

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

Introduction to Theoretical Perspectives

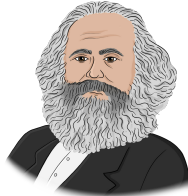
Functionalist Perspective



Émile Durkheim

(1858 – 1917)

Conflict Perspective



Karl Marx

(1818 – 1883)



Max Weber

(1864 - 1920)

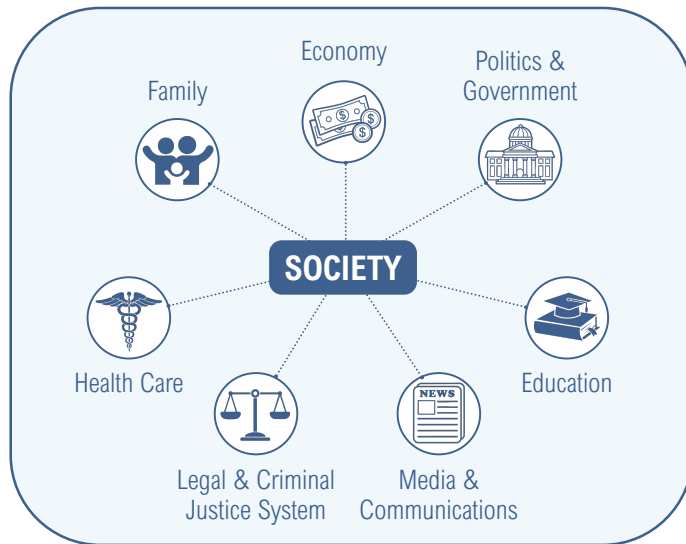
When studying these theories, keep in mind the context in which they were written:

- ▶ **Setting:** Western Europe
- ▶ **Enlightenment Period:** ~1685 – 1815
- ▶ **Industrial Revolution:** ~1750 – 1900
- ▶ **Urbanization of Western Europe:** ~1800

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

Functionalist Perspective: Émile Durkheim Part 1

◆ Durkheim focused on the interconnected structures that helped a society _____.



- ◆ **Social integration:** The strength of individual social _____; integral to personal health and happiness.
- Durkheim noted that people with _____ social integration are more likely to commit suicide.

◆ As societies become more complex, social order moves from *mechanical solidarity* to *organic solidarity*:

Mechanical Solidarity

- Common in _____-**industrial** societies where people all lead similar lives.
- Social bonds are **based on shared values and** _____.
- Society relies on _____ **consensus**.

Organic Solidarity

- Common in **industrial and** _____-**industrial** societies.
- Social bonds are **based on** _____ – occupational specialization makes people reliant on others.
- Society relies on **functional interdependence**.

Societal Complexity and Industrialization →

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

EXAMPLE

Note whether the statements in the box are describing mechanical or organic solidarity.

Mechanical Solidarity	
Organic Solidarity	

- a) Common in industrial and post-industrial societies.
- b) Social bonds based largely on shared values.
- c) Emerged (in part) due to occupational specialization.
- d) Common in preindustrial societies.
- e) Society relies on the interdependence between people.

PRACTICE

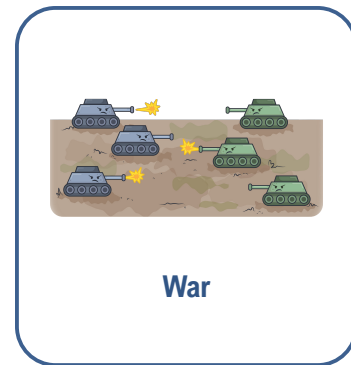
Which statement best summarizes Durkheim's functionalist view of society?

- a) A society is held together and driven by its economy.
- b) The most important factors in a society are people's ideas and values.
- c) Society is held together by interconnected institutions.
- d) Societies are successful when they are absent of crime.

