SOC 300: INTRODUCTORY SOCIOLOGY



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SOC 300: Introductory Sociology (Lugo)

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This text was compiled on 06/15/2026

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Licensing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: An Introduction to Sociology

Sociology is the study of social behavior or society, including its origins, development, organization, networks, and institutions. It is a social science that uses various methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop a body of knowledge about social order, disorder, and change. Many sociologists aim to conduct research that may be applied directly to social policy and welfare, while others focus primarily on refining the theoretical understanding of social processes. Subject matter ranges from the micro-sociology level of individual agency and interaction to the macro level of systems and the social structure.

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Thumbnail: Inside view of Ruca Che arena in Neuquén, Argentina, during a rock concert. (Public domain; Diegoluciano)

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1.1: Introduction



Figure 1.1: Every day, 7.5 million people use the railways around Mumbai, India. The vast majority of them don't know each other, but they share much in common as they move together. (Credit: Rajarshi MITRA/flickr)

Chapter Outline

1.1 What Is Sociology?
1.2 The History of Sociology
1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology
1.4 Why Study Sociology?

A busy commuter train station might seem like a very individualized place. Tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of strangers flow through with a singular purpose: to get where they need to go. Whether walking through main doors at a pace of a dozen people each second, or arriving by train hundreds at a time, the station can feel a bit like a balloon being pumped too full. Throngs of people cluster in tight bottlenecks until they burst through corridors and stairways and tunnels to reach the next stage of their journey. In some stations, walking against the crowd can be a tedious, nearly impossible process. And cutting across a river of determined commuters can be almost dangerous. Things are fast, relentless, and necessary.

But are those hundred thousand or half a million or, in the case of Tokyo's Shinjuku station, 3.5 million people really acting individually? It may seem surprising, but even with those numbers, strangers from across cities can synch up on the same schedules, use the same doors, take one leg of the trip together every day before separating into different directions. After just a few months, faces can become familiar, and senses can be tuned. An experienced commuter can tell where another person is going according to their pace and whatever announcement just went out; they may slow up a bit to let the other person pass, or hold a door open just a bit longer than usual, certain that someone will grab the handle behind them. Many regulars don't need to check the schedule board; they sense whether a train is running late or whether a track has changed simply by the movement of the crowd.

And then the customs develop: Which side to walk on, how fast to go, where to stand, how much space to leave between people on the escalator. When you board early, which seat should you take? When you see someone running for the train, do you jam the closing door with your foot? How does the crowd treat people who ask for food or money? What's the risk level in telling someone to be quiet?

Very few of these behaviors are taught. None are written down. But the transit hub, that pocket of constant flow, is an echo of its society. It takes on some aspects of the city and country around it, but its people also form an informal group of their own. Sociologists, as you will learn, may study these people. Sociologists may seek to understand how they feel about their trip, be it proud or annoyed or just plain exhausted. Sociologists might study how length of commute relates to job satisfaction or family relationships. They may study the ways that conditions of a train station affect attitudes about government, or how the difficulty of commuting may lead people to relocate. This understanding isn't just a collection of interesting facts; it can influence government policy and spending decisions, employer interventions, and healthcare practices. The work sociologists do to understand our society, and the work you will do in learning about it, is meaningful to our lives and our futures.

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1.2: What Is Sociology?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain concepts central to sociology.
- Describe how different sociological perspectives have developed.

What Are Society and Culture?



Figure 1.2: Sociologists learn about society while studying one-to-one and group interactions. (Credit: GlacierNPS/Flickr)

Sociology is the scientific and systematic study of groups and group interactions, societies and social interactions, from small and personal groups to very large groups. A group of people who live in a defined geographic area, who interact with one another, and who share a common culture is what sociologists call a society.

Sociologists study all aspects and levels of society. Sociologists working from the micro-level study small groups and individual interactions, while those using macro-level analysis look at trends among and between large groups and societies. For example, a micro-level study might look at the accepted rules of conversation in various groups such as among teenagers or business professionals. In contrast, a macro-level analysis might research the ways that language use has changed over time or in social media outlets.

The term culture refers to the group's shared practices, values, and beliefs. Culture encompasses a group's way of life, from routine, everyday interactions to the most important parts of group members' lives. It includes everything produced by a society, including all the social rules.

Sociologists often study culture using the sociological imagination, which pioneer sociologist C. Wright Mills described as an awareness of the relationship between a person's behavior and experience and the wider culture that shaped the person's choices and perceptions. It's a way of seeing our own and other people's behavior in relationship to history and social structure (1959). One illustration of this is a person's decision to marry. In the United States, this choice is heavily influenced by individual feelings. However, the social acceptability of marriage relative to the person's circumstances also plays a part.

Remember, though, that culture is a product of the people in a society. Sociologists take care not to treat the concept of "culture" as though it were alive and real. The error of treating an abstract concept as though it has a real, material existence is known as reification (Sahn, 2013).

Studying Patterns: How Sociologists View Society

All sociologists are interested in the experiences of individuals and how those experiences are shaped by interactions with social groups and society. To a sociologist, the personal decisions an individual makes do not exist in a vacuum. Cultural patterns, social forces and influences put pressure on people to select one choice over another. Sociologists try to identify these general patterns by examining the behavior of large groups of people living in the same society and experiencing the same societal pressures.

Consider the changes in U.S. families. The "typical" family in past decades consisted of married parents living in a home with their unmarried children. Today, the percent of unmarried couples, same-sex couples, single-parent and single-adult households is increasing, as well as is the number of expanded households, in which extended family members such as grandparents, cousins, or adult children live together in the family home. While 15 million mothers still make up the majority of single parents, 3.5 million fathers are also raising their children alone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Increasingly, single people and cohabitating couples are choosing to raise children outside of marriage through surrogates or adoption.

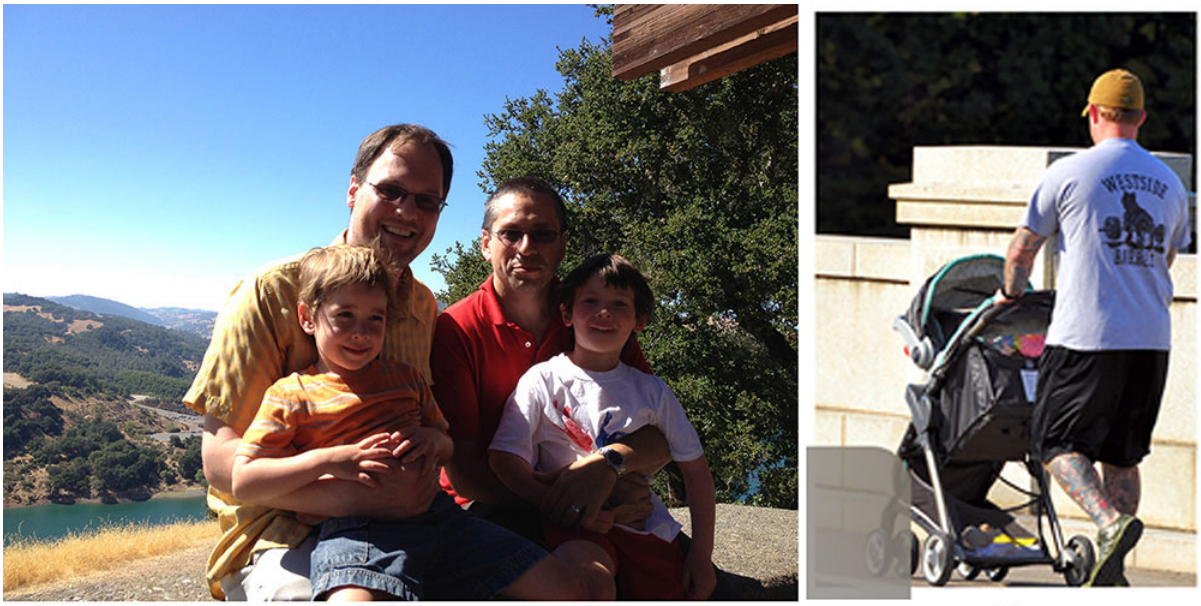


Figure 1.3: Modern U.S. families may be very different in makeup from what was historically typical. (Credit A: Paul Brody/flickr; B: Tony Alter/Wikimedia Commons)

Some sociologists study social facts—the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and cultural rules that govern social life—that may contribute to these changes in the family. Do people in the United States view marriage and family differently over the years? Do they view them differently than Peruvians? Do employment and economic conditions play a role in families? Other sociologists are studying the consequences of these new patterns, such as the ways children influence and are influenced by them and/or the changing needs for education, housing, and healthcare.

Sociologists identify and study patterns related to all kinds of contemporary social issues. The "Stop and Frisk" policy, the emergence of new political factions, how Twitter influences everyday communication—these are all examples of topics that sociologists might explore.

Studying Part and Whole: How Sociologists View Social Structures

A key component of the sociological perspective is the idea that the individual and society are inseparable. It is impossible to study one without the other. German sociologist Norbert Elias called the process of simultaneously analyzing the behavior of individuals and the society that shapes that behavior figuration.

Consider religion. While people experience religion in a distinctly individual manner, religion exists in a larger social context as a social institution. For instance, an individual's religious practice may be influenced by what government dictates, holidays, teachers, places of worship, rituals, and so on. These influences underscore the important relationship between individual practices of religion and social pressures that influence that religious experience (Elias, 1978). In simpler terms, figuration means that as one analyzes the social institutions in a society, the individuals using that institution in any fashion need to be 'figured' in to the analysis.

Sociology in the Real World: Individual-Society Connections

When sociologist Nathan Kierns spoke to his friend Ashley (a pseudonym) about the move she and her partner had made from an urban center to a small Midwestern town, he was curious about how the social pressures placed on a lesbian couple differed from one community to the other. Ashley said that in the city they had been accustomed to getting looks and hearing comments when she and her partner walked hand in hand. Otherwise, she felt that they were at least being tolerated. There had been little to no outright discrimination.

Things changed when they moved to the small town for her partner's job. For the first time, Ashley found herself experiencing direct discrimination because of her sexual orientation. Some of it was particularly hurtful. Landlords would not rent to them. Ashley, who is a highly trained professional, had a great deal of difficulty finding a new job.

When Nathan asked Ashley if she and her partner became discouraged or bitter about this new situation, Ashley said that rather than letting it get to them, they decided to do something about it. Ashley approached groups at a local college and several churches in the area. Together they decided to form the town's first Gay-Straight Alliance.

The alliance has worked successfully to educate their community about same-sex couples. It also worked to raise awareness about the kinds of discrimination that Ashley and her partner experienced in the town and how those could be eliminated. The alliance has become a strong advocacy group, and it is working to attain equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or LGBTQ individuals.

Kierns observed that this is an excellent example of how negative social forces can result in a positive response from individuals to bring about social change (Kierns, 2011).

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1.3: The History of Sociology

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain why sociology emerged when it did
- Describe how sociology became a separate academic discipline



(a) (b) (c) (d) (e)

Figure 1.4: People have been thinking like sociologists long before sociology became a distinct academic discipline: Plato and Aristotle, Confucius, Khaldun, Voltaire, and Mary Wollenscraft set the stage for modern sociology. (Credit: A, B, C, and E Wikimedia Commons; D: publicdomainfiles.com.)

For millennia, people have been fascinated by the relationships between individuals and societies. Many topics studied by ancient philosophers in their desire to describe an ideal society are still studied in modern sociology, including theories of social conflict, economics, social cohesion, and power in a continued attempt to describe an ideal society (Hannoum, 2003). Although we are more familiar with western philosophers like Plato and his student, Aristotle, eastern philosophers also thought about social issues.

Until recently, we have very few texts that are non-religious in nature that theorize about social life. From 4th century through the 19th century, the Catholic Church was the seat of power from today's Turkey in the east to western and northern Europe, including the British Isles. Only monks who were charged with rewriting holy texts by hand and the aristocracy were literate. Moreover, the Church consolidated power. In the year 800, Pope Leo III named Charlemagne, the king of Francia (today's France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany) emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, giving one individual control over most of Europe. Doing so gave the Catholic Church the power to maintain its own traditions safeguard them from the influence of people practicing other religions. If any social patterns challenged any belief of the Church, those practitioners were massacred, burned at the stake, or labeled heretics. As a result, the records that we have are extremely subjective and do not offer an unbiased view of social practice.

In the 13th century, Ma Tuan-Lin, a Chinese historian, was the first to record, in his seminal encyclopedia titled *General Study of Literary Remains*, the social dynamics underlying and generating historical development.

In the 14th century, the Tunisian historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) set the foundation for both modern sociology and economics. Khaldun proposed a theory of social conflict and provided a comparison of nomadic and sedentary life, an analysis of political economy, and a study connecting a tribe's social cohesion to its capacity for power (Hannoum, 2003). Khaldun often challenged authorities. As sociologists continue to study and report on social issues and problems, they often find themselves in the center of controversy.

From 1347 to 1522, the bubonic plague ravaged Europe, killing up to 35% of population (Armstrong, 2019). The plague dealt a major blow to the credibility of the Catholic Church. Out of this chaos emerged the the work of Copernicus, Galileo, Leonardo, Newton, Linnaeus, and other philosophers whose work sometimes contradicted church teachings. Events once held to be the product of the divine hand could be analyzed by human reason and observation and could be explained by scientific, testable, and retestable hypotheses. As literacy spread through conquests and colonization, more records and literature became available for sociologists and historians to put social puzzles together.

In the 18th century, Enlightenment philosophers developed general principles that could be used to explain social life. Thinkers such as John Locke, François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire), Immanuel Kant, and Thomas Hobbes responded to what they saw as social ills by writing on topics that they hoped would lead to social reform. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) wrote about women's

conditions in society. Like Harriet Martineau and Jane Addams, her works were long ignored by the male academic structure, but since the 1970s, Wollstonecraft has been widely considered the first feminist thinker of consequence. Ideas about economic systems, the family, health and hygiene, national offense and defense, were among the many concerns of social life.

The early 19th century saw great changes with the Industrial Revolution, increased mobility, and new kinds of employment. It was also a period of increased trade, travel, and globalization that exposed many people — for the first time—to societies and cultures other than their own. Millions of people moved into cities and many people turned away from their traditional religious beliefs. Ideas spread rapidly, groups were created, political decisions became public decisions. Among a new generation of philosophers, there were some who believed they could make sense of it all.

Creating a Discipline: European Theorists



Figure 1.5: Early major European theorists. Top row, left to right: Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, and Herbert Spencer. Bottom row, left to right: Georg Simmel, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons; Julius Cornelius Schaarwächter/Public domain.)

Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857)

The term sociology was first coined in 1780 by the French essayist Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836) in an unpublished manuscript (Fauré et al. 1999). In 1838, the term was reintroduced by Auguste Comte (1798–1857). Comte originally studied to be an engineer, but later became a pupil of social philosopher Claude Henri de Rouvroy Comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825). They both thought that social scientists could study society using the same scientific methods utilized in natural sciences. Comte also

believed in the potential of social scientists to work toward the betterment of society. He held that once scholars identified the laws that governed society, sociologists could address problems such as poor education and poverty (Abercrombie et al. 2000).

Comte named the scientific study of social patterns positivism. He described his philosophy in a series of books called *The Course in Positive Philosophy* (1830–1842) and *A General View of Positivism* (1848). He believed that revealing the laws by which societies and individuals interact would usher in a new "positivist" age of history. While the field and its terminology have grown, sociologists still believe in the positive impact of their work.

Harriet Martineau (1802 – 1876)

Harriet Martineau introduced sociology to English speaking scholars through her translation of Comte's writing from French to English. She was an early analyst of social practices, including economics, social class, religion, suicide, government, and women's rights. Her career began with *Illustrations of Political Economy*, a work educating ordinary people about the principles of economics (Johnson, 2003). She later developed the first systematic methodological international comparisons of social institutions in two of her most famous sociological works: *Society in America* (1837) and *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838).

Martineau found the workings of capitalism at odds with the professed moral principles of people in the United States. She pointed out the faults with the free enterprise system in which workers were exploited and impoverished while business owners became wealthy. She further noted that the belief that all are created equal was inconsistent with the lack of women's rights. Much like Mary Wollstonecraft, Martineau was often discounted in her own time because academic sociology was a male-dominated profession.

Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Karl Marx was a German philosopher and economist. In 1848, he and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) coauthored the *Communist Manifesto*. This book is one of the most influential political manuscripts in history. It also presents Marx's theory of society, which differed from what Comte proposed.

