



SOCI10103: General Sociology May Intersession 2025

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Chapter 1: sociological perspective

Textbook: Sociology in Our Time, Diana Kendall 12th edition



Chapter outlines

- Sociological imagination
- Origins of Sociology
- Sociology theoretical perspectives
- Sociological Research Process

Sociological imagination

The ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society.

Study of suicide by Emile Durkheim

Applying Durkheim's theory to suicide studies of 21st century India

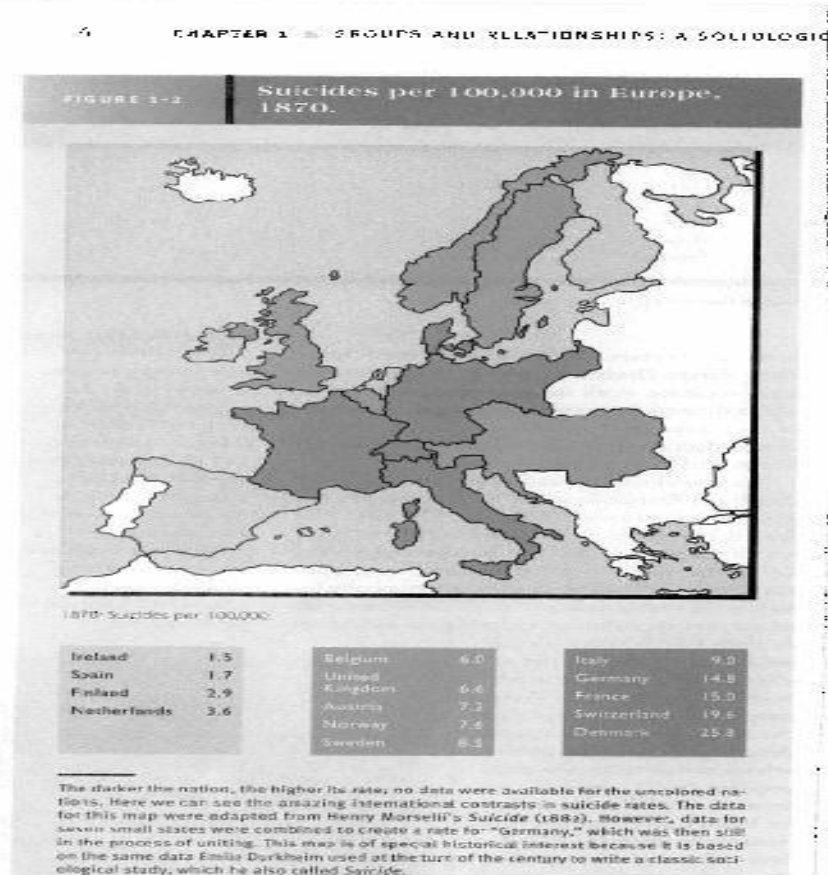
Economic booming at New Delhi, India recently

Job anxiety, high expectations, and added pressure

Rapid urbanization erodes social ties and community engagement

Suicide rate highest among 15 – 29 age group

Empirical observations of suicide trend



Joe Raedle/Getty Images News/Getty Images

Global sociological imagination

Syracuse Newspapers/John Berry/
The Image Works



High income: New York, United States



Gable/Alamy Stock Photo

Low income: Congo



Philipjbigg/Alamy Stock Photo

Middle income: China



Photos: left to right: Syracuse Newspapers/John Berry/The Image Works;
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Origins of Sociology

- Auguste Comte (French, 1798 – 1857)
 - Coined the term sociology, believing methods of natural sciences should be used to the objective study of society. Founder of positivism sociology, believing that social world can be understood through scientific inquiries.
- Herbert Spencer (British, 1820 – 1903)
 - Advocates for social Darwinism: survival of the fitness determine human being development. Such theory is used to justify gender and racial inequality.



Origins of Sociology

- Harriet Martineau (British, 1802 – 1876)
 - Made sociology from Auguste Comte more understood among scholars and students, advocating for gender and racial equality both in the discipline of sociology and in the society that sociologists study.
- Emile Durkheim (French, 1858 – 1917)
 - Understanding of individual behaviors requires understanding of its social environment. Coined the term anomie: which means normlessness, resulting from loss of social control, shared values, and common purpose. Studies suicides.



Spencer Arnold/Hulton Archive/Getty Images



RLHC 1C/Alamy Stock Photo

Origins of Sociology: Karl Marx (German, 1818 – 1883)

- Society is divided into two classes, owners (bourgeoisie) and workers (prole'tariat)
- The bourgeoisie own the means of production (productive assets like land and equipment that generate wealth)
- Farmers and marginal economic producers, like migrant workers, beggars, and criminals, are outside the two-class system
- To Marx, economic differences (property ownership) are the only basis for other social differences
- Marx noted middle class (small merchants, and self-employed professionals such as doctors and lawyers), that is outside of his two-class system. But he predicted they will eventually be crushed and forced into the proletariat.