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

Functionalist Perspective: Émile Durkheim Part 2

- ◆ **Anomie:** A condition in which society provides _____ moral guidance to individuals.
 - Breakdown of norms and cultural values.
 - Following these societal changes, new _____ are typically established.
 - Most common during:



EXAMPLE

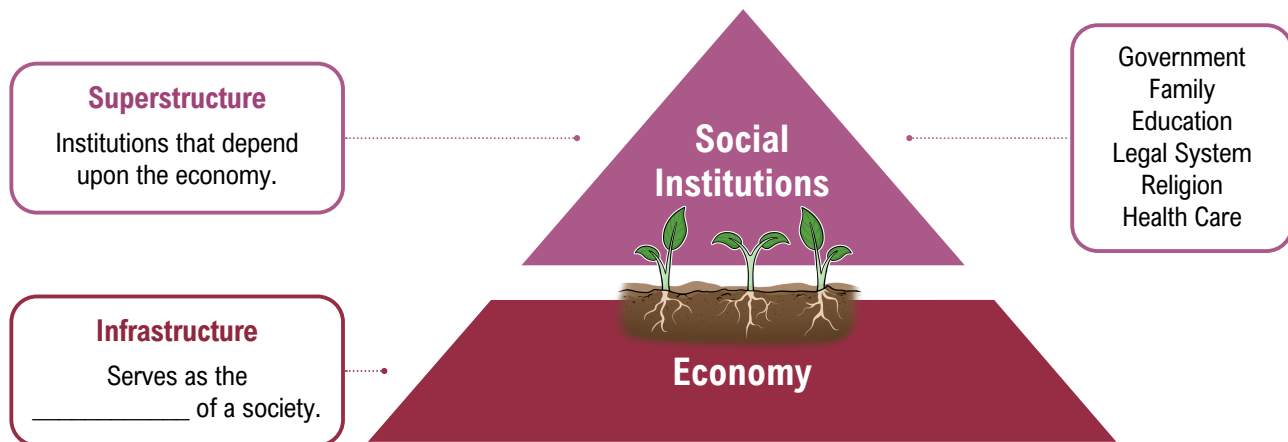
According to Durkheim's theory, anomie is most likely to occur during periods of:

- High mechanical solidarity.
- Economic prosperity and stability.
- Slow political, economic, and scientific growth.
- Rapid societal or economic changes.

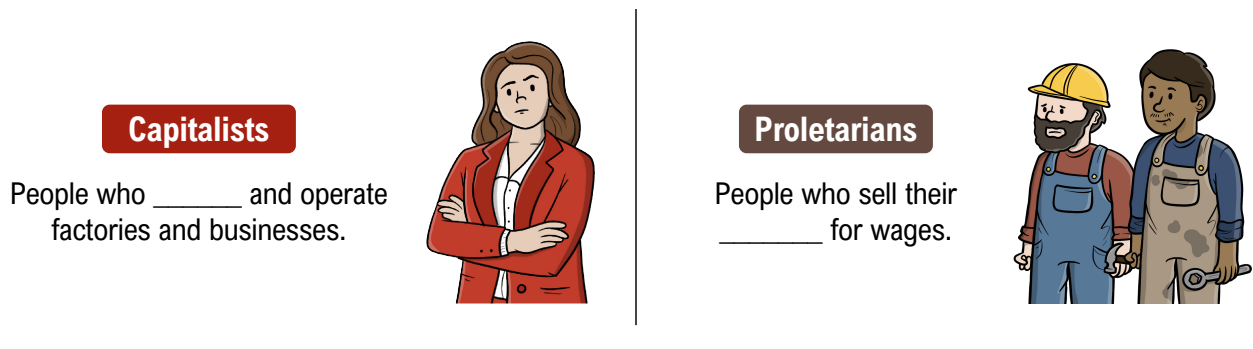
TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

Conflict Perspective: Karl Marx Part 1

- ◆ **Materialism:** _____ conditions are the most important factor in shaping human experience and society.
 - *Material conditions* include food, shelter, property, products, production of wealth, & organization of labor.



- ◆ **Class Conflict:** The conflict between classes over the distribution of a society's wealth and power.



**There is _____ conflict and tension
between these classes.**

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

EXAMPLE

True or False; if false, chose the answer that best corrects the statement.

According to Marxist theory, social institutions (government, legal system, etc.) are the infrastructure of a society.

- a) True.
- b) False; According to Marxist theory, the economy is the infrastructure of a society.
- c) False; According to Marxist theory, social institutions and the economy are equally important in shaping a society.
- d) False; According to Marxist theory, social institutions are responsible for creating mechanical solidarity within a society.

PRACTICE

According to Marx, the most fundamental conflict in a society exists between:

- a) Capitalists and proletarians.
- b) Governments and capitalists.
- c) Religious and non-religious citizens.
- d) Proletarians and consumers.