Marx rejected Comte's positivism. He believed that societies grew and changed as a result of the struggles of different social classes over the means of production. At the time he was developing his theories, the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism led to great disparities in wealth between the owners of the factories and workers. Capitalism, an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of goods and the means to produce them, had developed in many nations.

Marx predicted that inequalities of capitalism would become so extreme that workers would eventually revolt. This would lead to the collapse of capitalism, which would be replaced by communism. Communism is an economic system under which there is no private or corporate ownership: everything is owned communally and distributed as needed. Marx believed that communism was a more equitable system than capitalism.

While his economic predictions did not materialize in the time frame he predicted, Marx's idea that social conflict leads to change in society is still one of the major theories used in modern sociology.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)

In 1873, the English philosopher Herbert Spencer published *The Study of Sociology*, the first book with the term "sociology" in the title. Spencer rejected much of Comte's philosophy as well as Marx's theory of class struggle and his support of communism. Instead, he favored a form of government that allowed market forces to control capitalism. His work influenced many early sociologists including Émile Durkheim (1858–1917). Spencer, using Charles Darwin's work as a comparison said, "This survival of the fittest, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called 'natural selection,' or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life." (Spencer, 1864) The statement is often misinterpreted and adopted by those who believe in the superiority of one race over another.

Georg Simmel (1858–1918)

Georg Simmel was a German art critic who wrote widely on social and political issues as well. Simmel took an anti-positivism stance and addressed topics such as social conflict, the function of money, individual identity in city life, and the European fear of outsiders (Stapley 2010). Much of his work focused on micro-level theories and analyzed the dynamics of two-person and three-person groups. His work also emphasized individual culture as the creative capacities of individuals (Ritzer and Goodman 2004).

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917)

Émile Durkheim helped establish sociology as a formal academic discipline by establishing the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895 and by publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method* in 1895. In *Division of Labour in Society* (1893), Durkheim further laid out his theory on how societies transformed from a primitive state into a capitalist, industrial society. According to Durkheim, people rise to their proper levels in society based on merit.

Durkheim believed that sociologists could study objective social facts (Poggi, 2000). He also believed that through such studies it would be possible to determine if a society was "healthy" or "pathological." Healthy societies were stable while pathological societies experienced a breakdown in social norms.

In 1897, Durkheim attempted to demonstrate the effectiveness of his rules of social research when he published a work titled *Suicide*. Durkheim examined suicide statistics in different police districts to research differences between Catholic and Protestant communities. He attributed the differences to socio-religious forces rather than to individual or psychological causes.

Max Weber (1864–1920)

Prominent sociologist Max Weber established a sociology department in Germany at the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich in 1919. Weber wrote on many topics related to sociology including political change in Russia and social forces that affect factory workers. He is known best for his 1904 book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The theory that Weber sets forth in this book is still controversial. Some believe that Weber argued that the beliefs of many Protestants, especially Calvinists, led to the rise of capitalism. Others interpret it as simply claiming that the ideologies of capitalism and Protestantism are complementary.

Weber believed that it was difficult, if not impossible, to use standard scientific methods to accurately predict the behavior of groups as some sociologists hoped to do. Weber argued that the influence of culture on human behavior had to be taken into account. This even applied to the researchers themselves, who should be aware of how their own cultural biases could influence their research. To deal with this problem, Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey introduced the concept of *verstehen*, a German word that means to understand in a deep way. In seeking *verstehen*, outside observers of a social world—an entire culture or a small setting—attempt to understand it from an insider's point of view.

In *The Nature of Social Action*, Weber described sociology as striving to "… interpret the meaning of social action and thereby give a causal explanation of the way in which action proceeds and the effects it produces." He and other like-minded sociologists proposed a philosophy of anti-positivism whereby social researchers would strive for subjectivity as they worked to represent social processes, cultural norms, and societal values. This approach led to some research methods whose aim was not to generalize or predict (traditional in science), but to systematically gain an in-depth understanding of social worlds.

The different approaches to research based on positivism or anti-positivism are often considered the foundation for the differences found today between quantitative sociology and qualitative sociology. Quantitative sociology uses statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants. Researchers analyze data using statistical techniques to see if they can uncover patterns of human behavior. Qualitative sociology seeks to understand human behavior by learning about it through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and analysis of content sources (like books, magazines, journals, and popular media).

Social Policy and Debate: Should We Raise the Minimum Wage?

During his hard-fought 2020 campaign, President Joe Biden promised Americans that he would raise the federal minimum wage. Opponents of raising the minimum wage argue that some workers would get larger paychecks while others would lose their jobs, and companies would be less likely to hire new workers because of the increased cost of paying them. Biden and other proponents of raising the minimum wage contend that some job loss would be greatly offset by the positive effects on the standard of living of low-wage workers and reducing the income gap between the rich and poor.

Sociologists may consider the minimum wage issue from differing perspectives as well. How much of an impact would a minimum wage raise have for a single mother? Some might study the economic effects, such as her ability to pay bills and keep food on the table. Others might look at how reduced economic stress could improve family relationships. Some sociologists might research the impact on the status of small business owners. These could all be examples of public sociology, a branch of sociology that strives to bring sociological dialogue to public forums. The goals of public sociology are to increase understanding of the social factors that underlie social problems and assist in finding solutions. According to Michael Burawoy (2005), the challenge of public sociology is to engage multiple publics in multiple ways.

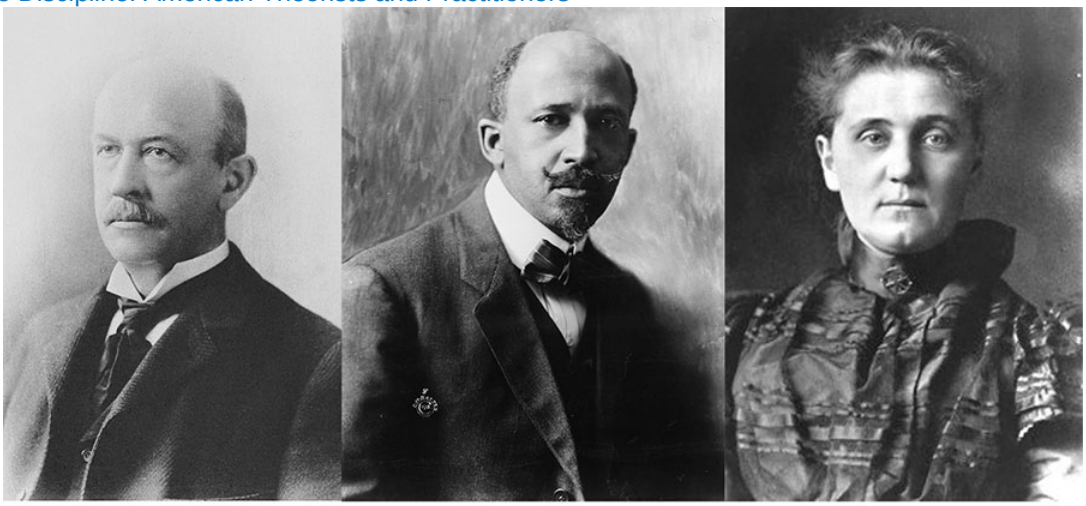


Figure 1.6: From left to right, William Sumner, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Jane Adams. (Credit A, B, and C: Wikimedia Commons.)

In the early 1900s, sociology reached universities in the United States. William Sumner held the first professorship in sociology (Yale University), Franklin Giddings was the first full professor of Sociology (Columbia University), and Albion Small wrote the first sociology textbook. Early American sociologists tested and applied the theories of the Europeans and became leaders in social research. Lester Ward (1841 – 1913) developed social research methods and argued for the use of the scientific method and quantitative data (Chapter 2) to show the effectiveness of policies. In order for sociology to gain respectability in American academia, social researchers understood that they must adopt empirical approaches.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963)

William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B.) Du Bois, a Harvard-trained historian, pioneered the use of rigorous empirical methodology into sociology. His groundbreaking 1896-1897 study of the African American community in Philadelphia incorporated hundreds of interviews Du Bois conducted in order to document the familial and employment structures and assess the chief challenges of the community. These new, comprehensive research methods stood in stark contrast to the less scientific practices of the time, which Du Bois critiqued as being similar to doing research as if through the window of a moving car. His scientific approach became highly influential to entire schools of sociological study, and is considered a forerunner to contemporary practices. Additionally, Du Bois' 1899 publication provided empirical evidence to challenge pseudoscientific ideas of biological racism (Morris, 2015; Green & Wortham, 2018), which had been used as justification to oppress people of different races.

Du Bois also played a prominent role in the effort to increase rights for Black people. Concerned at the slow pace of progress and advice from some Black leaders to be more accommodating of racism, Du Bois became a leader in what would later be known as the Niagara Movement. In 1905, he and others drafted a declaration that called for immediate political, economic, and social equality for African Americans. A few years later, he helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and served as its director of publications.

Thorstein Veblen (1857 – 1929)

After a brief stint as an unemployed college graduate, Thorstein Veblen began to study the economy through a social lens, writing about the leisure class, the business class, and other areas that touched on the idea of 'working' itself. He researched the chronically unemployed, the currently unemployed, the working classes, and the impact of technology and business within society. Veblen is known as a co-founder of the branch (or school) of institutional economics.

Jane Addams (1860-1935)

Jane Addams founded *Hull House*, a center that served needy immigrants through social and educational programs while providing extensive opportunities for sociological research. Founded in Chicago, Addams worked closely with University of Chicago's Chicago School of Sociology. This school of thought places much importance on environment in which relationships and behaviors develop. Research conducted at Hull House informed child labor, immigration, health care, and other areas of public policy.

Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929)

Charles Horton Cooley posited that individuals compare themselves to others in order to check themselves against social standards and remain part of the group. Calling this idea ‘the looking-glass self,’ Cooley argued that we ‘see’ ourselves by the reactions of others with whom we interact. If someone reacts positively to our behavior, theoretically we will continue that behavior. He wrote substantially on what he saw as the order of life in *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1902) followed by *Social Organization* in 1909. He was very concerned with the increasing individualism and competitiveness of US society, fearing it would disrupt families as primary groups lost their importance.

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931)

George Herbert Mead was a philosopher and sociologist whose work focused on the ways in which the mind and the self were developed as a result of social processes (Cronk, n.d.). He argued that how an individual comes to view himself or herself is based to a very large extent on interactions with others. Though Mead adopted Cooley’s concept of ‘looking-glasses,’ Mead felt that an individual’s reaction to a positive or negative reflection depended on who the ‘other’ was. Individuals that had the greatest impact on a person’s life were significant others while generalized others were the organized and generalized attitude of a social group. Mead often shares the title of father of symbolic interactionism with Cooley and Erving Goffman.

Robert E. Park (1864-1944)

Robert E. Park is best known as the founder of social ecology. Attached to the Chicago School, Park focused on how individuals lived within their environment. One of the first sociologists to focus on ethnic minorities, he wrote on the Belgian oppression of the Congolese. When he returned to the US, he and Ernest Burgess researched the inner city to show that no matter who lived there, social chaos was prevalent. As such, it was not the residents who caused the chaos but the environment.

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1.4: Theoretical Perspectives

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section you should be able to:

- Describe the ways that sociological theories are used to explain social institutions.
- Differentiate between functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.



Figure 1.7: Sociologists develop theories to explain social occurrences such as protest rallies. (Credit: David Shankbone/flickr)

Sociologists study social events, interactions, and patterns, and they develop theories to explain why things work as they do. In sociology, a theory is a way to explain different aspects of social interactions and to create a testable proposition, called a hypothesis, about society (Allan 2006).

For example, although suicide is generally considered an individual phenomenon, Émile Durkheim was interested in studying the social factors that affect it. He studied social solidarity, social ties within a group, and hypothesized that differences in suicide rates might be explained by religious differences. Durkheim gathered a large amount of data about Europeans and found that Protestants were more likely to commit suicide than Catholics. His work supports the utility of theory in sociological research.

Theories vary in scope depending on the scale of the issues that they are meant to explain. Macro-level theories relate to large-scale issues and large groups of people, while micro-level theories look at very specific relationships between individuals or small groups. Grand theories attempt to explain large-scale relationships and answer fundamental questions such as why societies form and why they change. Sociological theory is constantly evolving and should never be considered complete. Classic sociological theories are still considered important and current, but new sociological theories build upon the work of their predecessors and add to them (Calhoun, 2002).

In sociology, a few theories provide broad perspectives that help explain many different aspects of social life, and these are called paradigms. Paradigms are philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them. Three paradigms have come to dominate sociological thinking because they provide useful explanations: structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Table 1.1 Sociological Theories or Perspectives: Different sociological perspectives enable sociologists to view social issues through a variety of useful lenses.

Sociological Theories/Paradigms	Level of Analysis	Focus	Analogies	Questions that might be asked
Structural Functionalism	Macro or Mid	The way each part of society functions together to contribute to the functioning of the whole.	How each organ works to keep your body healthy (or not.)	How does education work to transmit culture?
Conflict Theory	Macro	The way inequities and inequalities contribute to social, political, and power differences and how they perpetuate power.	The ones with the most toys wins and they will change the rules to the games to keep winning.	Does education transmit only the values of the most dominant groups?
Symbolic Interactionism	Micro	The way one-on-one interactions and communications behave.	What's it mean to be an X?	How do students react to cultural messages in school?

Functionalism

Functionalism, also called structural-functional theory, sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of the individuals in that society. Functionalism grew out of the writings of English philosopher and biologist, Herbert Spencer, who saw similarities between society and the human body. He argued that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, the various parts of society work together to keep society functioning (Spencer, 1898). The parts of society that Spencer referred to were the social institutions, or patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs, such as government, education, family, healthcare, religion, and the economy.

Émile Durkheim applied Spencer's theory to explain how societies change and survive over time. Durkheim believed that society is a complex system of interrelated and interdependent parts that work together to maintain stability (Durkheim, 1893), and that society is held together by shared values, languages, and symbols. He believed that to study society, a sociologist must look beyond individuals to social facts such as laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashion, and rituals, which all serve to govern social life (Durkheim, 1895). Alfred Radcliff-Brown (1881–1955) defined the function of any recurrent activity as the part it played in social life as a whole, and therefore the contribution it makes to social stability and continuity (Radcliff-Brown 1952). In a healthy society, all parts work together to maintain stability, a state called dynamic equilibrium by later sociologists such as Parsons (1961).

Durkheim believed that individuals may make up society, but in order to study society, sociologists have to look beyond individuals to social facts. . Each of these social facts serves one or more functions within a society. For example, one function of a society's laws may be to protect society from violence, while another is to punish criminal behavior, while another is to preserve public health.

Another noted structural functionalist, Robert Merton (1910–2003), pointed out that social processes often have many functions. Manifest functions are the consequences of a social process that are sought or anticipated, while latent functions are the unsought consequences of a social process. A manifest function of a college education, for example, includes gaining knowledge, preparing for a career, and finding a good job that utilizes that education. Latent functions of your college years include meeting new people, participating in extracurricular activities, or even finding a spouse or partner. Another latent function of education is creating a hierarchy of employment based on the level of education attained. Latent functions can be beneficial, neutral, or harmful. Social processes that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society are called dysfunctions. In education, examples of dysfunction include getting bad grades, truancy, dropping out, not graduating, and not finding suitable employment.

Criticism

One criticism of the structural-functional theory is that it can't adequately explain social change even though the functions are processes. Also problematic is the somewhat circular nature of this theory: repetitive behavior patterns are assumed to have a function, yet we profess to know that they have a function only because they are repeated. Furthermore, dysfunctions may

continue, even though they don't serve a function, which seemingly contradicts the basic premise of the theory. Many sociologists now believe that functionalism is no longer useful as a macro-level theory, but that it does serve a useful purpose in some mid-level analyses.

Big Picture: A Global Culture?



Figure 1.8: Some sociologists see the online world contributing to the creation of an emerging global culture. Are you a part of any global communities? This Indiana rabbi is participating in what was recognized as the longest Zoom meeting, which started in Australia after the Sabbath and proceeded through each of the world's time zones, effectively lasting much longer than a day. (Credit: Chabad Lubavitch/flickr)

Sociologists around the world look closely for signs of what would be an unprecedented event: the emergence of a global culture. In the past, empires such as those that existed in China, Europe, Africa, and Central and South America linked people from many different countries, but those people rarely became part of a common culture. They lived too far from each other, spoke different languages, practiced different religions, and traded few goods. Today, increases in communication, travel, and trade have made the world a much smaller place. More and more people are able to communicate with each other instantly—wherever they are located—by telephone, video, and text. They share movies, television shows, music, games, and information over the Internet. Students can study with teachers and pupils from the other side of the globe. Governments find it harder to hide conditions inside their countries from the rest of the world.

