
“The instructor of this course ‘SOC 171B Introductory Sociology’ owns the copyright of all the course materials. This lecture material was distributed only to the students attending the course of IIT Kanpur, and should not be distributed in print or through electronic media without the consent of the instructor. Students can make their own copies of the course materials for their use.”

Chapter 1 What Is Sociology?

Textbook: Anthony Giddens, Mitchell Duneier, Richard P. Appelbaum, and Deborah Carr. Introduction to Sociology. Seagull 12th Edition.

Copyright © 2021 W. W. Norton & Company

This Week's Learning Objectives

- Learn what sociology covers as a field and how everyday topics are shaped by social and historical forces.
- Recognize that sociology involves not only acquiring knowledge but also developing a sociological imagination.
- Learn how sociology originated and understand the significance of the intellectual contributions of early sociologists.

This Week's Learning Objectives

- Be able to identify some of the leading theorists and the concepts they contributed to sociology.
- Learn the different theoretical approaches modern sociologists bring to the field.
- Understand how adopting a sociological perspective allows us to develop a richer understanding of ourselves and the world.

Today's Class

1.What is Sociology?

2.Basic Concepts

Social Construction

Social Order

Agency and Structure

Social Change

▪

Today's Class

3. The Development of Sociological Thinking

Theories and Theoretical Approaches

- August Comte
- Émile Durkheim
- Karl Marx
- Max Weber

Neglected Founders

Harriet Martineau

W. E. B. Du Bois

What is Sociology?

Sociology: Why it matters?

- We are all members of society, and we all experience a variety of social interactions every day
- Sociology complements many other subject areas and is pertinent to every aspect of your life
- You are an individual within society but also a member of several social groups that interact constantly and part of social institutions

What is Sociology?

- Sociology is the **scientific** study of the connection between the individual & social structure (underlying patterns in human behavior and our relationships with one another).
- Sociologists believe that we can understand problems like divorce, unemployment, or suicide by examining elements of social structure.
- Social structure refers to the underlying regularities or patterns in how people behave and in their relationships with one another.

What Is Sociology?

- **Sociology** is the study of groups and group interactions, societies and social interactions
- A **group** is any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share some sense of aligned identity
- A **society** is a group of people who live in a defined geographic area who interact and share a common culture

Sociologists study small groups and individual interactions from the micro-level and trends among and between large groups and societies on the macro-level

What Is Sociology?

- The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 caused drastic shifts in many areas of life, including academia.
- Students, teachers, and parents were all suddenly forced to take note of and reevaluate their understandings of everyday life.
- The sociologist C. Wright Mills would have called this an example of average people using their sociological imagination.

Introduction to the Sociological Imagination

- The **sociological imagination** (C. Wright Mills, 1916 - 1962) provides a framework for understanding our social world and makes the connection between personal challenges and larger social issues
- **Personal troubles** are private problems experienced within the character of the individual and the range of their immediate relation to others
- Larger **social or public issues** are those that are outside of one's personal control and the range of one's inner life
- The real power of the sociological imagination is in how we learn to distinguish between the personal and social levels in our own lives
- A majority of personal problems are not experienced only personally but are also influenced and affected by social norms, habits, and expectations

The Sociological Imagination

- **Sociological imagination:** The application of imaginative thought to the asking and answering of sociological questions. Someone using the sociological imagination “thinks himself away” from the familiar routines of daily life.
- **Social structure:** The underlying regularities or patterns in how people behave in their relationships with one another.

Basic Concepts

Social Construction

- **Social construction:** An idea or practice that a group of people agree exists. It is maintained over time by people taking its existence for granted.
- Gender is one such construction.
 - People interact with babies differently based on their sex.
 - These interactions teach children what is considered traditionally “masculine” and “feminine,” and they incorporate these norms into their behavior as they start to occupy the role of “boy” or “girl.”

Example: Boy/Girl, Blue/Pink?



Example: A Diamond Is Forever, Since When?



Social Order

- There are many instances of social order that make society run smoothly, such as students quietly sitting in a classroom during a lecture.
- Sociologists have offered several explanations for social order:
 - It is the most rational choice.
 - It is the result of norms internalized through socialization.
 - It is a product of beliefs and values.
- We will explore the second explanation further.

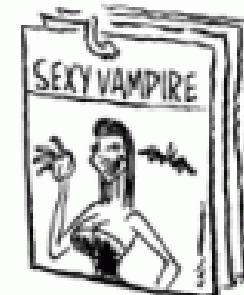
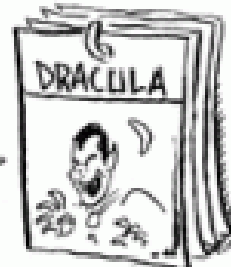
Socialization

- **Socialization:** The social processes through which children develop an awareness of social norms and values and achieve a distinct sense of self.
- Although socialization processes are particularly significant in infancy and childhood, they continue to some degree throughout life.
- No individuals are immune from the reactions of others around them, which influence and modify their behavior at all phases of the life course.