PRACTICE

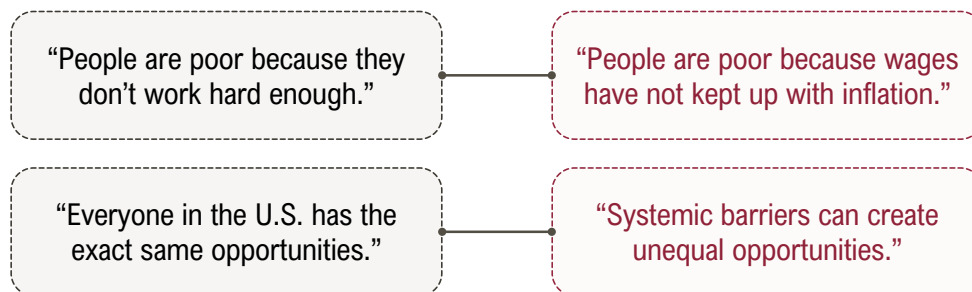
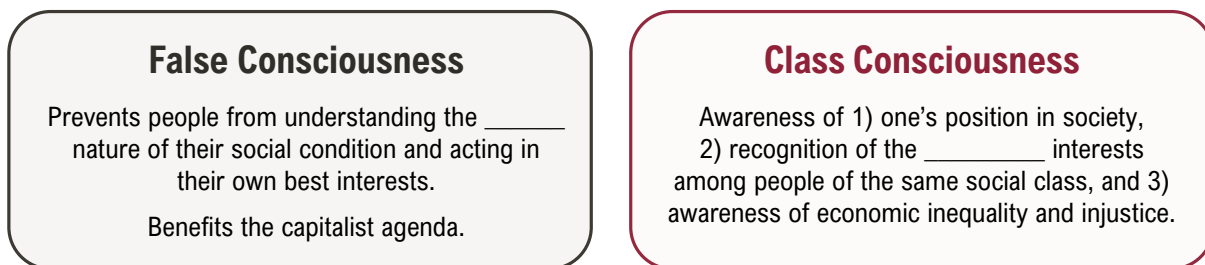
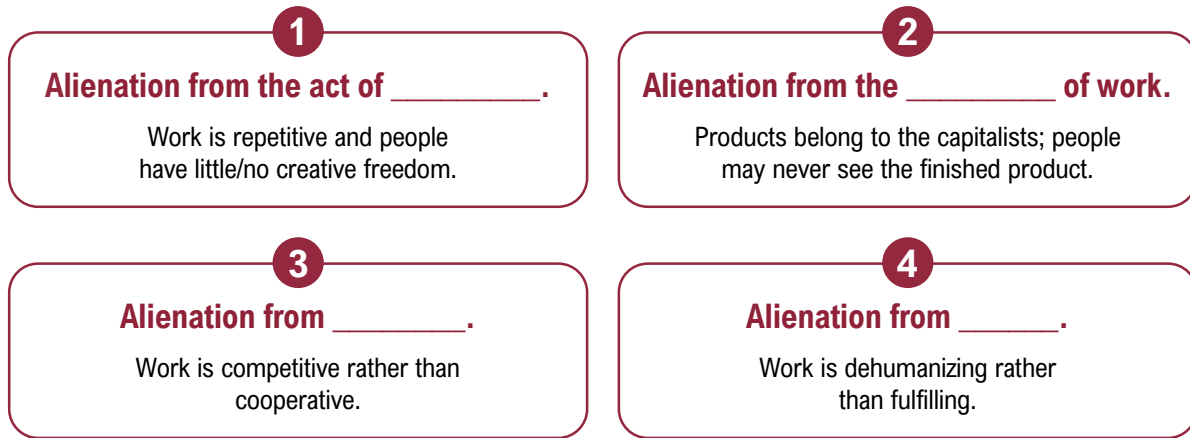
Karl Marx believed a society is primarily shaped by:

- a) Traditions, religious values, and morality.
- b) Material conditions and economy.
- c) Political orientation and ideology.
- d) Ideas and beliefs of individuals.

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

Conflict Perspective: Karl Marx Part 2

- ◆ According to Marx, inequality exists due to systemic issues inherent in _____ systems. Capitalism creates:
- ◆ **Alienation:** Condition in which an individual is isolated and divorced from their society and sense of self.



- ◆ Social conflict can only end when the proletariat gain class consciousness and unite in _____.

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

EXAMPLE

Write if each statement is describing false consciousness (“F”) or class consciousness (“C”), based on Marx’s theory.