Sociologists research many different aspects of this potential global culture. Some explore the dynamics involved in the social interactions of global online communities, such as when members feel a closer kinship to other group members than to people residing in their own countries. Other sociologists study the impact this growing international culture has on smaller, less-powerful local cultures. Yet other researchers explore how international markets and the outsourcing of labor impact social inequalities. Sociology can play a key role in people's abilities to understand the nature of this emerging global culture and how to respond to it.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory looks at society as a competition for limited resources. This perspective is a macro-level approach most identified with the writings of German philosopher and economist Karl Marx, who saw society as being made up of individuals in different social classes who must compete for social, material, and political resources such as food and housing, employment, education, and

leisure time. Social institutions like government, education, and religion reflect this competition in their inherent inequalities and help maintain the unequal social structure. Some individuals and organizations are able to obtain and keep more resources than others, and these "winners" use their power and influence to maintain social institutions. The perpetuation of power results in the perpetuation of oppression.

Several theorists suggested variations on this basic theme like Polish-Austrian sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838–1909) who expanded on Marx's ideas by arguing that war and conquest are the bases of civilizations. He believed that cultural and ethnic conflicts led to states being identified and defined by a dominant group that had power over other groups (Irving, 2007).

German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) agreed with Marx but also believed that, in addition to economic inequalities, inequalities of political power and social structure cause conflict. Weber noted that different groups were affected differently based on education, race, and gender, and that people's reactions to inequality were moderated by class differences and rates of social mobility, as well as by perceptions about the legitimacy of those in power. A reader of Marx, Georg Simmel believed that conflict can help integrate and stabilize a society. He said that the intensity of the conflict varies depending on the emotional involvement of the parties, the degree of solidarity within the opposing groups, and the clarity and limited nature of the goals. Simmel also showed that groups work to create internal solidarity, centralize power, and reduce dissent. The stronger the bond, the weaker the discord. Resolving conflicts can reduce tension and hostility and can pave the way for future agreements.

In the 1930s and 1940s, German philosophers, known as the Frankfurt School, developed critical theory as an elaboration on Marxist principles. Critical theory is an expansion of conflict theory and is broader than just sociology, incorporating other social sciences and philosophy. A critical theory is a holistic theory and attempts to address structural issues causing inequality. It must explain what's wrong in current social reality, identify the people who can make changes, and provide practical goals for social transformation (Horkeimer, 1982).

More recently, inequality based on gender or race has been explained in a similar manner and has identified institutionalized power structures that help to maintain inequality between groups. Janet Saltzman Chafetz (1941–2006) presented a model of feminist theory that attempts to explain the forces that maintain gender inequality as well as a theory of how such a system can be changed (Turner, 2003). Similarly, critical race theory grew out of a critical analysis of race and racism from a legal point of view. Critical race theory looks at structural inequality based on white privilege and associated wealth, power, and prestige.

Sociology in the Real World: Farming and Locavores: How Sociological Perspectives Might View Food Consumption

The consumption of food is a commonplace, daily occurrence. Yet, it can also be associated with important moments in our lives. Eating can be an individual or a group action, and eating habits and customs are influenced by our cultures. In the context of society, our nation's food system is at the core of numerous social movements, political issues, and economic debates. Any of these factors might become a topic of sociological study.

A structural-functional approach to the topic of food consumption might analyze the role of the agriculture industry within the nation's economy and how this has changed from the early days of manual-labor farming to modern mechanized production. Another might study the different functions of processes in food production, from farming and harvesting to flashy packaging and mass consumerism.

A conflict theorist might be interested in the power differentials present in the regulation of food, by exploring where people's right to information intersects with corporations' drive for profit and how the government mediates those interests. Or a conflict theorist might examine the power and powerlessness experienced by local farmers versus large farming conglomerates, such as the documentary Food Inc., which depicts as resulting from Monsanto's patenting of seed technology. Another topic of study might be how nutrition varies between different social classes.

A sociologist viewing food consumption through a symbolic interactionist lens would be more interested in microlevel topics, such as the symbolic use of food in religious rituals, or the role it plays in the social interaction of a family dinner. This perspective might also explore the interactions among group members who identify themselves based on their sharing a particular diet, such as vegetarians (people who don't eat meat) or locavores (people who strive to eat locally produced food).

Criticism

Just as structural functionalism was criticized for focusing too much on the stability of societies, conflict theory has been criticized because it tends to focus on conflict to the exclusion of recognizing stability. Many social structures are extremely stable or have

gradually progressed over time rather than changing abruptly as conflict theory would suggest.

Symbolic Interactionist Theory

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theory that focuses on the relationships among individuals within a society. Communication—the exchange of meaning through language and symbols—is believed to be the way in which people make sense of their social worlds. Theorists Herman and Reynolds (1994) note that this perspective sees people as being active in shaping the social world rather than simply being acted upon.

George Herbert Mead is considered a founder of symbolic interactionism though he never published his work on it (LaRossa and Reitzes, 1993). Mead's student, Herbert Blumer (1900-1987), coined the term "symbolic interactionism" and outlined these basic premises: humans interact with things based on meanings ascribed to those things; the ascribed meaning of things comes from our interactions with others and society; the meanings of things are interpreted by a person when dealing with things in specific circumstances (Blumer 1969). If you love books, for example, a symbolic interactionist might propose that you learned that books are good or important in the interactions you had with family, friends, school, or church. Maybe your family had a special reading time each week, getting your library card was treated as a special event, or bedtime stories were associated with warmth and comfort.

Social scientists who apply symbolic-interactionist thinking look for patterns of interaction between individuals. Their studies often involve observation of one-on-one interactions. For example, while a conflict theorist studying a political protest might focus on class difference, a symbolic interactionist would be more interested in how individuals in the protesting group interact, as well as the signs and symbols protesters use to communicate their message.

The focus on the importance of symbols in building a society led sociologists like Erving Goffman (1922-1982) to develop a technique called dramaturgical analysis. Goffman used theater as an analogy for social interaction and recognized that people's interactions showed patterns of cultural "scripts." He argued that individuals were actors in a play. We switched roles, sometimes minute to minute—for example, from student or daughter to dog walker. Because it can be unclear what part a person may play in a given situation, he or she has to improvise his or her role as the situation unfolds (Goffman, 1958).

Studies that use the symbolic interactionist perspective are more likely to use qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or participant observation, because they seek to understand the symbolic worlds in which research subjects live.

Constructivism is an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be. We develop social constructs based on interactions with others, and those constructs that last over time are those that have meanings which are widely agreed-upon or generally accepted by most within the society. This approach is often used to examine what's defined as deviant within a society. There is no absolute definition of deviance, and different societies have constructed different meanings for deviance, as well as associating different behaviors with deviance.

One situation that illustrates this is what you believe you're to do if you find a wallet in the street. In the United States, turning the wallet in to local authorities would be considered the appropriate action, and to keep the wallet would be seen as deviant. In contrast, many Eastern societies would consider it much more appropriate to keep the wallet and search for the owner yourself. Turning it over to someone else, even the authorities, would be considered deviant behavior.

Criticism

Research done from this perspective is often scrutinized because of the difficulty of remaining objective. Others criticize the extremely narrow focus on symbolic interaction. Proponents, of course, consider this one of its greatest strengths.

Sociological Theory Today

These three approaches still provide the main foundation of modern sociological theory though they have evolved. Structural-functionalism was a dominant force after World War II and until the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, sociologists began to feel that structural-functionalism did not sufficiently explain the rapid social changes happening in the United States at that time. The women's movement and the Civil Rights movement forced academics to develop approaches to study these emerging social practices.

Conflict theory then gained prominence, with its emphasis on institutionalized social inequality. Critical theory, and the particular aspects of feminist theory and critical race theory, focused on creating social change through the application of sociological principles. The field saw a renewed emphasis on helping ordinary people understand sociology principles, in the form of public sociology.

Gaining prominence in the wake of Mead's work in the 1920s and 1930s, symbolic interactionism declined in influence during the 1960s and 1970s only to be revitalized at the turn of the twenty-first century (Stryker, 1987). Postmodern social theory developed in the 1980s to look at society through an entirely new lens by rejecting previous macro-level attempts to explain social phenomena. Its growth in popularity coincides with the rise of constructivist views of symbolic interactionism.

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1.4.1: Sociology Imagination

Social Structure and the Sociological Imagination

One way sociology achieves a more complete understanding of social reality is through its focus on the importance of the social forces affecting our behavior, attitudes, and life chances. This focus involves an emphasis on social structure, the social patterns through which a society is organized. Social structure can be both horizontal or vertical. Horizontal social structure refers to the social relationships and the social and physical characteristics of communities to which individuals belong. Some people belong to many networks of social relationships, including groups like the PTA and the Boy or Girl Scouts, while other people have fewer such networks. Some people grew up on streets where the houses were crowded together, while other people grew up in areas where the homes were much farther apart. These are examples of the sorts of factors constituting the horizontal social structure that forms such an important part of our social environment and backgrounds.

The other dimension of social structure is vertical. Vertical social structure, more commonly called social inequality, refers to ways in which a society or group ranks people in a hierarchy, with some more "equal" than others. In the United States and most other industrial societies, such things as wealth, power, race and ethnicity, and gender help determine one's social ranking, or position, in the vertical social structure. Some people are at the top of society, while many more are in the middle or at the bottom. People's positions in society's hierarchy in turn often have profound consequences for their attitudes, behaviors, and life chances, both for themselves and for their children.

In recognizing the importance of social structure, sociology stresses that individual problems are often rooted in problems stemming from the horizontal and vertical social structures of society. This key insight informed C. Wright Mills' (1959) classic distinction between personal troubles and public issues. *Personal troubles* refer to a problem affecting individuals that the affected person, as well as other members of society, typically blame on the individual's own failings. Examples include such different problems as eating disorders, divorce, and unemployment. *Public issues*, whose source lies in the social structure and culture of a society, refer to a social problem affecting many individuals. Thus problems in society help account for problems that individuals experience. Mills, feeling that many problems ordinarily considered private troubles are best understood as public issues, coined the term sociological imagination to refer to the ability to appreciate the structural basis for individual problems.

To illustrate Mills's viewpoint, let's use our sociological imaginations to understand some important contemporary social problems. We will start with unemployment, which Mills himself discussed. If only a few people were unemployed, Mills wrote, we could reasonably explain their unemployment by saying they were lazy, lacked good work habits, and so forth. If so, their unemployment would be their own personal trouble. But when millions of people are out of work, unemployment is best understood as a public issue because, as Mills put it, "the very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals" (1959, p. 9). The growing unemployment rate stemming from the severe economic downturn that began in 2008 provides a telling example of the point Mills was making. Millions of people lost their jobs through no fault of their own. While some individuals are undoubtedly unemployed because they are lazy or lack good work habits, a more structural explanation focusing on lack of opportunity is needed to explain why so many people were out of work as this book went to press. If so, unemployment is best understood as a public issue rather than a personal trouble. The same can be said for the unemployment rate in the second quarter of 2020. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate rose to 13.9 during April, May and June of 2020 (https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2021/ar...-pandemic.html). Why were so many Americans out of work? Were they just lazy? No, there was a global pandemic which caused many businesses to close during those months of 2020.

Another contemporary problem is crime, which we explore further in Chapter 5. If crime were only a personal trouble, then we could blame crime on the moral failings of individuals, and many explanations of crime do precisely this. But such an approach ignores the fact that crime is a public issue, as structural factors such as inequality and the physical characteristics of communities contribute to high crime rates among certain groups in American society. As an illustration, consider identical twins separated at birth. One twin grows up in a wealthy suburb or rural area, while the other twin grows up in a blighted neighborhood in a poor, urban area. Twenty years later, which twin will be more likely to have a criminal record? You probably answered the twin growing up in the poor, run-down urban neighborhood. If so, you recognize that there is something about growing up in that type of neighborhood that increases the chances of a person becoming prone to crime. That "something" is the structural factors just mentioned. Criminal behavior is a public issue, not just a personal trouble.



Figure 1.8: Although eating disorders often stem from personal problems, they also may reflect a cultural emphasis for women to have slender bodies. © Thinkstock

A final problem we will consider for now is eating disorders. We usually consider a person's eating disorder to be a personal trouble that stems from a lack of control, low self-esteem, or other personal problem. This explanation may be OK as far as it goes, but it does not help us understand why so many people have the personal problems that lead to eating disorders. Perhaps more important, this belief also neglects the larger social and cultural forces that help explain such disorders. For example, most Americans with eating disorders are women, not men. This gender difference forces us to ask what it is about being a woman in American society that makes eating disorders so much more common. To begin to answer this question, we need to look to the standard of beauty for women that emphasizes a slender body (Whitehead & Kurz, 2008).Whitehead, K., & Kurz, T. (2008). Saints, sinners and standards of femininity: Discursive constructions of anorexia nervosa and obesity in women's magazines. *Journal of Gender Studies, 17,* 345–358. If this cultural standard did not exist, far fewer American women would suffer from eating disorders than do now. Even if every girl and woman with an eating disorder were cured, others would take their places unless we could somehow change the cultural standard of female slenderness. To the extent this explanation makes sense, eating disorders are best understood as a public issue, not just as a personal trouble.

Picking up on Mills's argument, William Ryan (1976)Ryan, W. (1976). *Blaming the victim*. New York, NY: Vintage Books. pointed out that Americans typically blame the victim when they think about the reasons for social problems such as poverty, unemployment, and crime. They feel that these problems stem from personal failings of the people suffering them, not from structural problems in the larger society. Using Mills's terms, Americans tend to think of social problems as personal troubles rather than public issues. They thus subscribe to a blaming the victim ideology rather than to a blaming the system belief.

To help us understand a blaming-the-victim ideology, let's consider why poor children in urban areas often learn very little in their schools. A blaming-the-victim approach, according to Ryan, would say that the children's parents do not care about their learning, fail to teach them good study habits, and do not encourage them to take school seriously. This type of explanation may apply to some parents, in Ryan's opinion, but it ignores a much more important reason: the sad shape of America's urban schools, which are decrepit structures housing old textbooks and out-of-date equipment. To improve the schooling of children in urban areas, he wrote, we must improve the schools themselves, and not just try to "improve" the parents.

As this example suggests, a blaming-the-victim approach points to solutions to social problems such as poverty and illiteracy that are very different from those suggested by a more structural approach that "blames the system." If we blame the victim, we would spend our limited dollars to address the personal failings of individuals who suffer from poverty, illiteracy, poor health, eating disorders, and other difficulties. If instead we blame the system, we would focus our attention on the various social conditions (decrepit schools, cultural standards of female beauty, and the like) that account for these difficulties. A sociological perspective suggests that the latter approach is ultimately needed to help us deal successfully with the social problems facing us today.

Sociological Imagination

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1.5: Why Study Sociology?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain why it is worthwhile to study sociology.
- Identify ways sociology is applied in the real world.



Figure 1.9: The research of Kenneth and Mamie Clark helped the Supreme Court decide to end "separate but equal" racial segregation in schools in the United States. (Credit: University of Texas)

When Elizabeth Eckford tried to enter Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in September 1957, she was met by an angry crowd and was turned away by authorities. But she knew she had the law on her side. Three years earlier in the landmark *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court had overturned twenty-one state laws that allowed Black and White people to be taught in separate school systems as long as the school systems were "equal." The decision was nothing short of momentous, not only for education, but for a number of other segregation and discrimination issues that have lasted into this decade. And in that momentous decision, the Supreme Court cited the research of the husband-and-wife team of social scientists, Kenneth and Mamie Clark, as evidence that segregation generates in minority students a feeling of inferiority. In the 'doll test,' for example, the Clarks showed children four dolls, two with white skin and yellow hair and two with brown skin and black hair. When asked which doll they preferred, the majority of Black children chose the doll with the light skin doll, and they assigned positive characteristics to it. Most of the Black children discarded the doll with the brown skin—the one that had a closer resemblance to themselves.

When asked to choose the doll that looked like them, many children left the room, started to cry, and/or became depressed. The Clarks' research contributed to the Supreme Court's conclusion that separate but equal was damaging to students, and that separate facilities are unequal.