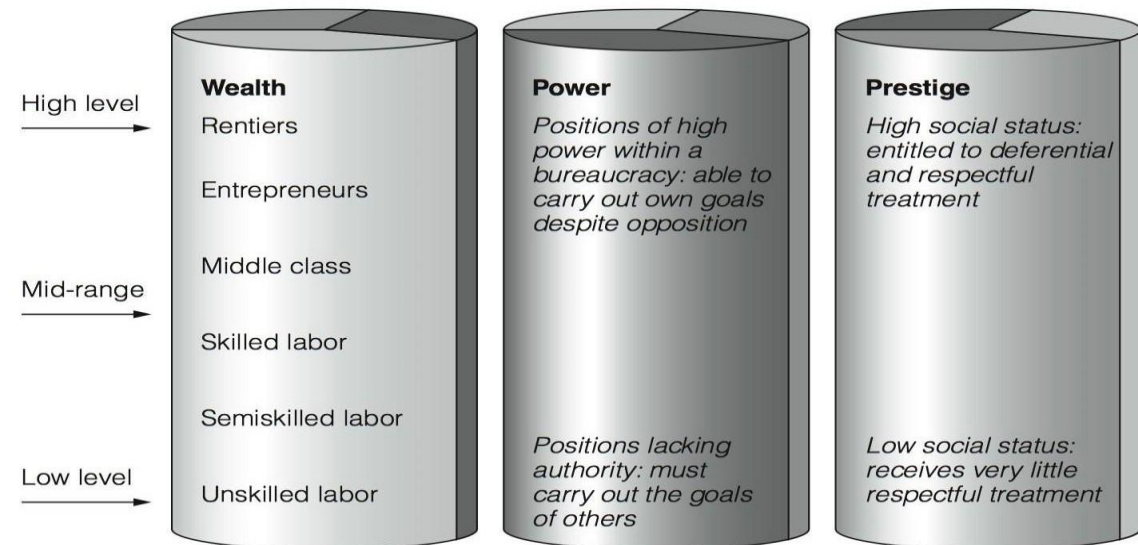


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Origins of Sociology: Max Weber (German, 1864 – 1920)



Hulton Archive/Getty Images



Weber's Multidimensional Approach to Social Stratification

Origins of Sociology in US

- Chicago School
 - Urbanization, community and neighborhood, racial and social class antagonism
- W.E.B. Du Bois
 - Duality: double consciousness, in particular to black Americans of being blacks, and being Americans.



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Sociology theoretical perspectives

Functional perspective or theory

- based on the assumption that society is a stable, orderly system.
- This stable system is characterized by societal consensus, whereby the majority of members share a common set of values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations.
- Societies develop social structures, or institutions that persist because they play a part in helping society survive.
- These institutions include the family, education, government, religion, and the economy.
- These social components work together to create relative harmony. If anything adverse happens to one of these institutions or parts, all other parts are affected, and the system no longer functions properly.

Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton

Conflict perspective/theory

groups in society are engaged in a continuous power struggle for control of scarce resources.

Conflict may take the form of politics, litigation, negotiations, or family discussions about financial matters.

Today, advocates of the conflict perspective view social life as a continuous power struggle among competing social groups.

Conflict perspective/theory

Karl Marx focused on the exploitation and oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie.

Max Weber recognized the importance of economic conditions in producing inequality and conflict in society, but he added *power* and *prestige* as other sources of inequality.

Weber (1968/1922) defined *power* as the ability of a person within a social relationship to carry out his or her own will despite resistance from others, and *prestige* as a positive or negative social estimation of honor (Weber, 1968/1922).



CEO

(Jeff Bezos)

vs

Warehouse Associate

(average)

earns

\$1,681,840

annually

earns

\$27,506

annually

that's

\$809

per hour

that's

\$13.08

per hour



=

.

that's **62** hours

to equal **1** hour of Jeff Bezos' pay

Conflict perspective/theory

- C. Wright Mills (1916–1962), look beneath everyday events in order to observe the major resource and power inequalities that exist in society.
- The most important decisions in the United States are made largely behind the scenes by the *power elite*—a small clique of top corporate, political, and military officials.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives

George Herbert Mead and the sociologist Herbert Blumer (1900–1986) coined the term symbolic interactionism.

Society is the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups. Theorists using this perspective focus on the process of interaction—defined as immediate reciprocally oriented communication between two or more people—and the part that symbols play in communication.

A symbol is anything that meaningfully represents something else, such as signs, gestures, written language, and shared values.



Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives

Symbolic interaction occurs when people communicate through the use of symbols—for example, a ring to indicate a couple's engagement.

Symbolic communication occurs in a variety of forms, including facial gestures, posture, tone of voice, and other symbolic gestures (such as a handshake or a clenched fist).

Perspective	Analysis Level	View of Society
Functionalist	Macrolevel	Society is composed of interrelated parts that work together to maintain stability within society. This stability is threatened by dysfunctional acts and institutions.
Conflict	Macrolevel	Society is characterized by social inequality; social life is a struggle for scarce resources. Social arrangements benefit some groups at the expense of others.
Symbolic Interactionist	Microlevel	Society is the sum of the interactions of people and groups. Behavior is learned in interaction with other people; how people define a situation becomes the foundation for how they behave.