1	Employees at a company avoid discussing their wages with one another because doing so might be perceived as “inappropriate.”	
2	After sharing information about their working conditions and wages, factory workers realize they are being exploited and begin to unionize.	
3	Maria believes that people who rely on food stamps are lazy and lack motivation.	
4	Devona works full time. She lives in a city where renting a studio apartment costs \$2500 a month (not including utilities) but she blames herself for not working hard enough when she struggles to pay rent.	

PRACTICE

Generally, Marx’s concept of alienation refers to:

- a) Workers lacking political power.
- b) How occupational specialization leads people in a society to develop functional interdependence.
- c) People holding beliefs that benefit the capitalist class.
- d) Workers being disconnected from their labor and robbed of opportunities for self-fulfillment.

PRACTICE

According to Marx, why is the transition from false consciousness to class consciousness important?

- a) It encourages more people to transition from proletarian to capitalist.
- b) It encourages collective action against capitalist systems.
- c) It reinforces and stabilizes capitalist systems.
- d) It will reduce social conflict between capitalists and proletarians.

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

Conflict Perspective: Max Weber Part 1

- ◆ **Idealism:** Human _____, values, and beliefs shape society.
 - The most important thing is not what people produce (materialism), it's how people **think** about the world.
- ◆ By focusing on thoughts/values, Weber created two categories of societies:

Tradition

- Pre-Industrial Societies.
- Guided by the past and traditional ways of life.
- Behavior, values, and _____ are passed down from generation to generation.



Rationality

- Industrial and Post-Industrial Societies.
- Emphasis on logic, scientific advancement, _____, and efficiency.



- ◆ Weber referred to industrialization and the development of capitalist systems as the **rationalization of society**.
- ◆ According to Weber's theory, **rational societies** have common features:

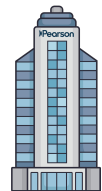
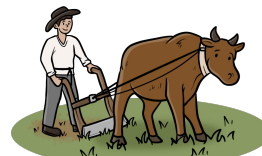
1

Distinct, _____ social institutions.



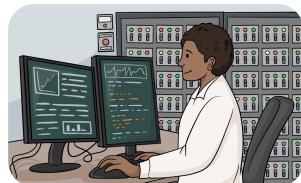
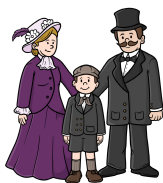
2

Employment through _____-scale organizations.



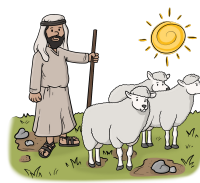
3

Emphasis on technical competence.



4

Awareness of _____.



5

Impersonality.



TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

EXAMPLE

Note whether the statements in the box are describing traditional or rational society.

Traditional Society	
Rational Society	

- a) Jobs are typically passed down through families.
- b) Many people are employed by large-scale organizations.
- c) People largely follow tradition because “that’s just how things are.”
- d) People prefer to make decisions based on formal rules, optimal functioning, and efficiency.

PRACTICE

Based on Weber’s theory, which of the following are considered features of a rational society?

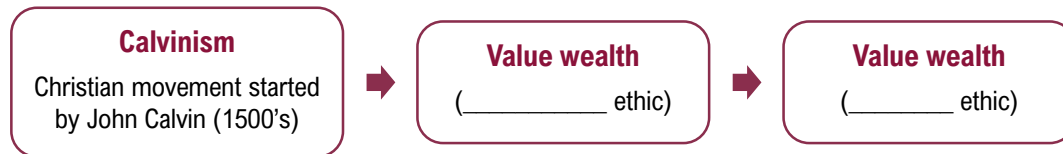
- I. Distinct and formalized social institutions.
- II. Emphasis on efficiency and optimization.
- III. Heavier emphasis on skills and education than family lineage.

-
- a) I & II. b) I & III. c) II & III. d) I, II, & III.

TOPIC: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETY

Conflict Perspective: Max Weber Part 2

- ◆ Recall: Weber believes that _____ shape a society.
- ◆ Weber developed a thesis that the birth of Industrial Capitalism began with the Protestant Reformation.



- ◆ These economic changes occurring at the societal level → _____.
- ◆ Capitalism spread fastest in regions of Europe where Calvinism was strongest.
 - Spread slower in predominantly Catholic and Orthodox regions of Europe.

EXAMPLE

Which of the following was **not** part of Weber's theory of Protestantism and Capitalism?

- The idea that people's beliefs and values can shape society at a structural level.
- The observation that people of the Protestant faith were hard working and valued economic success.
- The argument that economic systems change religious beliefs.
- The observation that capitalism spread faster in parts of Europe where Calvinism was strongest.