Sociology and a Better Society

Since it was first founded, many people interested in sociology have been driven by the scholarly desire to contribute knowledge to this field, while others have seen it as way not only to study society but also to improve it. Besides desegregation, sociology has played a crucial role in many important social reforms, such as equal opportunity for women in the workplace, improved treatment for individuals with mental illnesses or learning disabilities, increased accessibility and accommodation for people with physical disabilities, the right of native populations to preserve their land and culture, and prison system reforms.

The predominant American sociologist, the late Peter L. Berger (1929–2017), in his 1963 book, *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*, describes a sociologist as "someone concerned with understanding society in a disciplined way." He

asserts that sociologists have a natural interest in the monumental moments of people's lives, as well as a fascination with banal, everyday occurrences. Berger also describes the "aha" moment when a sociological theory becomes applicable and understood:

> *[T]here is a deceptive simplicity and obviousness about some sociological investigations. One reads them, nods at the familiar scene, remarks that one has heard all this before and don't people have better things to do than to waste their time on truisms—until one is suddenly brought up against an insight that radically questions everything one had previously assumed about this familiar scene. This is the point at which one begins to sense the excitement of sociology. (Berger, 1963)*

Sociology can be exciting because it teaches people ways to recognize how they fit into the world and how others perceive them. Looking at themselves and society from a sociological perspective helps people see where they connect to different groups based on the many different ways they classify themselves and how society classifies them in turn. It raises awareness of how those classifications—such as economic and status levels, education, ethnicity, or sexual orientation—affect perceptions.

Sociology teaches people not to accept easy explanations. It teaches them a way to organize their thinking so that they can ask better questions and formulate better answers. It makes people more aware that there are many different kinds of people in the world who do not necessarily think the way they do. It increases their willingness and ability to try to see the world from other people's perspectives. This prepares them to live and work in an increasingly diverse and integrated world.

Sociology in the Workplace

Employers continue to seek people with what are called "transferable skills." This means that they want to hire people whose knowledge and education can be applied in a variety of settings and whose skills will contribute to various tasks.

Studying sociology can provide people with this wide knowledge and a skill set that can contribute to many workplaces, including

- an understanding of social systems and large bureaucracies;
- the ability to devise and carry out research projects to assess whether a program or policy is working;
- the ability to collect, read, and analyze statistical information from polls or surveys;
- the ability to recognize important differences in people's social, cultural, and economic backgrounds;
- skills in preparing reports and communicating complex ideas; and
- the capacity for critical thinking about social issues and problems that confront modern society. (Department of Sociology, University of Alabama-Huntsville)

Sociology prepares people for a wide variety of careers. Besides actually conducting social research or training others in the field, people who graduate from college with a degree in sociology are hired by government agencies and corporations in fields such as social services, counseling (e.g., family planning, career, substance abuse), community planning, health services, marketing, market research, and human resources. Even a small amount of training in sociology can be an asset in careers like sales, public relations, journalism, teaching, law, and criminal justice.

Sociology in the Real World: Social Networking Consequences

You've probably heard a cautionary story that goes something like this: A high school student spent years working hard, engaging in their community, helping others, and generally growing into a positive and promising young adult. During senior year, they start the college application process, and after a couple of interviews and other interactions, things are looking bright at several of their top choices. But when the time arrives for those fateful notifications about acceptance or rejection, the student and their family are shocked to get rejected from all schools but one. Inquiries from family members and guidance counselors had no results. The only news came in the form of a letter three weeks later from the one school that had accepted the student.

"...After an initial investigation, the University has determined that several posts attributed to you violate our policies, and are offensive and troubling..."

The letter's remaining two pages detailed the ongoing investigation and outlined the potential outcomes. But that one statement said it all: The student had posted something offensive on social media, and their prospective colleges had found it.

Two years earlier, at the beginning of sophomore year, the student had posted two comments and a meme that mocked a classmate who had been assaulted at a party. Even thought the student had removed them within a few days, the posts lived on in other forums and on a few friends' pages; there was also the possibility that someone had screen-grabbed them. While social media posts are protected forms of speech in relation to the government, colleges can review them as they evaluate applicants. Employers can do the same, as can romantic partners or even volunteer organizations.

You may believe that a 15-year-old's social media comments should not impact them years later. Or you may feel that someone who jokes about assault may be a risk to commit a similar act or fail to stop or report one. Sociologists may consider all of those assumptions, and may seek answers or information through research to uncover the impacts, risks, tendencies, and outcomes on the different groups involved. For example, a sociologist might work to discover answers to the following questions:

- Is abusive speech or assault less likely to occur at colleges that screen applicants' social media posts?
- Do sensitivity trainings or cultural competency programs have an effect on online speech?
- Do colleges treat all community members equally when they discover someone has posted offensive comments or other content?
- Are algorithms and artificial intelligence used to detect problematic comments biased against certain people or communities?

None of these questions could be answered by a single study or even a group of them. But like the Supreme Court's use of Mamie and Kenneth Clarke's research, college administrators, high school counselors, and technology companies can use the outcomes of research and analysis to make decisions or implement programs.

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1.6: Key Terms

antipositivism | the view that social researchers should strive for subjectivity as they worked to represent social processes, cultural norms, and societal values

conflict theory | a theory that looks at society as a competition for limited resources

constructivism | an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be

culture | a group's shared practices, values, and beliefs

dramaturgical analysis | a technique sociologists use in which they view society through the metaphor of theatrical performance

dynamic equilibrium | a stable state in which all parts of a healthy society work together properly

dysfunctions | social patterns that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society

figuration | the process of simultaneously analyzing the behavior of an individual and the society that shapes that behavior

function | the part a recurrent activity plays in the social life as a whole and the contribution it makes to structural continuity

functionalism | a theoretical approach that sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of individuals that make up that society

generalized others | the organized and generalized attitude of a social group

grand theories | an attempt to explain large-scale relationships and answer fundamental questions such as why societies form and why they change

hypothesis | a testable proposition

latent functions | the unrecognized or unintended consequences of a social process

macro-level | a wide-scale view of the role of social structures within a society

manifest functions | sought consequences of a social process

micro-level theories | the study of specific relationships between individuals or small groups

paradigms | philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them

positivism | the scientific study of social patterns

qualitative sociology | in-depth interviews, focus groups, and/or analysis of content sources as the source of its data

quantitative sociology | statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants

reification | an error of treating an abstract concept as though it has a real, material existence

significant others | specific individuals that impact a person's life

social facts | the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and all of the cultural rules that govern social life

social institutions | patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs

social solidarity | the social ties that bind a group of people together such as kinship, shared location, and religion

society | a group of people who live in a defined geographical area who interact with one another and who share a common culture

sociological imagination | the ability to understand how your own past relates to that of other people, as well as to history in general and societal structures in particular

sociology | the systematic study of society and social interaction

symbolic interactionism | a theoretical perspective through which scholars examine the relationship of individuals within their society by studying their communication (language and symbols)

theory | a proposed explanation about social interactions or society

verstehen | a German word that means to understand in a deep way

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1.7: Section Summary

1.1 What Is Sociology?

Sociology is the systematic and scientific study of society and social interaction. In order to carry out their studies, sociologists identify cultural patterns and social forces and determine how they affect individuals and groups. They also develop ways to apply their findings to the real world.

1.2 The History of Sociology

Sociology was developed as an academic and scientific way to study and theorize about the changes to society brought on by the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of the earliest sociologists thought that societies and individuals' roles in society could be studied using the same scientific methodologies that were used in the natural sciences, while others believed that is was impossible to predict human behavior scientifically, and still others debated the value of such predictions. Those perspectives continue to be represented within sociology today.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

Sociologists develop theories to explain social events, interactions, and patterns. A theory is a proposed explanation of those social interactions. Theories have different scales. Macro-level theories, such as structural functionalism and conflict theory, attempt to explain how societies operate as a whole. Micro-level theories, such as symbolic interactionism, focus on interactions between individuals.

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

Studying sociology is beneficial both for the individual and for society. By studying sociology people learn how to think critically about social issues and problems that confront our society. The study of sociology enriches students' lives and prepares them for careers in an increasingly diverse world. Society benefits because people with sociological training are better prepared to make informed decisions about social issues and take effective action to deal with them.

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1.9: Crash Course Video- Sociological Theories

Major Sociological Paradigms: Crash Course Sociology #2



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Sociological Research

Social research is research conducted by social scientists following a systematic plan. Social research methodologies can be classified along a quantitative/qualitative dimension.

2.1: Introduction
2.2: Approaches to Sociological Research
2.3: Research Methods
2.3.1: Macro vs. Micro Perspectives
2.4: Ethical Concerns
2.5: Key Terms
2.6: Section Summary
2.7: References
2.8: Milgram Experiment Reenactment

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2.1: Introduction



Figure 2.1: Many believe that crime rates go up during the full moon, but scientific research does not support this conclusion. (Credit: Arman Thanvir/flickr.)

Chapter Outline

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research
2.2 Research Methods
2.3 Ethical Concerns

As sociology made its way into American universities, scholars developed it into a science that relies on research to build a body of knowledge. Sociologists began collecting data (observations and documentation) and applying the scientific method or an interpretative framework to increase understanding of societies and social interactions.

Our observations about social situations often incorporate biases based on our own views and limited data. To avoid subjectivity, sociologists conduct experiments or studies that gather and analyze empirical evidence from direct experience. Peers review the conclusions from this research and often repeat the experiments or studies or apply them to other contexts in order to validate these conclusions. Examples of peer-reviewed research are found in scholarly journals.

Consider a study on the relationship between COVID-19 and crime rates published in *Crime Science*, a scholarly journal. Researchers hypothesized that COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions would lead to a drop both in street crimes and home burglaries. Researchers collected the data Swedish police used to track and project future crimes. They found that assaults, pickpocketing and burglary had decreased significantly (Gerell, Kardell, and Kindgren, 2020). In this way, researchers used empirical evidence and statistical analysis to answer the question how did COVID-19 restrictions impact crime rates. In this chapter, we will explore the approaches and methods sociologists use to conduct studies like this one.

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2.2: Approaches to Sociological Research

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Define and describe the scientific method.
- Explain how the scientific method is used in sociological research.
- Describe the function and importance of an interpretive framework.
- Describe the differences in accuracy, reliability and validity in a research study.

When sociologists apply the sociological perspective and begin to ask questions, no topic is off limits. Every aspect of human behavior is a source of possible investigation. Sociologists question the world that humans have created and live in. They notice patterns of behavior as people move through that world. Using sociological methods and systematic research within the framework of the scientific method and a scholarly interpretive perspective, sociologists have discovered social patterns in the workplace that have transformed industries, in families that have enlightened family members, and in education that have aided structural changes in classrooms.

Sociologists often begin the research process by asking a question about how or why things happen in this world. It might be a unique question about a new trend or an old question about a common aspect of life. Once the question is formed, the sociologist proceeds through an in-depth process to answer it. In deciding how to design that process, the researcher may adopt a scientific approach or an interpretive framework. The following sections describe these approaches to knowledge.

The Scientific Method

Sociologists make use of tried and true methods of research, such as experiments, surveys, and field research. But humans and their social interactions are so diverse that these interactions can seem impossible to chart or explain. It might seem that science is about discoveries and chemical reactions or about proving ideas right or wrong rather than about exploring the nuances of human behavior.

However, this is exactly why scientific models work for studying human behavior. A scientific process of research establishes parameters that help make sure results are objective and accurate. Scientific methods provide limitations and boundaries that focus a study and organize its results.

The scientific method involves developing and testing theories about the social world based on empirical evidence. It is defined by its commitment to systematic observation of the empirical world and strives to be objective, critical, skeptical, and logical. It involves a series of six prescribed steps that have been established over centuries of scientific scholarship.

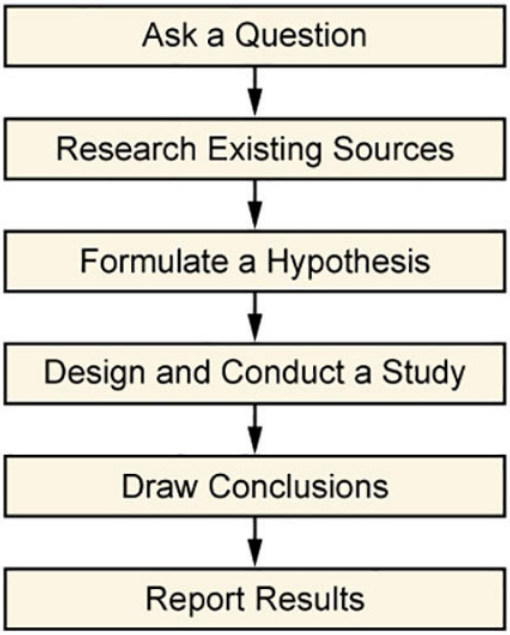


Figure 2.2: The Scientific Method. 6 steps of the scientific method are an essential tool in research.

Sociological research does not reduce knowledge to right or wrong facts. Results of studies tend to provide people with insights they did not have before—explanations of human behaviors and social practices and access to knowledge of other cultures, rituals and beliefs, or trends and attitudes.

In general, sociologists tackle questions about the role of social characteristics in outcomes or results. For example, how do different communities fare in terms of psychological well-being, community cohesiveness, range of vocation, wealth, crime rates, and so on? Are communities functioning smoothly? Sociologists often look between the cracks to discover obstacles to meeting basic human needs. They might also study environmental influences and patterns of behavior that lead to crime, substance abuse, divorce, poverty, unplanned pregnancies, or illness. And, because sociological studies are not all focused on negative behaviors or challenging situations, social researchers might study vacation trends, healthy eating habits, neighborhood organizations, higher education patterns, games, parks, and exercise habits.

Sociologists can use the scientific method not only to collect but also to interpret and analyze data. They deliberately apply scientific logic and objectivity. They are interested in—but not attached to—the results. They work outside of their own political or social agendas. This does not mean researchers do not have their own personalities, complete with preferences and opinions. But sociologists deliberately use the scientific method to maintain as much objectivity, focus, and consistency as possible in collecting and analyzing data in research studies.

With its systematic approach, the scientific method has proven useful in shaping sociological studies. The scientific method provides a systematic, organized series of steps that help ensure objectivity and consistency in exploring a social problem. They provide the means for accuracy, reliability, and validity. In the end, the scientific method provides a shared basis for discussion and analysis (Merton 1963). Typically, the scientific method has 6 steps which are described below.

Step 1: Ask a Question or Find a Research Topic

The first step of the scientific method is to ask a question, select a problem, and identify the specific area of interest. The topic should be narrow enough to study within a geographic location and time frame. “Are societies capable of sustained happiness?” would be too vague. The question should also be broad enough to have universal merit. “What do personal hygiene habits reveal about the values of students at XYZ High School?” would be too narrow. Sociologists strive to frame questions that examine well-defined patterns and relationships.

In a hygiene study, for instance, hygiene could be defined as “personal habits to maintain physical appearance (as opposed to health),” and a researcher might ask, “How do differing personal hygiene habits reflect the cultural value placed on appearance?”

Step 2: Review the Literature/Research Existing Sources

The next step researchers undertake is to conduct background research through a literature review, which is a review of any existing similar or related studies. A visit to the library, a thorough online search, and a survey of academic journals will uncover existing research about the topic of study. This step helps researchers gain a broad understanding of work previously conducted, identify gaps in understanding of the topic, and position their own research to build on prior knowledge. Researchers—including student researchers—are responsible for correctly citing existing sources they use in a study or that inform their work. While it is fine to borrow previously published material (as long as it enhances a unique viewpoint), it must be referenced properly and never plagiarized.

To study crime, a researcher might also sort through existing data from the court system, police database, prison information, interviews with criminals, guards, wardens, etc. It's important to examine this information in addition to existing research to determine how these resources might be used to fill holes in existing knowledge. Reviewing existing sources educates researchers and helps refine and improve a research study design.

Step 3: Formulate a Hypothesis

A hypothesis is an explanation for a phenomenon based on a conjecture about the relationship between the phenomenon and one or more causal factors. In sociology, the hypothesis will often predict how one form of human behavior influences another. For example, a hypothesis might be in the form of an "if, then statement." Let's relate this to our topic of crime: If unemployment increases, then the crime rate will increase.

In scientific research, we formulate hypotheses to include an independent variables (IV), which are the *cause* of the change, and a dependent variable (DV), which is the *effect*, or thing that is changed. In the example above, unemployment is the independent variable and the crime rate is the dependent variable.

In a sociological study, the researcher would establish one form of human behavior as the independent variable and observe the influence it has on a dependent variable. How does gender (the independent variable) affect rate of income (the dependent variable)? How does one's religion (the independent variable) affect family size (the dependent variable)? How is social class (the dependent variable) affected by level of education (the independent variable)?