HALLOWEEN COSTUME

BOYS

GIRLS



Mandy Morlette
News Journal

Agency and Structure

- The sociological imagination can be deterministic in the way it pushes us to see that our lives are determined by social roles, gender, race, and class.
- Sociologists look at the probabilities that people will end up in certain living situations based on certain characteristics.
- At the same time, they acknowledge that individuals with free will can have their own impact within these constraints.

Social Change

- Sociologists ask how people live through the social transformations of their time.
- How are the times in which we are living different from the times that came before?
 - Social life is dynamic; it is constantly changing
 - Understanding the present relies on understanding the past

Social Change

- In recent years, sociologists have focused on the rise of the Internet and its transformation of everyday life.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these changes came together to form a new social reality.

The Development of Sociological Thinking

Development of Sociological Thinking

- Sociology is rooted in questions about social change, social conflict, and social problems brought on by **industrialization** and urbanization.
- Early sociologists continue to influence contemporary sociology.

Auguste Comte (1798-1857)

- Auguste Comte : French philosopher who coined the term *sociology* - the scientific study of human behavior and society
- He believed that the scientific method could be applied to the study of human behavior and society, and that this new field could produce knowledge of society based on scientific evidence.
- He initially called the subject *social physics*.



Auguste Comte (1798-1857)

The French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution greatly impacted Comte.

Comte believed that society developed in stages:

- Theological stage where people took religious views of society
- Metaphysical stage where people understood society as natural
- Scientific or **positivist** stage where society is governed by reliable knowledge understood in light of scientific knowledge (mainly sociology)

Positivism is the scientific study of social patterns

Sociology as a Science

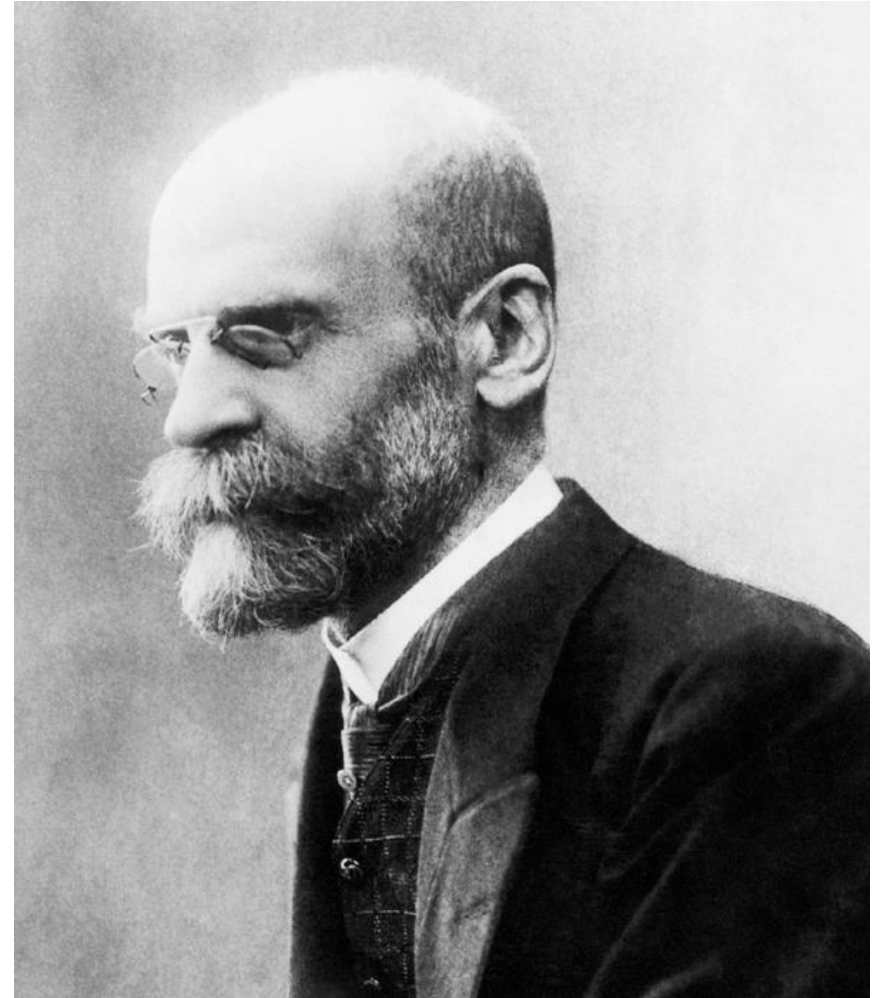
- Comte felt that sociology should contribute to the welfare of humanity by using science to predict and control human behavior.
- His ideas about social planning were predicated on an understanding that society and the social order are not natural, but rather are constructed by individuals.

