassion, and equity irrespective of political leanings.

Challenges and Considerations

"Clinical sociologists acknowledge that unending interventions can be iatrogenic and pathological."

Understanding Iatrogenic Effects

- Iatrogenic effects refer to negative consequences caused by an intervention.
- Potential for interventions to create dependency or unintended social issues.
- Importance of assessing long-term impacts and sustainability.

Ethical Considerations

- Balancing the need for intervention with potential harm.
- Implementing ethical guidelines to minimize negative outcomes.

Strategies for Effective Interventions

- Developing clear goals and endpoints for interventions.
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation to identify and mitigate adverse effects.

Future Directions

"Christian sociologists have a role to play in the advancement of applied and clinical sociology."

Emerging Trends in Sociology

- Integration of technology and digital methodologies in sociological research.
- Increased focus on global and multicultural perspectives.

Christian Sociologists' Contribution

- Bringing unique ethical perspectives to contemporary sociological issues.
- Influencing the discourse on social justice and human rights.

Research and Academic Exploration

- Opportunities for collaboration between sociologists, theologians, and other scholars.
- Interdisciplinary approaches to address complex social problems.

Influence on Policies and Social Programs

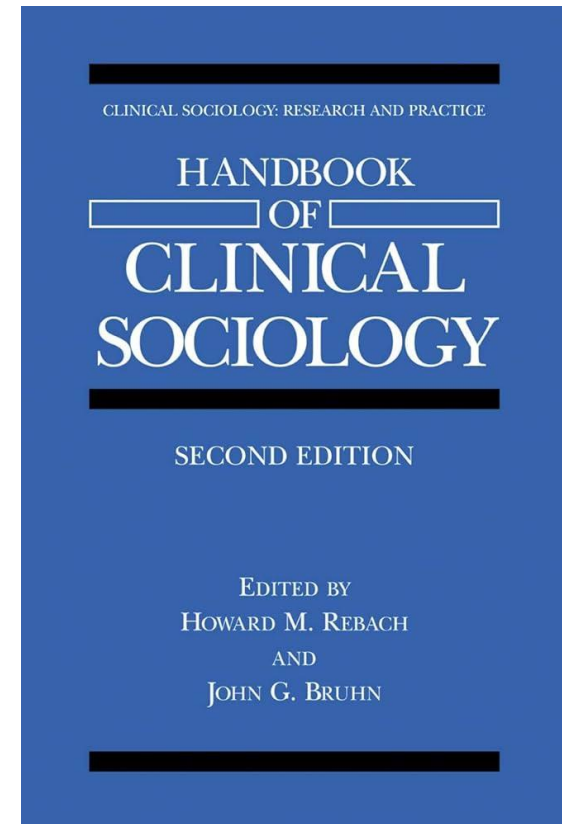
- Potential impact on shaping policies and programs with Christian ethical principles.
- Advocating for policies that reflect compassion, fairness, and community welfare.

Certification

- Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology (AACCS)
- **Certified Sociological Practitioner (Applied Sociology)**
- **Certified Clinical Sociologist (Clinical Sociology)**
- Postgraduate degree in sociology-related field, clinical hours, and a portfolio are required for certification consideration



Handbook of Clinical Sociology



Conclusion

- Explored applied and clinical sociology, integrating Christian perspectives.
- Analyzed relevance of sociological theories, including W.I. Thomas' situationism, especially in religious contexts.
- Discussed Christian critiques and applications in sociological practice.
- Focused on real-world applications and the role of clinical sociology.
- Addressed ethical considerations and the integration of sociological methods and Christian beliefs.
- Identified future directions in research and practice.
- Emphasized the role of interdisciplinary collaboration and ethical practice.
- The intersection of sociology and Christianity can help advance the role of applied and clinical sociology in driving positive social change.