Table 2.1 Examples of Dependent and Independent Variables: Typically, the independent variable causes the dependent variable to change in some way.

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
The greater the availability of affordable housing, the lower the homeless rate.	Affordable Housing	Homeless Rate
The greater the availability of math tutoring, the higher the math grades.	Math Tutoring	Math Grades
The greater the police patrol presence, the safer the neighborhood.	Police Patrol Presence	Safer Neighborhood
The greater the factory lighting, the higher the productivity.	Factory Lighting	Productivity
The greater the amount of media coverage, the higher the public awareness.	Observation	Public Awareness

Taking an example from Table 12.1, a researcher might hypothesize that teaching children proper hygiene (the independent variable) will boost their sense of self-esteem (the dependent variable). Note, however, this hypothesis can also work the other way around. A sociologist might predict that increasing a child's sense of self-esteem (the independent variable) will increase or improve habits of hygiene (now the dependent variable). Identifying the independent and dependent variables is very important. As the hygiene example shows, simply identifying related two topics or variables is not enough. Their prospective relationship must be part of the hypothesis.

Step 4: Design and Conduct a Study

Researchers design studies to maximize reliability, which refers to how likely research results are to be replicated if the study is reproduced. Reliability increases the likelihood that what happens to one person will happen to all people in a group or what will happen in one situation will happen in another. Cooking is a science. When you follow a recipe and measure ingredients with a cooking tool, such as a measuring cup, the same results is obtained as long as the cook follows the same recipe and uses the same type of tool. The measuring cup introduces accuracy into the process. If a person uses a less accurate tool, such as their hand, to measure ingredients rather than a cup, the same result may not be replicated. Accurate tools and methods increase reliability.

Researchers also strive for validity, which refers to how well the study measures what it was designed to measure. To produce reliable and valid results, sociologists develop an operational definition, that is, they define each concept, or variable, in terms of the physical or concrete steps it takes to objectively measure it. The operational definition identifies an observable condition of the concept. By operationalizing the concept, all researchers can collect data in a systematic or replicable manner. Moreover, researchers can determine whether the experiment or method validly represent the phenomenon they intended to study.

A study asking how tutoring improves grades, for instance, might define "tutoring" as "one-on-one assistance by an expert in the field, hired by an educational institution." However, one researcher might define a "good" grade as a C or better, while another uses a B+ as a starting point for "good." For the results to be replicated and gain acceptance within the broader scientific community, researchers would have to use a standard operational definition. These definitions set limits and establish cut-off points that ensure consistency and replicability in a study.

We will explore research methods in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

Step 5: Draw Conclusions

After constructing the research design, sociologists collect, tabulate or categorize, and analyze data to formulate conclusions. If the analysis supports the hypothesis, researchers can discuss the implications of the results for the theory or policy solution that they were addressing. If the analysis does not support the hypothesis, researchers may consider repeating the experiment or think of ways to improve their procedure.

However, even when results contradict a sociologist's prediction of a study's outcome, these results still contribute to sociological understanding. Sociologists analyze general patterns in response to a study, but they are equally interested in exceptions to patterns. In a study of education, a researcher might predict that high school dropouts have a hard time finding rewarding careers. While many assume that the higher the education, the higher the salary and degree of career happiness, there are certainly exceptions. People with little education have had stunning careers, and people with advanced degrees have had trouble finding work. A sociologist prepares a hypothesis knowing that results may substantiate or contradict it.

Sociologists carefully keep in mind how operational definitions and research designs impact the results as they draw conclusions. Consider the concept of "increase of crime," which might be defined as the percent increase in crime from last week to this week, as in the study of Swedish crime discussed above. Yet the data used to evaluate "increase of crime" might be limited by many factors: who commits the crime, where the crimes are committed, or what type of crime is committed. If the data is gathered for "crimes committed in Houston, Texas in zip code 77021," then it may not be generalizable to crimes committed in rural areas outside of major cities like Houston. If data is collected about vandalism, it may not be generalizable to assault.

Step 6: Report Results

Researchers report their results at conferences and in academic journals. These results are then subjected to the scrutiny of other sociologists in the field. Before the conclusions of a study become widely accepted, the studies are often repeated in the same or different environments. In this way, sociological theories and knowledge develops as the relationships between social phenomenon are established in broader contexts and different circumstances.

Interpretive Framework

While many sociologists rely on empirical data and the scientific method as a research approach, others operate from an interpretive framework. While systematic, this approach doesn't follow the hypothesis-testing model that seeks to find generalizable results. Instead, an interpretive framework, sometimes referred to as an *interpretive perspective*, seeks to understand social worlds from the point of view of participants, which leads to in-depth knowledge or understanding about the human experience.

Interpretive research is generally more descriptive or narrative in its findings. Rather than formulating a hypothesis and method for testing it, an interpretive researcher will develop approaches to explore the topic at hand that may involve a significant amount of direct observation or interaction with subjects including storytelling. This type of researcher learns through the process and sometimes adjusts the research methods or processes midway to optimize findings as they evolve.

Critical Sociology

Critical sociology focuses on deconstruction of existing sociological research and theory. Informed by the work of Karl Marx, scholars known collectively as the Frankfurt School proposed that social science, as much as any academic pursuit, is embedded in the system of power constituted by the set of class, caste, race, gender, and other relationships that exist in the society. Consequently, it cannot be treated as purely objective. Critical sociologists view theories, methods, and the conclusions as serving one of two purposes: they can either legitimate and rationalize systems of social power and oppression or liberate humans from inequality and restriction on human freedom. Deconstruction can involve data collection, but the analysis of this data is not empirical or positivist.

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2.3: Research Methods

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Recall the 6 Steps of the Scientific Method
- Differentiate between four kinds of research methods: surveys, field research, experiments, and secondary data analysis.
- Explain the appropriateness of specific research approaches for specific topics.

Sociologists examine the social world, see a problem or interesting pattern, and set out to study it. They use research methods to design a study. Planning the research design is a key step in any sociological study. Sociologists generally choose from widely used methods of social investigation: **primary source data collection** such as survey, participant observation, ethnography, case study, unobtrusive observations, experiment, and secondary data analysis, or use of existing sources. Every research method comes with plusses and minuses, and the topic of study strongly influences which method or methods are put to use. When you are conducting research think about the best way to gather or obtain knowledge about your topic, think of yourself as an architect. An architect needs a blueprint to build a house, as a sociologist your blueprint is your research design including your data collection method.

When entering a particular social environment, a researcher must be careful. There are times to remain anonymous and times to be overt. There are times to conduct interviews and times to simply observe. Some participants need to be thoroughly informed; others should not know they are being observed. A researcher wouldn't stroll into a crime-ridden neighborhood at midnight, calling out, "Any gang members around?"

Making sociologists' presence invisible is not always realistic for other reasons. That option is not available to a researcher studying prison behaviors, early education, or the Ku Klux Klan. Researchers can't just stroll into prisons, kindergarten classrooms, or Klan meetings and unobtrusively observe behaviors or attract attention. In situations like these, other methods are needed. Researchers choose methods that best suit their study topics, protect research participants or subjects, and that fit with their overall approaches to research.

Surveys

As a research method, a survey collects data from subjects who respond to a series of questions about behaviors and opinions, often in the form of a questionnaire or an interview. The survey is one of the most widely used scientific research methods. The standard survey format allows individuals a level of anonymity in which they can express personal ideas.

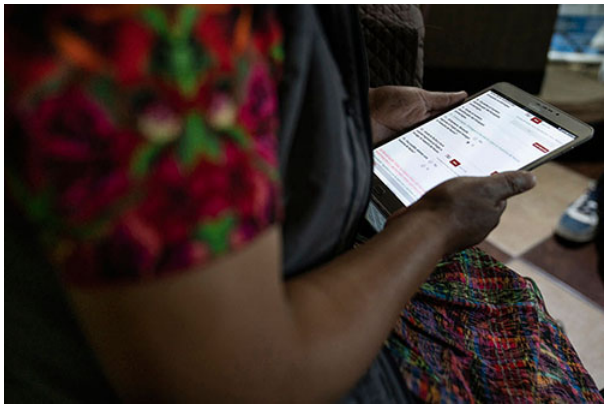


Figure 2.3: Questionnaires are a common research method. (Credit: CDC Global/flickr)

At some point, most people in the United States respond to some type of survey. The 2020 U.S. Census is an excellent example of a large-scale survey intended to gather sociological data. Since 1790, United States has conducted a survey consisting of six questions to received demographical data pertaining to residents. The questions pertain to the demographics of the residents who live in the United States. Currently, the Census is received by residents in the United Stated and five territories and consists of 12 questions.

Not all surveys are considered sociological research, however, and many surveys people commonly encounter focus on identifying marketing needs and strategies rather than testing a hypothesis or contributing to social science knowledge. Questions such as,

"How many hot dogs do you eat in a month?" or "Were the staff helpful?" are not usually designed as scientific research. The Nielsen Ratings determine the popularity of television programming through scientific market research. However, polls conducted by television programs such as *American Idol* or *So You Think You Can Dance* cannot be generalized, because they are administered to an unrepresentative population, a specific show's audience. You might receive polls through your cell phones or emails, from grocery stores, restaurants, and retail stores. They often provide you incentives for completing the survey.

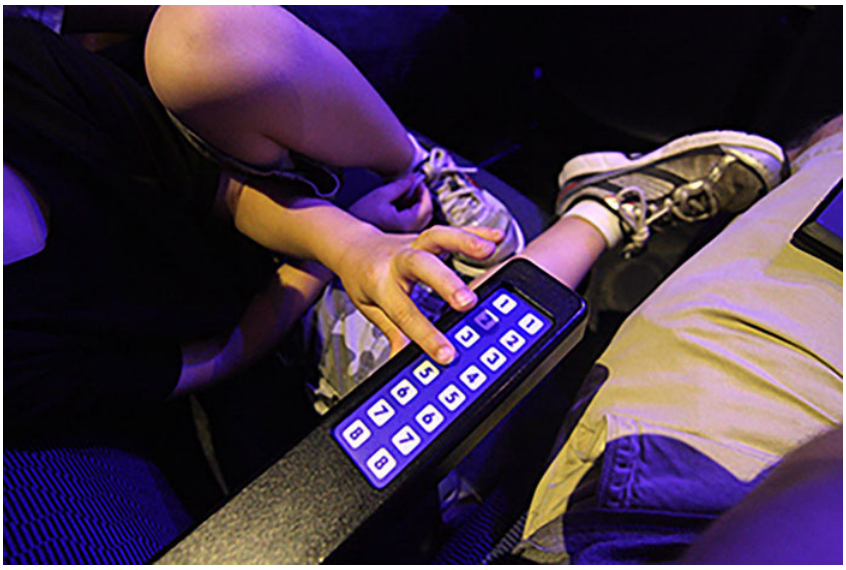


Figure 2.4: Real-time surveys are common in classrooms, live-audience events, and even popular media. Twitter polls have often replaced physical devices such as the one pictured. (Credit: Sam Howzit/flickr)

Sociologists conduct surveys under controlled conditions for specific purposes. Surveys gather different types of information from people. While surveys are not great at capturing the ways people really behave in social situations, they are a great method for discovering how people feel, think, and act—or at least how they say they feel, think, and act. Surveys can track preferences for presidential candidates or reported individual behaviors (such as sleeping, driving, or texting habits) or information such as employment status, income, and education levels.

A survey targets a specific population, people who are the focus of a study, such as college athletes, international students, or teenagers living with type 1 (juvenile-onset) diabetes. Most researchers choose to survey a small sector of the population, or a sample, a manageable number of subjects who *represent* a larger population. The success of a study depends on how well a population is represented by the sample. In a random sample, every person in a population has the same chance of being chosen for the study. As a result, a Gallup Poll, if conducted as a nationwide random sampling, should be able to provide an accurate estimate of public opinion whether it contacts 2,000 or 10,000 people.

After selecting subjects, the researcher develops a specific plan to ask questions and record responses. It is important to inform subjects of the nature and purpose of the survey up front. If they agree to participate, researchers thank subjects and offer them a chance to see the results of the study if they are interested. The researcher presents the subjects with an instrument, which is a means of gathering the information.

A common instrument is a questionnaire. Subjects often answer a series of **closed-ended questions**. The researcher might ask yes-or-no or multiple-choice questions, allowing subjects to choose possible responses to each question. This kind of questionnaire collects quantitative data—data in numerical form that can be counted and statistically analyzed. Just count up the number of "yes" and "no" responses or correct answers, and chart them into percentages.

Questionnaires can also ask more complex questions with more complex answers—beyond "yes," "no," or checkbox options. These types of inquiries use **open-ended questions** that require short essay responses. Participants willing to take the time to write those answers might convey personal religious beliefs, political views, goals, or morals. The answers are subjective and vary from person to person. *How do plan to use your college education?*

Some topics that investigate internal thought processes are impossible to observe directly and are difficult to discuss honestly in a public forum. People are more likely to share honest answers if they can respond to questions anonymously. This type of personal explanation is qualitative data—conveyed through words. Qualitative information is harder to organize and tabulate. The researcher

will end up with a wide range of responses, some of which may be surprising. The benefit of written opinions, though, is the wealth of in-depth material that they provide.

An interview is a one-on-one conversation between the researcher and the subject, and it is a way of conducting surveys on a topic. However, participants are free to respond as they wish, without being limited by predetermined choices. In the back-and-forth conversation of an interview, a researcher can ask for clarification, spend more time on a subtopic, or ask additional questions. In an interview, a subject will ideally feel free to open up and answer questions that are often complex. There are no right or wrong answers. The subject might not even know how to answer the questions honestly.

Questions such as “How does society’s view of alcohol consumption influence your decision whether or not to take your first sip of alcohol?” or “Did you feel that the divorce of your parents would put a social stigma on your family?” involve so many factors that the answers are difficult to categorize. A researcher needs to avoid steering or prompting the subject to respond in a specific way; otherwise, the results will prove to be unreliable. The researcher will also benefit from gaining a subject’s trust, from empathizing or commiserating with a subject, and from listening without judgment.

Surveys often collect both quantitative and qualitative data. For example, a researcher interviewing people who are incarcerated might receive quantitative data, such as demographics – race, age, sex, that can be analyzed statistically. For example, the researcher might discover that 20 percent of incarcerated people are above the age of 50. The researcher might also collect qualitative data, such as why people take advantage of educational opportunities during their sentence and other explanatory information.

The survey can be carried out online, over the phone, by mail, or face-to-face. When researchers collect data outside a laboratory, library, or workplace setting, they are conducting field research, which is our next topic.

Field Research

The work of sociology rarely happens in limited, confined spaces. Rather, sociologists go out into the world. They meet subjects where they live, work, and play. Field research refers to gathering primary data from a natural environment. To conduct field research, the sociologist must be willing to step into new environments and observe, participate, or experience those worlds. In field work, the sociologists, rather than the subjects, are the ones out of their element.

The researcher interacts with or observes people and gathers data along the way. The key point in field research is that it takes place in the subject’s natural environment, whether it’s a coffee shop or tribal village, a homeless shelter or the DMV, a hospital, airport, mall, or beach resort.



Figure 2.5: Sociological researchers travel across countries and cultures to interact with and observe subjects in their natural environments. (Credit: IMLS Digital Collections and Content/flickr)

While field research often begins in a specific *setting*, the study's purpose is to observe specific *behaviors* in that setting. Field work is optimal for observing *how* people think and behave. It seeks to understand *why* they behave that way. However, researchers may struggle to narrow down cause and effect when there are so many variables floating around in a natural environment. And while field research looks for correlation, its small sample size does not allow for establishing a causal relationship between two variables. Indeed, much of the data gathered in sociology do not identify a cause and effect but a correlation.

Sociology in the Real World: Beyoncé and Lady Gaga as Sociological Subjects



Figure 2.6: Researchers have used surveys and participant observations to accumulate data on Lady Gaga and Beyonce as multifaceted performers. (Credit a: John Robert Chartlon/flickr, b: Kristopher Harris/flickr.)

Sociologist have studied Lady Gaga and Beyoncé and their impact on music, movies, social media, fan participation, and social equality. In their studies, researchers have used several research methods including secondary analysis, participant observation, and surveys from concert participants.

In their study, Click, Lee & Holiday (2013) interviewed 45 Lady Gaga fans who utilized social media to communicate with the artist. These fans viewed Lady Gaga as a mirror of themselves and a source of inspiration. Like her, they embrace not being a part of mainstream culture. Many of Lady Gaga's fans are members of the LGBTQ community. They see the "song "Born This Way" as a rallying cry and answer her calls for "Paws Up" with a physical expression of solidarity—outstretched arms and fingers bent and curled to resemble monster claws."

