1.1: Basic, Public, and Applied Sociology

There are a variety of ways people use and practice sociology. Basic, public, and applied sociology are the most common forms of sociological practice. Each form integrates research on human social life to understand and improve society.

Some people in sociology use discipline concepts and theories to produce knowledge and research in the field. This form of sociological practice is basic sociology. Academics including teachers, scholars, and researchers use basic sociology to study society, test hypothesis, and construct theories.

Theories explain how things work and are fundamental in understanding and solving social issues (Steele and Price 2008). To address social issues, we must understand their structure, influences, and processes. Sociological theories give a better understanding of how society works to guide solutions and improve circumstances. Basic sociology helps develop understanding about human social life including the influence of groups and organizations on people to improve society (Henslin 2011). A basic sociologist will analyze society based on theoretical foundation and publish findings for practitioners to identify and construct the best and most effective practices in addressing and solving social issues.

Public sociology uses empirical methods and theoretical insights to evaluate and analyze social policy (Henslin 2011). Formal norms such as laws, regulations, court orders, and executive decisions enacted by government are social policies. A public sociologist studies society and social policies to engage in issues of public and political concern for social change (Burawoy 2014). These practitioners use sociological research and theories to contribute and influence policy, activism, and social movements.

Applied sociology uses information about society and social forces or actions to solve social issues. The goal of
applied sociology is to use theories, concepts, and methods to solve real-world problems (Steele and Price 2008). This form of sociological practice is the application of sociology to improve society, not rebuild it or create social reform as with public sociology. Applied sociologists use sociology to address a specific social issue for a specific group of people. This form of practice applies sociological principles and methods to enhance human social life by using analyzing, evaluating, and suggesting interventions or solutions grounded in theory.

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIOLOGICAL PRACTICE

As an applied sociologist, W.E.B. DuBois used social research and findings to liberate and empower people of color. Research the publications and work of DuBois then explain how his findings and efforts influenced sociological practice today.

Clinical sociology, an arm of applied sociology, emphasizes the implementation of client-centered or direct service solutions. These practitioners work to solve client-centered problems by using social research to diagnose and measure interventions for change (Steele and Price 2008). These practitioners integrate sociological principles and methods to address social conditions and issues of individuals, groups, and organizations. Clinical sociologists use interventions or solutions supported by empirical evidence and grounded in theory to help improve the lives of others (Henslin 2011). This form of practice uses sociological components to serve and meet the needs of people and groups.

1. Watch the video entitled *What is Applied Sociology* by Dr. Stephen F. Steele: [https://youtu.be/qEG5TV9za_g](https://youtu.be/qEG5TV9za_g).
2. After viewing the film, explain the different forms of sociological practice.
3. Describe how sociology might be used or incorporated in the workplace.
4. Provide three examples of jobs or careers that incorporate sociological practice.