Émile Durkheim (1858 – 1917)

- Helped establish sociology as a formal academic discipline by establishing the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895 and publishing *Rules of the Sociological Method* in 1895
- Durkheim laid out his theory on how societies transformed from a primitive state into a capitalist, industrial society with the belief that people rise to their proper level in society based on merit
- Durkheim believed that sociologists could study objective “social facts” and that healthy societies are stable while pathological societies experience a breakdown in social norms between individuals and society

Émile Durkheim (1858 – 1917)

- **Social facts:** According to Émile Durkheim, the aspects of social life that shape our actions as individuals.
- Durkheim believed that social facts could be studied scientifically, and that social life could be analyzed like any object or event in nature.



Organic Solidarity

- Durkheim saw society as an organism comprised of specialized parts that needed to work in harmony for the whole structure to endure.
- **Organic solidarity:** According to Durkheim, the social cohesion that results from the various parts of a society functioning as an integrated whole.
- Durkheim argued that the continuation of a society depends on cooperation, which presumes a general consensus among its members regarding basic values and customs.

Social Constraint

- **Social constraint:** The conditioning influence on our behavior of the groups and societies of which we are members.
- Social constraint was regarded by Durkheim as one of the distinctive properties of social facts.
- He argued that social structure is an external constraint on our choices and activities.

Division of Labor

- **Division of labor:** The specialization of work tasks by means of which different occupations are combined within a production system.
- All societies have at least some rudimentary form of division of labor, especially between the tasks allocated to men and those performed by women.
- With the development of industrialism, the division of labor became vastly more complex than in any prior type of production system.

Anomie

- **Anomie:** A feeling of aimlessness or despair provoked by modern social life.
- The concept was first brought into wide usage in sociology by Durkheim to apply to situations such as suicide, in which social norms lose their hold over individual behavior.
- According to Durkheim, processes of change in the modern world are so rapid and intense that they give rise to major social difficulties, which he linked to anomie.

Karl Marx (1818 - 1883)

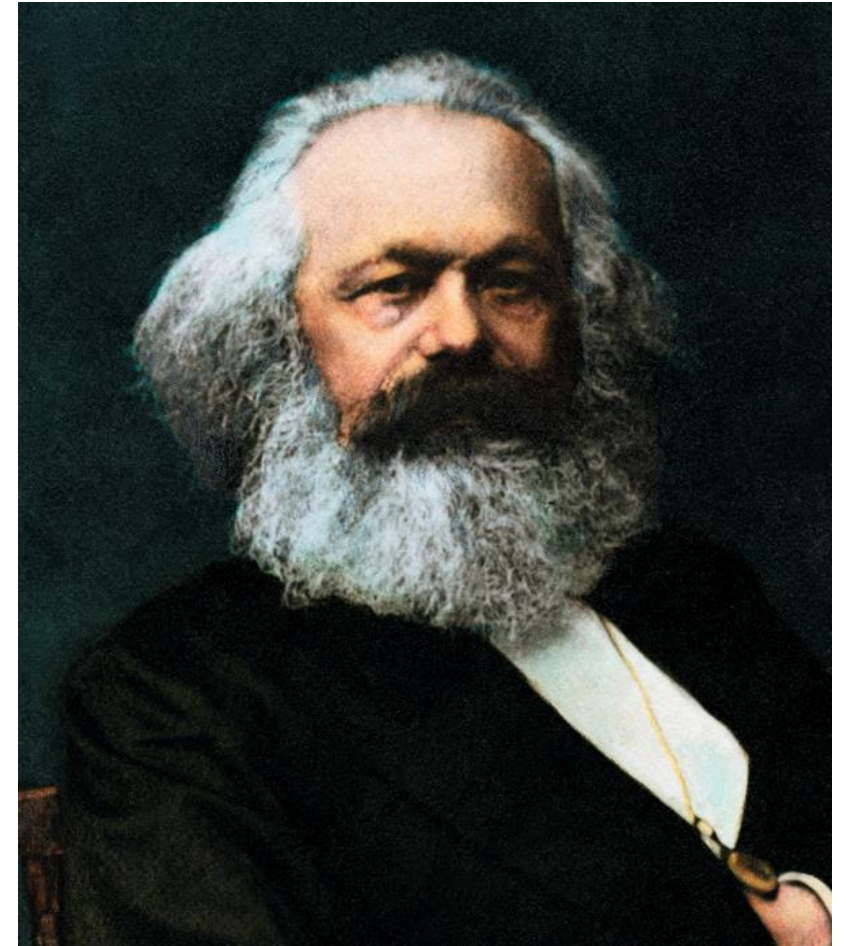
- German philosopher and economist who coauthored *The Communist Manifesto* with Friedrich Engels, one of the most influential political manuscripts in history
- Marx believed societies grew and changed as a result of the struggles of different social classes over the means of production