Sascha Buchanan (2019) made use of participant observation to study the relationship between two fan groups, that of Beyoncé and that of Rihanna. She observed award shows sponsored by iHeartRadio, MTV EMA, and BET that pit one group against another as they competed for Best Fan Army, Biggest Fans, and FANdemonium. Buchanan argues that the media thus sustains a myth of rivalry between the two most commercially successful Black women vocal artists.

Participant Observation

In 2000, a comic writer named Rodney Rothman wanted an insider's view of white-collar work. He slipped into the sterile, high-rise offices of a New York "dot com" agency. Every day for two weeks, he pretended to work there. His main purpose was simply to see whether anyone would notice him or challenge his presence. No one did. The receptionist greeted him. The employees smiled and said good morning. Rothman was accepted as part of the team. He even went so far as to claim a desk, inform the receptionist of his whereabouts, and attend a meeting. He published an article about his experience in *The New Yorker* called "My Fake Job" (2000). Later, he was discredited for allegedly fabricating some details of the story and *The New Yorker* issued an apology. However, Rothman's entertaining article still offered fascinating descriptions of the inside workings of a "dot com" company and exemplified the lengths to which a writer, or a sociologist, will go to uncover material.

Rothman had conducted a form of study called participant observation, in which researchers join people and participate in a group's routine activities for the purpose of observing them within that context. This method lets researchers experience a specific aspect of social life. A researcher might go to great lengths to get a firsthand look into a trend, institution, or behavior. A researcher might work as a waitress in a diner, experience homelessness for several weeks, or ride along with police officers as they patrol their regular beat. Often, these researchers try to blend in seamlessly with the population they study, and they may not disclose their true identity or purpose if they feel it would compromise the results of their research.



Figure 2.7: Is she a working waitress or a sociologist conducting a study using participant observation? A field researcher may take a job or take other steps to get firsthand knowledge of their subjects. (Credit: Gareth Williams/flickr.)

At the beginning of a field study, researchers might have a question: "What really goes on in the kitchen of the most popular diner on campus?" or "What is it like to be homeless?" Participant observation is a useful method if the researcher wants to explore a certain environment from the inside.

Field researchers simply want to observe and learn. In such a setting, the researcher will be alert and open minded to whatever happens, recording all observations accurately. Soon, as patterns emerge, questions will become more specific, observations will lead to hypotheses, and hypotheses will guide the researcher in analyzing data and generating results.

In a study of small towns in the United States conducted by sociological researchers John S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, the team altered their purpose as they gathered data. They initially planned to focus their study on the role of religion in U.S. towns. As they gathered observations, they realized that the effect of industrialization and urbanization was the more relevant topic of this social group. The Lynds did not change their methods, but they revised the purpose of their study.

This shaped the structure of *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*, their published results (Lynd & Lynd, 1929).

The Lynds were upfront about their mission. The townspeople of Muncie, Indiana, knew why the researchers were in their midst. But some sociologists prefer not to alert people to their presence. The main advantage of covert participant observation is that it allows the researcher access to authentic, natural behaviors of a group's members. The challenge, however, is gaining access to a setting without disrupting the pattern of others' behavior. Becoming an inside member of a group, organization, or subculture takes time and effort. Researchers must pretend to be something they are not. The process could involve role playing, making contacts, networking, or applying for a job.

Once inside a group, some researchers spend months or even years pretending to be one of the people they are observing. However, as observers, they cannot get too involved. They must keep their purpose in mind and apply the sociological perspective. That way, they illuminate social patterns that are often unrecognized. Because information gathered during participant observation is mostly qualitative, rather than quantitative, the end results are often descriptive or interpretive. The researcher might present findings in an article or book and describe what he or she witnessed and experienced.

This type of research is what journalist Barbara Ehrenreich conducted for her book *Nickel and Dimed*. One day over lunch with her editor, Ehrenreich mentioned an idea. *How can people exist on minimum-wage work? How do low-income workers get by?* she wondered. *Someone should do a study*. To her surprise, her editor responded, *Why don't you do it?*

That's how Ehrenreich found herself joining the ranks of the working class. For several months, she left her comfortable home and lived and worked among people who lacked, for the most part, higher education and marketable job skills. Undercover, she applied for and worked minimum wage jobs as a waitress, a cleaning woman, a nursing home aide, and a retail chain employee. During her participant observation, she used only her income from those jobs to pay for food, clothing, transportation, and shelter.

She discovered the obvious, that it's almost impossible to get by on minimum wage work. She also experienced and observed attitudes many middle and upper-class people never think about. She witnessed firsthand the treatment of working class employees. She saw the extreme measures people take to make ends meet and to survive. She described fellow employees who held two or three jobs, worked seven days a week, lived in cars, could not pay to treat chronic health conditions, got randomly fired, submitted to drug tests, and moved in and out of homeless shelters. She brought aspects of that life to light, describing difficult working conditions and the poor treatment that low-wage workers suffer.

The book she wrote upon her return to her real life as a well-paid writer, has been widely read and used in many college classrooms.



Figure 2.8: Field research happens in real locations. What type of environment do work spaces foster? What would a sociologist discover after blending in? (Credit: Lyncconf Games/flickr)

Ethnography

Ethnography is the immersion of the researcher in the natural setting of an entire social community to observe and experience their everyday life and culture. The heart of an ethnographic study focuses on how subjects view their own social standing and how they understand themselves in relation to a social group.

An ethnographic study might observe, for example, a small U.S. fishing town, an Inuit community, a village in Thailand, a Buddhist monastery, a private boarding school, or an amusement park. These places all have borders. People live, work, study, or vacation within those borders. People are there for a certain reason and therefore behave in certain ways and respect certain cultural norms. An ethnographer would commit to spending a determined amount of time studying every aspect of the chosen place, taking in as much as possible.

A sociologist studying a tribe in the Amazon might watch the way villagers go about their daily lives and then write a paper about it. To observe a spiritual retreat center, an ethnographer might sign up for a retreat and attend as a guest for an extended stay, observe and record data, and collate the material into results.

Institutional Ethnography

Institutional ethnography is an extension of basic ethnographic research principles that focuses intentionally on everyday concrete social relationships. Developed by Canadian sociologist Dorothy E. Smith (1990), institutional ethnography is often considered a feminist-inspired approach to social analysis and primarily considers women's experiences within male- dominated societies and power structures. Smith's work is seen to challenge sociology's exclusion of women, both academically and in the study of women's lives (Fenstermaker, n.d.).

Historically, social science research tended to objectify women and ignore their experiences except as viewed from the male perspective. Modern feminists note that describing women, and other marginalized groups, as subordinates helps those in authority maintain their own dominant positions (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada n.d.). Smith's three major works explored what she called "the conceptual practices of power" and are still considered seminal works in feminist theory and ethnography (Fensternmaker n.d.).

Sociological Research: The Making of Middletown: A Study in Modern U.S. Culture

In 1924, a young married couple named Robert and Helen Lynd undertook an unprecedented ethnography: to apply sociological methods to the study of one U.S. city in order to discover what "ordinary" people in the United States did and believed. Choosing Muncie, Indiana (population about 30,000) as their subject, they moved to the small town and lived there for eighteen months.

Ethnographers had been examining other cultures for decades—groups considered minorities or outsiders—like gangs, immigrants, and the poor. But no one had studied the so-called average American.

Recording interviews and using surveys to gather data, the Lynds objectively described what they observed. Researching existing sources, they compared Muncie in 1890 to the Muncie they observed in 1924. Most Muncie adults, they found, had grown up on farms but now lived in homes inside the city. As a result, the Lynds focused their study on the impact of industrialization and urbanization.

They observed that Muncie was divided into business and working class groups. They defined business class as dealing with abstract concepts and symbols, while working class people used tools to create concrete objects. The two classes led different lives with different goals and hopes. However, the Lynds observed, mass production offered both classes the same amenities. Like wealthy families, the working class was now able to own radios, cars, washing machines, telephones, vacuum cleaners, and refrigerators. This was an emerging material reality of the 1920s.

As the Lynds worked, they divided their manuscript into six chapters: Getting a Living, Making a Home, Training the Young, Using Leisure, Engaging in Religious Practices, and Engaging in Community Activities.

When the study was completed, the Lynds encountered a big problem. The Rockefeller Foundation, which had commissioned the book, claimed it was useless and refused to publish it. The Lynds asked if they could seek a publisher themselves.

Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture was not only published in 1929 but also became an instant bestseller, a status unheard of for a sociological study. The book sold out six printings in its first year of publication, and has never gone out of print (Caplow, Hicks, & Wattenberg. 2000).

Nothing like it had ever been done before. Middletown was reviewed on the front page of the New York Times. Readers in the 1920s and 1930s identified with the citizens of Muncie, Indiana, but they were equally fascinated by the sociological methods and the use of scientific data to define ordinary people in the United States. The book was proof that social data was important —and interesting—to the U.S. public.



Figure 2.9: A classroom in Muncie, Indiana, in 1917, five years before John and Helen Lynd began researching this "typical" U.S. community. (Credit: Don O'Brien/flickr)

Case Study

Sometimes a researcher wants to study one specific person or event. A case study is an in-depth analysis of a single event, situation, or individual. To conduct a case study, a researcher examines existing sources like documents and archival records, conducts interviews, engages in direct observation and even participant observation, if possible.

Researchers might use this method to study a single case of a foster child, drug lord, cancer patient, criminal, or rape victim. However, a major criticism of the case study as a method is that while offering depth on a topic, it does not provide enough evidence to form a generalized conclusion. In other words, it is difficult to make universal claims based on just one person, since one person does not verify a pattern. This is why most sociologists do not use case studies as a primary research method.

However, case studies are useful when the single case is unique. In these instances, a single case study can contribute tremendous incite. For example, a feral child, also called "wild child," is one who grows up isolated from human beings. Feral children grow up without social contact and language, which are elements crucial to a "civilized" child's development. These children mimic the behaviors and movements of animals, and often invent their own language. There are only about one hundred cases of "feral children" in the world.

As you may imagine, a feral child is a subject of great interest to researchers. Feral children provide unique information about child development because they have grown up outside of the parameters of "normal" growth and nurturing. And since there are very few feral children, the case study is the most appropriate method for researchers to use in studying the subject.

At age three, a Ukranian girl named Oxana Malaya suffered severe parental neglect. She lived in a shed with dogs, and she ate raw meat and scraps. Five years later, a neighbor called authorities and reported seeing a girl who ran on all fours, barking. Officials brought Oxana into society, where she was cared for and taught some human behaviors, but she never became fully socialized. She has been designated as unable to support herself and now lives in a mental institution (Grice 2011). Case studies like this offer a way for sociologists to collect data that may not be obtained by any other method.

Experiments

You have probably tested some of your own personal social theories. "If I study at night and review in the morning, I'll improve my retention skills." Or, "If I stop drinking soda, I'll feel better." Cause and effect. If this, then that. When you test the theory, your results either prove or disprove your hypothesis.

One way researchers test social theories is by conducting an experiment, meaning they investigate relationships to test a hypothesis—a scientific approach.

There are two main types of experiments: lab-based experiments and natural or field experiments. In a lab setting, the research can be controlled so that more data can be recorded in a limited amount of time. In a natural or field- based experiment, the time it takes to gather the data cannot be controlled but the information might be considered more accurate since it was collected without interference or intervention by the researcher.

As a research method, either type of sociological experiment is useful for testing *if-then* statements: *if* a particular thing happens (cause), *then* another particular thing will result (effect). To set up a lab-based experiment, sociologists create artificial situations that allow them to manipulate variables.

Classically, the sociologist selects a set of people with similar characteristics, such as age, class, race, or education. Those people are divided into two groups. One is the experimental group and the other is the control group. The **experimental group** is exposed to the independent variable(s) and the **control group** is not. To test the benefits of tutoring, for example, the sociologist might provide tutoring to the experimental group of students but not to the control group. Then both groups would be tested for differences in performance to see if tutoring had an effect on the experimental group of students. As you can imagine, in a case like this, the researcher would not want to jeopardize the accomplishments of either group of students, so the setting would be somewhat artificial. The test would not be for a grade reflected on their permanent record of a student, for example.

And if a researcher told the students they would be observed as part of a study on measuring the effectiveness of tutoring, the students might not behave naturally. This is called the Hawthorne effect—which occurs when people change their behavior because they know they are being watched as part of a study. The Hawthorne effect is unavoidable in some research studies because sociologists have to make the purpose of the study known. Subjects must be aware that they are being observed, and a certain amount of artificiality may result (Sonnenfeld 1985).

Sociological Research: An Experiment in Action



Figure 2.10: Sociologist Frances Heussenstamm conducted an experiment to explore the correlation between traffic stops and race-based bumper stickers. This issue of racial profiling remains a hot-button topic today. (Credit: dwightsghost/flickr)

A real-life example will help illustrate the experiment process. In 1971, Frances Heussenstamm, a sociology professor at California State University at Los Angeles, had a theory about police prejudice. To test her theory, she conducted an experiment. She chose fifteen students from three ethnic backgrounds: Black, White, and Hispanic. She chose students who routinely drove to and from campus along Los Angeles freeway routes, and who had had perfect driving records for longer than a year.

Next, she placed a Black Panther bumper sticker on each car. That sticker, a representation of a social value, was the independent variable. In the 1970s, the Black Panthers were a revolutionary group actively fighting racism. Heussenstamm asked the students to follow their normal driving patterns. She wanted to see whether seeming support for the Black Panthers would change how these good drivers were treated by the police patrolling the highways. The dependent variable would be the number of traffic stops/citations.

The first arrest, for an incorrect lane change, was made two hours after the experiment began. One participant was pulled over three times in three days. He quit the study. After seventeen days, the fifteen drivers had collected a total of thirty-three traffic citations. The experiment was halted. The funding to pay traffic fines had run out, and so had the enthusiasm of the participants (Heussenstamm, 1971).

Secondary Data Analysis

While sociologists often engage in original research studies, they also contribute knowledge to the discipline through secondary data analysis. Secondary data does not result from firsthand research collected from primary sources, but are the already completed work of other researchers or data collected by an agency or organization. Sociologists might study works written by historians, economists, teachers, or early sociologists. They might search through periodicals, newspapers, or magazines, or organizational data from any period in history.

Using available information not only saves time and money but can also add depth to a study. Sociologists often interpret findings in a new way, a way that was not part of an author's original purpose or intention. To study how women were encouraged to act and behave in the 1960s, for example, a researcher might watch movies, televisions shows, and situation comedies from that period. Or to research changes in behavior and attitudes due to the emergence of television in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a sociologist would rely on new interpretations of secondary data. Decades from now, researchers will most likely conduct similar studies on the advent of mobile phones, the Internet, or social media.

Social scientists also learn by analyzing the research of a variety of agencies. Governmental departments and global groups, like the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics or the World Health Organization (WHO), publish studies with findings that are useful to sociologists. A public statistic like the foreclosure rate might be useful for studying the effects of a recession. A racial demographic profile might be compared with data on education funding to examine the resources accessible by different groups.

One of the advantages of secondary data like old movies or WHO statistics is that it is nonreactive research (or unobtrusive research), meaning that it does not involve direct contact with subjects and will not alter or influence people's behaviors. Unlike studies requiring direct contact with people, using previously published data does not require entering a population and the investment and risks inherent in that research process.

Using available data does have its challenges. Public records are not always easy to access. A researcher will need to do some legwork to track them down and gain access to records. To guide the search through a vast library of materials and avoid wasting time reading unrelated sources, sociologists employ content analysis, applying a systematic approach to record and value information gleaned from secondary data as they relate to the study at hand.

Also, in some cases, there is no way to verify the accuracy of existing data. It is easy to count how many drunk drivers, for example, are pulled over by the police. But how many are not? While it's possible to discover the percentage of teenage students who drop out of high school, it might be more challenging to determine the number who return to school or get their GED later.

Another problem arises when data are unavailable in the exact form needed or do not survey the topic from the precise angle the researcher seeks. For example, the average salaries paid to professors at a public school is public record. But these figures do not necessarily reveal how long it took each professor to reach the salary range, what their educational backgrounds are, or how long they've been teaching.

When conducting content analysis, it is important to consider the date of publication of an existing source and to take into account attitudes and common cultural ideals that may have influenced the research. For example, when Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd gathered research in the 1920s, attitudes and cultural norms were vastly different then than they are now. Beliefs about gender roles, race, education, and work have changed significantly since then. At the time, the study's purpose was to reveal insights about small U.S. communities. Today, it is an illustration of 1920s attitudes and values.

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2.3.1: Macro vs. Micro Perspectives

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish macro approaches in sociology from micro approaches.
- Summarize the most important beliefs and assumptions of functionalism and conflict theory.
- Summarize the most important beliefs and assumptions of symbolic interactionism and exchange theory.

We have talked repeatedly about "a" sociological perspective, as if all sociologists share the same beliefs on how society works. This implication is misleading. Although all sociologists would probably accept the basic premise that social backgrounds affect people's attitudes, behavior, and life chances, their views as sociologists differ in many other ways.

Macro and Micro Approaches

Although this may be overly simplistic, sociologists' views basically fall into two camps: macrosociology and microsociology. Macrosociologists focus on the big picture, which usually means such things as social structure, social institutions, and social, political, and economic change. They look at the large-scale social forces that change the course of human society and the lives of individuals. Microsociologists, on the other hand, study social interaction. They look at how families, coworkers, and other small groups of people interact; why they interact the way they do; and how they interpret the meanings of their own interactions and of the social settings in which they find themselves. Often macro- and microsociologists look at the same phenomena but do so in different ways. Their views taken together offer a fuller understanding of the phenomena than either approach can offer alone.



Figure 1.9: Microsociologists examine the interaction of small groups of people, such as the two women conversing here. These sociologists examine how and why individuals interact and interpret the meanings of their interaction. © Thinkstock

The different but complementary nature of these two approaches can be seen in the case of armed robbery. Macrosociologists would discuss such things as why robbery rates are higher in poorer communities and whether these rates change with changes in the national economy. Microsociologists would instead focus on such things as why individual robbers decide to commit a robbery and how they select their targets. Both types of approaches give us a valuable understanding of robbery, but together they offer an even richer understanding.

Within the broad macro camp, two perspectives dominate: functionalism and conflict theory. Within the micro camp, two other perspectives exist: symbolic interactionism and utilitarianism (also called rational choice theory or exchange theory) (Collins, 1994).Collins, R. (1994). *Four sociological traditions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. We now turn to these four theoretical perspectives, which are summarized in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Theory Snapshot

Theoretical perspective	Major assumptions

Theoretical perspective	Major assumptions
Functionalism or Structural Functionalism	Social stability is necessary to have a strong society, and adequate socialization and social integration are necessary to achieve social stability. Society's social institutions perform important functions to help ensure social stability. Slow social change is desirable, but rapid social change threatens social order. Functionalism is a macro theory.
Conflict theory	Society is characterized by pervasive inequality based on social class, gender, and other factors. Far-reaching social change is needed to reduce or eliminate social inequality and to create an egalitarian society. Conflict theory is a macro theory.
Symbolic Interactionism	People construct their roles as they interact; they do not merely learn the roles that society has set out for them. As this interaction occurs, individuals negotiate their definitions of the situations in which they find themselves and socially construct the reality of these situations. In so doing, they rely heavily on symbols such as words and gestures to reach a shared understanding of their interaction. Symbolic interactionism is a micro theory.
Utilitarianism or Exchange Theory	People act to maximize their advantages in a given situation and to reduce their disadvantages. If they decide that benefits outweigh disadvantages, they will initiate the interaction or continue it if it is already under way. If they instead decide that disadvantages outweigh benefits, they will decline to begin interacting or stop the interaction if already begun. Social order is possible because people realize it will be in their best interests to cooperate and to make compromises when necessary. Utilitarianism is a micro theory.

Functionalism or Structural Functionalism

Functionalism, also known as the functionalist perspective, arose out of two great revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. The first was the French Revolution of 1789, whose intense violence and bloody terror shook Europe to its core. The aristocracy throughout Europe feared that revolution would spread to their own lands, and intellectuals feared that social order was crumbling.

The Industrial Revolution of the 19th century reinforced these concerns. Starting first in Europe and then in the United States, the Industrial Revolution led to many changes, including the rise and growth of cities as people left their farms to live near factories. As the cities grew, people lived in increasingly poor, crowded, and decrepit conditions. One result of these conditions was mass violence, as mobs of the poor roamed the streets of European and American cities. They attacked bystanders, destroyed property, and generally wreaked havoc. Here was additional evidence, if European intellectuals needed it, of the breakdown of social order.

In response, the intellectuals began to write that a strong society, as exemplified by strong social bonds and rules and effective socialization, was needed to prevent social order from disintegrating (Collins, 1994).Collins, R. (1994). *Four sociological traditions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. In this regard, their view was similar to that of the 20th-century novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding (1954), Golding, W. (1954). *Lord of the flies*. London, England: Coward-McCann.which many college students read in high school. Some British boys are stranded on an island after a plane crash. No longer supervised by adults and no longer in a society as they once knew it, they are not sure how to proceed and come up with new rules for their behavior. These rules prove ineffective, and the boys slowly become savages, as the book calls them, and commit murder. However bleak, Golding's view echoes back to that of the conservative intellectuals writing in the aftermath of the French and Industrial Revolutions. Without a strong society and effective socialization, they warned, social order breaks down, and violence and other signs of social disorder result.

This general framework reached fruition in the writings of Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), a French scholar largely responsible for the sociological perspective as we now know it. Adopting the conservative intellectuals' view of the need for a strong society,

Durkheim felt that human beings have desires that result in chaos unless society limits them. He wrote, “To achieve any other result, the passions first must be limited.…But since the individual has no way of limiting them, this must be done by some force exterior to him” (Durkheim, 1897/1952, p. 274). Durkheim, E. (1952). *Suicide*. New York, NY: Free Press. (Original work published 1897) This force, Durkheim continued, is the moral authority of society.

How does society limit individual aspirations? Durkheim emphasized two related social mechanisms: socialization and social integration. Socialization helps us learn society’s rules and the need to cooperate, as people end up generally agreeing on important norms and values, while social integration, or our ties to other people and to social institutions such as religion and the family, helps to socialize us and to integrate us into society and reinforce our respect for its rules. In general, Durkheim added, society comprises many types of social facts, or forces external to the individual, that affect and constrain individual attitudes and behavior. The result is that socialization and social integration help establish a strong set of social rules—or, as Durkheim called it, a strong collective conscience—that is needed for a stable society. By so doing, society “creates a kind of cocoon around the individual, making him or her less individualistic, more a member of the group” (Collins, 1994, p. 181).Collins, R. (1994). *Four sociological traditions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Weak rules or social ties weaken this “moral cocoon” and lead to social disorder. In all of these respects, says Randall Collins (1994, p. 181),Collins, R. (1994). *Four sociological traditions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Durkheim’s view represents the “core tradition” of sociology that lies at the heart of the sociological perspective.



Figure 1.10: Émile Durkheim was a founder of sociology and largely responsible for the sociological perspective as we now know it. Source: Photo courtesy of www.marxists.org/glossary/peo...s/durkheim.jpg.

Durkheim used suicide to illustrate how social disorder can result from a weakening of society’s moral cocoon. Focusing on group rates of suicide, he felt they could not be explained simply in terms of individual unhappiness and instead resulted from external forces. One such force is anomie, or normlessness, which results from situations, such as periods of rapid social change, when social norms are weak and unclear or social ties are weak. When anomie sets in, people become more unclear about how to deal with problems in their life. Their aspirations, no longer limited by society’s constraints, cannot be fulfilled. The frustration stemming from anomie leads some people to commit suicide (Durkheim, 1897/1952).Durkheim, E. (1952). *Suicide*. New York, NY: Free Press. (Original work published 1897)

To test his theory, Durkheim gathered suicide rate data and found that Protestants had higher suicide rates than Catholics. To explain this difference, he rejected the idea that Protestants were less happy than Catholics and instead reasoned that Catholic doctrine provides many more rules for behavior and thinking than does Protestant doctrine. Protestants’ aspirations were thus less constrained than Catholics’ desires. In times of trouble, Protestants also have fewer norms on which to rely for comfort and support than do Catholics. He also thought that Protestants’ ties to each other were weaker than those among Catholics, providing Protestants fewer social support networks to turn to when troubled. In addition, Protestant belief is ambivalent about suicide, while Catholic doctrine condemns it. All of these properties of religious group membership combine to produce higher suicide rates among Protestants than among Catholics.

Today’s functionalist perspective arises out of Durkheim’s work and that of other conservative intellectuals of the 19th century. It uses the human body as a model for understanding society. In the human body, our various organs and other body parts serve important functions for the ongoing health and stability of our body. Our eyes help us see, our ears help us hear, our heart circulates our blood, and so forth. Just as we can understand the body by describing and understanding the functions that its parts serve for its health and stability, so can we understand society by describing and understanding the **functions that its “parts”—or, more accurately, its social institutions—serve for the ongoing health and stability of society. Thus functionalism emphasizes the**

importance of social institutions such as the family, religion, and education for producing a stable society. We look at these institutions in later chapters.

Similar to the view of the conservative intellectuals from which it grew, functionalism is skeptical of rapid social change and other major social upheaval. The analogy to the human body helps us understand this skepticism. In our bodies, any sudden, rapid change is a sign of danger to our health. If we break a bone in one of our legs, we have trouble walking; if we lose sight in both our eyes, we can no longer see. Slow changes, such as the growth of our hair and our nails, are fine and even normal, but sudden changes like those just described are obviously troublesome. By analogy, sudden and rapid changes in society and its social institutions are troublesome according to the functionalist perspective. If the human body evolved to its present form and functions because these made sense from an evolutionary perspective, so did society evolve to its present form and functions because these made sense. Any sudden change in society thus threatens its stability and future. By taking a skeptical approach to social change, functionalism supports the status quo and is thus often regarded as a conservative perspective.

Conflict Theory

In many ways, conflict theory is the opposite of functionalism but ironically also grew out of the Industrial Revolution, thanks largely to Karl Marx (1818–1883) and his collaborator, Friedrich Engels (1820–1895). Whereas conservative intellectuals feared the mass violence resulting from industrialization, Marx and Engels deplored the conditions they felt were responsible for the mass violence and the capitalist society they felt was responsible for these conditions. Instead of fearing the breakdown of social order that mass violence represented, they felt that revolutionary violence was needed to eliminate capitalism and the poverty and misery they saw as its inevitable result (Marx, 1867/1906; Marx & Engels, 1848/1962).Marx, K. 1906. *Capital*. New York, NY: Random House. (Original work published 1867); Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1962). The Communist Manifesto. In *Marx and Engels: Selected works* (pp. 21–65). Moscow, Russia: Foreign Language Publishing House. (Original work published 1848)

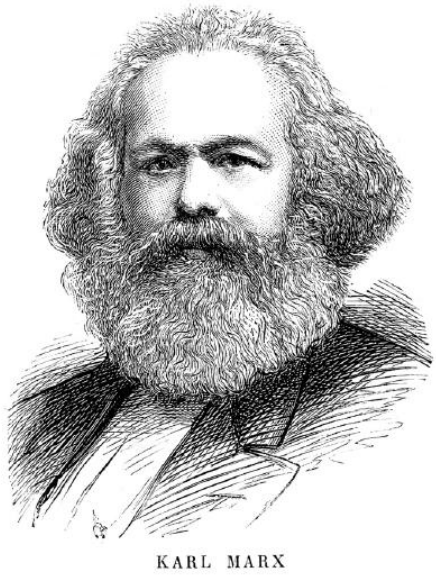


Figure 1.11: Karl Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels were intense critics of capitalism. Their work inspired the later development of conflict theory in sociology. © Thinkstock

According to Marx and Engels, every society is divided into two classes based on the ownership of the means of production (tools, factories, and the like). In a capitalist society, the bourgeoisie, or ruling class, owns the means of production, while the proletariat, or working class, does not own the means of production and instead is oppressed and exploited by the bourgeoisie. This difference creates automatic conflict of interests between the two groups. Simply put, the bourgeoisie is interested in maintaining its position at the top of society, while the proletariat's interest lies in rising up from the bottom and overthrowing the bourgeoisie to create an egalitarian society.

In a capitalist society, Marx and Engels wrote, revolution is inevitable because of structural contradictions arising from the very nature of capitalism. Because profit is the main goal of capitalism, the bourgeoisie's interest lies in maximizing profit. To do so, capitalists try to keep wages as low as possible and to spend as little money as possible on working conditions. This central fact of capitalism, said Marx and Engels, eventually prompts the rise among workers of class consciousness, or an awareness of the

reasons for their oppression. Their class consciousness in turn leads them to revolt against the bourgeoisie to eliminate the oppression and exploitation they suffer.

Over the years, Marx and Engels's views on the nature of capitalism and class relations have greatly influenced social, political, and economic theory and also inspired revolutionaries in nations around the world. However, history has not supported their prediction that capitalism will inevitably result in a revolution of the proletariat. For example, no such revolution has occurred in the United States, where workers never developed the degree of class consciousness envisioned by Marx and Engels. Because the United States is thought to be a free society where everyone has the opportunity to succeed, even poor Americans feel that the system is basically just. Thus various aspects of American society and ideology have helped minimize the development of class consciousness and prevent the revolution that Marx and Engels foresaw.

Despite this shortcoming, their basic view of conflict arising from unequal positions held by members of society lies at the heart of today's conflict theory. This theory emphasizes that different groups in society have different interests stemming from their different social positions. These different interests in turn lead to different views on important social issues. Some versions of the theory root conflict in divisions based on race and ethnicity, gender, and other such differences, while other versions follow Marx and Engels in seeing conflict arising out of different positions in the economic structure. In general, however, conflict theory emphasizes that the various parts of society contribute to ongoing inequality, whereas functionalist theory, as we have seen, stresses that they contribute to the ongoing stability of society. Thus, while functionalist theory emphasizes the benefits of the various parts of society for ongoing social stability, conflict theory favors social change to reduce inequality. In this regard, conflict theory may be considered a progressive perspective.

Feminist theory has developed in sociology and other disciplines since the 1970s and for our purposes will be considered a specific application of conflict theory. In this case, the conflict concerns gender inequality rather than the class inequality emphasized by Marx and Engels. Although many variations of feminist theory exist, they all emphasize that society is filled with gender inequality such that women are the subordinate sex in many dimensions of social, political, and economic life (Tong, 2009).Tong, R. (2009). *Feminist thought: A more comprehensive introduction*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Liberal feminists view gender inequality as arising out of gender differences in socialization, while Marxist feminists say that this inequality is a result of the rise of capitalism, which made women dependent on men for economic support. On the other hand, radical feminists view gender inequality as present in all societies, not just capitalist ones. Chapter 8 examines some of the arguments of feminist theory at great length.

Symbolic Interactionism

Whereas the functionalist and conflict perspectives are macro approaches, symbolic interactionism is a micro approach that **focuses on the interaction of individuals and on how they interpret their interaction.** Its roots lie in the work in the early 1900s of American sociologists, social psychologists, and philosophers who were interested in human consciousness and action. Herbert Blumer (1969),Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. a sociologist at the University of Chicago, built upon their writings to develop symbolic interactionism, a term he coined. This view remains popular today, in part because many sociologists object to what they perceive as the overly deterministic view of human thought and action and passive view of the individual inherent in the sociological perspective derived from Durkheim.

Drawing on Blumer's work, symbolic interactionists feel that people do not merely learn the roles that society has set out for them; **instead they construct these roles as they interact. As they interact, they "negotiate" their definitions of the situations in which they find themselves and socially construct the reality of these situations. In so doing, they rely heavily on symbols such as words and gestures to reach a shared understanding of their interaction.**

An example is the familiar symbol of shaking hands. In the United States and many other societies, shaking hands is a symbol of greeting and friendship. This simple act indicates that you are a nice, polite person with whom someone should feel comfortable. To reinforce this symbol's importance for understanding a bit of interaction, consider a situation where someone *refuses* to shake hands. This action is usually intended as a sign of dislike or as an insult, and the other person interprets it as such. Their understanding of the situation and subsequent interaction will be very different from those arising from the more typical shaking of hands.

Now let's say that someone does not shake hands, but this time the reason is that the person's right arm is broken. Because the other person realizes this, no snub or insult is inferred, and the two people can then proceed to have a comfortable encounter. Their definition of the situation depends not only on whether they shake hands but also, if they do not shake hands, on why they do not. As the term symbolic interactionism implies, their understanding of this encounter arises from what they do when they interact and their use and interpretation of the various symbols included in their interaction. According to symbolic interactionists, social order

is possible because people learn what various symbols (such as shaking hands) mean and apply these meanings to different kinds of situations. If you visited a society where sticking your right hand out to greet someone was interpreted as a threatening gesture, you would quickly learn the value of common understandings of symbols.