Karl Marx (1818 - 1883)

- Marx predicted that inequalities of capitalism would become so extreme that workers would eventually revolt and result in the collapse of capitalism and rise of communism
- Communism is an economic system under which there is no private or corporate ownership but with everything distributed as needed
- Marx's idea that social conflict leads to change in society remains a major theory used in modern sociology

Karl Marx

- **Materialist conception of history:** The view developed by Karl Marx according to which material or economic factors have a prime role in determining historical change.
- For Marx, it is not the ideas or values human beings hold that are the main sources of social change, but economic influences.



Capitalism

- **Capitalism:** An economic system based on the private ownership of wealth, which is invested and reinvested in order to produce profit.
 - The ruling class: Capitalists who own factories, machines, and large sums of money.
 - The working class: Wage workers who do not own the means of their livelihood but must find employment provided by the owners of capital.
- According to Marx, capitalism is a class system in which conflict is inevitable.

Post-Capitalism

- Marx imagined a future where societies would no longer be split into a small class that monopolizes economic and political power and a large mass of people who benefit little from the wealth their work creates.
- His ideal economic system, while not eradicating all inequality, would be characterized by communal ownership and would lead to a more equal society than we know at present.

Max Weber (1864 – 1920)

- **Weber** was a prominent German sociologist who wrote on many sociological topics
- His best-known book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
- Weber believed that the influence of culture on human behavior had to be considered
- **Verstehen:** concept meaning to understand in a deep way and that in seeking verstehen, outside observers attempt to understand it from an insider's point of view

Max Weber (1864 – 1920)

- Weber and others proposed **antipositivism** whereby social researchers strive for subjectivity and has an aim to systematically gain an in-depth understanding of social worlds
- Differences between positivism and antipositivism have been considered the foundation for the differences between **quantitative** (like surveys with many participants) and **qualitative** (like in-depth interviews, focus groups, content analysis)

Max Weber (1864 – 1920)

- Max Weber was influenced by Marx, but he thought ideas and values were just as important for social change as economic factors.
- He focused on why Western societies developed so differently from other societies, studying religion in particular.



Bureaucracy

- **Bureaucracy:** A type of organization marked by a clear hierarchy of authority and the existence of written rules of procedure and staffed by full-time, salaried officials.
- Weber saw the advance of bureaucracy as an inevitable feature of our era.
- Bureaucracy enables large organizations to run efficiently, but it also poses problems for effective democratic participation in modern societies.
- Experts make decisions without consulting those whose lives are affected by these decisions.

Harriet Martineau (1802-1876)

- Harriet Martineau has been called the “first woman sociologist.”
- She was an active proponent of women’s rights and the abolition of slavery.
- She is credited with introducing sociology to England through her translation of Comte’s *Positive Philosophy*.



Martineau's Insights

- Martineau is significant to sociologists today for her methodological insights.
- She argued that when one studies a society, one must focus on all its aspects, including key political, religious, and social institutions.
- She also insisted an analysis of a society must include all its members, a point that emphasized the absence of women's lives from the sociology of that time.

Martineau's Insights

- Martineau was the first to turn a sociological eye on previously ignored issues and institutions, including marriage, children, domestic and religious life, and race relations.
- She believed sociologists should do more than just observe; they should also act in ways that benefit society.

W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963)

- W. E. B. Du Bois was the first African American to earn a doctorate from Harvard University and a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).
- One of his most important sociological contributions is the idea of “double consciousness.”



Double Consciousness

- Double consciousness describes the identity struggle felt by African Americans in an American society that only lets them see themselves through the eyes of others.
- Du Bois claimed that one's sense of self and one's identity are greatly influenced by historical experiences and social circumstances.
- In the case of African Americans, they were shaped by the effects of slavery, emancipation, segregation, and prejudice.

Race Relations

- “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line.”
- Du Bois was the first social researcher to link the problems faced by African Americans to social and economic causes.
 - This is a connection that most sociologists now widely accept.
- He also connected social analysis to social reform.

An Introduction to W.E.B Du Bois' The Souls of Black Folk-

An Introduction to W.E.B Du Bois' The Souls of Black Folk- Macat
Sociology Analysis:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvE3Ft10h2w>