Utilitarianism or Social Exchange Theory

Utilitarianism is a general view of human behavior that says people act to maximize their pleasure and to reduce their pain. It originated in the work of such 18th-century thinkers as the Italian economist Cesare Beccaria (1738–1794) and the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832). Both men thought that people act rationally and decide before they act whether their behavior will cause them more pleasure or pain. Applying their views to crime, they felt the criminal justice system in Europe at the time was far harsher than it needed to be to deter criminal behavior. Another 18th-century utilitarian thinker was Adam Smith, whose book *The Wealth of Nations* (1776/1910)Smith, A. (1910). *The wealth of nations*. London, England: J. M. Dent & Sons; New York, NY: E. P. Dutton. (Original work published 1776) laid the foundation for modern economic thought. Indeed, at the heart of economics is the view that sellers and buyers of goods and services act rationally to reduce their costs and in this and other ways to maximize their profits.

In sociology, utilitarianism is commonly called exchange theory or rational choice theory (Coleman, 1990; Homans, 1961).Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of social theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Homans, G. (1961). *Social behavior: Its elementary forms*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. No matter what name it goes under, this view emphasizes that when people interact, **they seek to maximize the benefits they gain from the interaction and to reduce the disadvantages.** If they decide that the interaction's benefits outweigh its disadvantages, they will initiate the interaction or continue it if it is already under way. If they instead decide that the interaction's disadvantages outweigh its benefits, they will decline to begin interacting or stop the interaction if already begun. Social order is possible because people realize it will be in their best interests to cooperate and to make compromises when necessary.

A familiar application of exchange theory would be a dating relationship. Each partner in a dating relationship gives up a bit of autonomy in return for love and other benefits of being close to someone. Yet every relationship has its good and bad moments, and both partners make frequent compromises to ensure the relationship will endure. As long as the couple feels the good moments outweigh the bad moments, the relationship will continue. But once one or both partners decide the reverse is true, the relationship will end.

Comparing Macro and Micro Perspectives

This brief presentation of the four major theoretical perspectives in sociology is necessarily incomplete but should at least outline their basic points. Each perspective has its proponents, and each has its detractors. All four offer a lot of truth, and all four oversimplify and make other mistakes. We will return to them in many of the chapters ahead, but a brief critique is in order here.

A major problem with functionalist theory is that it tends to support the status quo and thus seems to favor existing inequalities based on race, social class, and gender. By emphasizing the contributions of social institutions such as the family and education to social stability, functionalist theory minimizes the ways in which these institutions contribute to social inequality.

Conflict theory's problems are the opposite of functionalist theory's. By emphasizing inequality and dissensus in society, conflict theory overlooks the large degree of consensus on many important issues. And by emphasizing the ways in which social institutions contribute to social inequality, conflict theory minimizes the ways in which these institutions are necessary for society's stability.

Neither of these two macro perspectives has very much to say about social interaction, one of the most important building blocks of society. In this regard, the two micro perspectives, symbolic interactionism and utilitarianism, offer significant advantages over their macro cousins. Yet their very micro focus leads them to pay relatively little attention to the reasons for, and possible solutions to, such broad and fundamentally important issues as poverty, racism, sexism, and social change, which are all addressed by functionalism and conflict theory. In this regard, the two macro perspectives offer significant advantages over their micro cousins. In addition, one of the micro perspectives, rational choice theory, has also been criticized for ignoring the importance of emotions, altruism, and other values for guiding human interaction (Lowenstein, 1996).Lowenstein, G. (1996). Out of control: Visceral influences on behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 65*, 272–292.



Figure 1.12: To explain armed robbery, symbolic interactionists focus on how armed robbers decide when and where to rob a victim and on how their interactions with other criminals reinforce their own criminal tendencies. © Thinkstock

These criticisms aside, all four perspectives taken together offer a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena than any one perspective can offer alone. To illustrate this, let's return to our armed robbery example. A functionalist approach might suggest that armed robbery and other crimes actually serve positive functions for society. As one function, fear of crime ironically strengthens social bonds by uniting the law-abiding public against the criminal elements in society. As a second function, armed robbery and other crimes create many jobs for police officers, judges, lawyers, prison guards, the construction companies that build prisons, and the various businesses that provide products the public buys to help protect against crime.

Conflict theory would take a very different but no less helpful approach to understanding armed robbery. It might note that most street criminals are poor and thus emphasize that armed robbery and other crimes are the result of the despair and frustration of living in poverty and facing a lack of jobs and other opportunities for economic and social success. The roots of street crime, from the perspective of conflict theory, thus lie in society at least as much as they lie in the individuals committing such crime.

In explaining armed robbery, symbolic interactionism would focus on how armed robbers make such decisions as when and where to rob someone and on how their interactions with other criminals reinforce their own criminal tendencies. Exchange or rational choice theory would emphasize that armed robbers and other criminals are rational actors who carefully plan their crimes and who would be deterred by a strong threat of swift and severe punishment.

Now that you have some understanding of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology, we'll next see how sociologists go about testing these perspectives.

Conclusion

- Sociological theories may be broadly divided into macro approaches and micro approaches.
- Functionalism emphasizes the importance of social institutions for social stability and implies that far-reaching social change will be socially harmful.
- Conflict theory emphasizes social inequality and suggests that far-reaching social change is needed to achieve a just society.
- Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the social meanings and understandings that individuals derive from their social interaction.
- Utilitarianism emphasizes that people act in their self-interest by calculating whether potential behaviors will be more advantageous than disadvantageous.

For Your Review

1. In thinking about how you view society and individuals, do you consider yourself more of a macro thinker or a micro thinker?
2. At this point in your study of sociology, which one of the four sociological traditions sounds most appealing to you? Why?

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2.4: Ethical Concerns

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Understand why ethical standards exist
- Investigate unethical studies
- Demonstrate awareness of the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics

Sociologists conduct studies to shed light on human behaviors. Knowledge is a powerful tool that can be used to achieve positive change. As a result, conducting a sociological study comes with a tremendous amount of responsibility. Like all researchers, sociologists must consider their ethical obligation to avoid harming human subjects or groups while conducting research.

Pioneer German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) identified another crucial ethical concern. Weber understood that personal values could distort the framework for disclosing study results. While he accepted that some aspects of research design might be influenced by personal values, he declared it was entirely inappropriate to allow personal values to shape the interpretation of the responses. Sociologists, he stated, must establish value neutrality, a practice of remaining impartial, without bias or judgment, during the course of a study and in publishing results (Weber, 1949). Sociologists are obligated to disclose research findings without omitting or distorting significant data.

Is value neutrality possible? Many sociologists believe it is impossible to retain complete objectivity. They caution readers, rather, to understand that sociological studies may contain a certain amount of value bias. This does not discredit the results, but allows readers to view them as one form of truth—one fact-based perspective. Some sociologists attempt to remain uncritical and as objective as possible when studying social institutions. They strive to overcome personal biases, particularly subconscious biases, when collecting and analyzing data. They avoid skewing data in order to match a predetermined outcome that aligns with a particular agenda, such as a political or moral point of view. Investigators are ethically obligated to report results, even when they contradict personal views, predicted outcomes, or widely accepted beliefs.

The American Sociological Association, or ASA, is the major professional organization of sociologists in North America. The ASA is a great resource for students of sociology as well. The ASA maintains a code of ethics—formal guidelines for conducting sociological research—consisting of principles and ethical standards to be used in the discipline. These formal guidelines were established by practitioners in 1905 at John Hopkins University, and revised in 1997. When working with human subjects, these codes of ethics require researchers' to do the following:

1. Maintain objectivity and integrity in research
2. Respect subjects' rights to privacy and dignity
3. Protect subject from personal harm
4. Preserve confidentially
5. Seek informed consent
6. Acknowledge collaboration and assistance
7. Disclose sources of financial support

Unfortunately, when these codes of ethics are ignored, it creates an unethical environment for humans being involved in a sociological study. Throughout history, there have been numerous unethical studies, some of which are summarized below.



Figure 2.11: Participants in the Tuskegee study were denied important information about their diagnosis, leading to significant health issues. (Credit: Centers for Disease Control)

The Tuskegee Experiment: This study was conducted 1932 in Macon County, Alabama, and included 600 African American men, including 399 diagnosed with syphilis. The participants were told they were diagnosed with a disease of “bad blood.” Penicillin was distributed in the 1940s as the cure for the disease, but unfortunately, the African American men were not given the treatment because the objective of the study was to see “how untreated syphilis would affect the African American male” (Caplan, 2007)

Henrietta Lacks: Ironically, this study was conducted at the hospital associated with Johns Hopkins University, where codes of the ethics originated. In 1951, Henrietta Lacks was receiving treatment for cervical cancer at John Hopkins Hospital, and doctors discovered that she had “immortal” cells, which could reproduce rapidly and indefinitely, making them extremely valuable for medical research. Without her consent, doctors collected and shared her cells to produce extensive cell lines. Lacks’ cells were widely used for experiments and treatments, including the polio vaccine, and were put into mass production. Today, these cells are known worldwide as HeLa cells (Shah, 2010).

Milgram Experiment: In 1961, psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted an experiment at Yale University. Its purpose was to measure the willingness of study subjects to obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform acts that conflicted with their personal conscience. People in the role of teacher believed they were administering electric shocks to students who gave incorrect answers to word-pair questions. No matter how concerned they were about administering the progressively more intense shocks, the teachers were told to keep going. The ethical concerns involve the extreme emotional distress faced by the teachers, who believed they were hurting other people. (Vogel 2014).

Philip Zimbardo and the Stanford prison experiment: In 1971, psychologist Phillip Zimbardo conducted a study involving students from Stanford University. The students were put in the roles of prisoners and guards, and were required to play their assigned role accordingly. The experiment was intended to last two weeks, but it only last six days due to the negative outcome and treatment of the “prisoners.” Beyond the ethical concerns, the study’s validity has been questioned after participants revealed they had been coached to behave in specific ways.

Laud Humphreys: In the 1960s, Laud Humphreys conducted an experiment at a restroom in a park known for same-sex sexual encounters. His objective was to understand the diversity of backgrounds and motivations of people seeking same-sex relationships. His ethics were questioned because he misrepresented his identity and intent while observing and questioning the men he interviewed (Nardi, 1995).

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2.5: Key Terms

accuracy | using a tool makes the measuring more precise.

case study | in-depth analysis of a single event, situation, or individual

code of ethics | a set of guidelines that the American Sociological Association has established to foster ethical research and professionally responsible scholarship in sociology

content analysis | applying a systematic approach to record and value information gleaned from secondary data as it relates to the study at hand

correlation | when a change in one variable coincides with a change in another variable, but does not necessarily indicate causation

debunking | looking beyond the obvious to expose falseness by examining merit, logic, and evidence.

dependent variables | a variable changed by other variables

empirical evidence | evidence that comes from direct observations, scientifically gathered data, or experimentation

ethnography | participating and observing thinking and behavior in a social setting

experiment | the testing of a hypothesis under controlled conditions

field research | gathering data from a natural environment without doing a lab experiment or a survey

Hawthorne effect | when study subjects behave in a certain manner due to their awareness of being observed by a researcher

hypothesis | a testable educated guess about predicted outcomes between two or more variables

independent variables | variables that cause changes in dependent variables

interpretive framework | a sociological research approach that seeks in-depth understanding of a topic or subject through observation or interaction; this approach is not based on hypothesis testing

interview | a one-on-one conversation between the researcher and the subject

literature review | a scholarly research step that entails identifying and studying all existing studies on a topic to create a basis for new research

nonreactive research | using secondary data, does not include direct contact with research subjects and does not alter or influence people's behaviors

operational definitions | specific explanations of abstract concepts that a researcher plans to study

participant observation | when a researcher immerses herself in a group or social setting in order to make observations from an "insider" perspective

population | a defined group serving as the subject of a study

primary data | data that are collected directly from firsthand experience

qualitative data | non-numerical, descriptive data that is often subjective and based on what is experienced in a natural setting

quantitative data | data collected in numerical form that can be counted and analyzed using statistics

random sample | a study's participants being randomly selected to serve as a representation of a larger population

reliability | a measure of a study's consistency that considers how likely results are to be replicated if a study is reproduced

samples | small, manageable number of subjects that represent the population

scientific method | an established scholarly research that involves asking a question, researching existing sources, forming a hypothesis, designing a data collection method, gathering data, and drawing conclusions

secondary data analysis | using data collected by others and applying new interpretations

surveys | collect data from subjects who respond to a series of questions about thinking, behaviors, and opinions, often in the form of a questionnaire

validity | the degree to which a sociological measure accurately reflects the topic of study

value neutrality | a practice of remaining impartial, without bias or judgment during the course of a study and in publishing results

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2.6: Section Summary

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

Using the scientific method, a researcher conducts a study in six phases: asking a question, researching existing sources, formulating a hypothesis, research design, collecting & analyzing data, and drawing conclusions. The scientific method is useful in that it provides a clear method of organizing a study. Some sociologists conduct research through an interpretive framework rather than employing the scientific method.

Scientific sociological studies often observe relationships between variables. Researchers study how one variable influences another. Prior to conducting a study, researchers are careful to apply operational definitions to their terms and to establish dependent and independent variables.

2.2 Research Methods

Sociological research is a fairly complex process. As you can see, a lot goes into even a simple research design. There are many steps and much to consider when collecting data on human behavior, as well as in interpreting and analyzing data in order to form conclusive results. Sociologists use the scientific methods for good reasons. The scientific method provides a system of organization to help researchers plan and conduct a study to ensure data and results are reliable, valid, and objective.

The many methods available to researchers—including experiments, surveys, participant observation, ethnography, case study, and secondary data analysis—all come with advantages and disadvantages. The strength of a study can depend on the choice and implementation of the appropriate method of gathering data. Depending on the topic, a study might use a single method or a combination of methods. It is important to plan a research design before undertaking a study. The information gathered may in itself be surprising, and the study design should provide a solid framework in which to analyze predicted and unpredicted data.

Table 2.2 Main Sociological Research Methods: Sociological research methods have advantages and disadvantages.

Method	Implementation	Advantages	Challenges
Survey	• Questionnaires • Interviews	• Yields many responses • Can survey a large sample • Quantitative data are easy to chart	• Can be time consuming • Can be difficult to encourage participant response • Captures what people think and believe but not necessarily how they behave in real life
Field Work	• Participant observation • Ethnography • Case study	• Yields detailed, accurate real-life information	• Time consuming • Data captures how people behave but not what they think and believe • Qualitative data is difficult to organize
Experiment	• Deliberate manipulation of social customs and mores	• Tests cause and effect relationships	• Hawthorne Effect • Ethical concerns about people's wellbeing
Secondary Data Analysis	• Analysis of government data (census, health, crime statistics) • Research of historic documents	• Makes good use of previous sociological information	• Data could be focused on a purpose other than yours • Data can be hard to find

2.3 Ethical Concerns

Sociologists and sociology students must take ethical responsibility for any study they conduct. They must first and foremost guarantee the safety of their participants. Whenever possible, they must ensure that participants have been fully informed consent

before participating ina study.

The American Sociological Association (ASA) establishes parameters for ethical guidelines that sociologists must take into account as they conduct research. The guidelines address conducting studies, properly using existing sources, accepting funding, and publishing results. Unfortunately, the code of ethics were not in existence and in some cases researchers did not adhere to ASA guidelines resulting in unethical practices in which humans were caused either physical or psychological harm.

Sociologists must try to maintain value neutrality. They must gather and analyze data objectively and set aside their personal preferences, beliefs, and opinions. They must report findings accurately, even if they contradict personal values and convictions.

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2.8: Milgram Experiment Reenactment

Milgram Experiment (Derren Brown)



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Culture

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. Culture is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people.

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3.2: What Is Culture?
3.3: Elements of Culture
3.4: Cultural Diversity
3.5: High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change
3.6: Theoretical Perspectives on Culture
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3.10: Crash Course Video- Symbols, Values, and Norms

Thumbnail: !Kung woman and child sharing a meal. (CC-SA-BY 4.0; Staehler).

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3.1: Introduction



Figure 3.1: Martial arts has a strong tradition of deep respect for one's opponent, as these judo competitors display after a match. Even in other styles and other venues such as professional boxing or mixed martial arts, it is common to see opponents showing extreme courtesy and concern for each other despite the level of vitriol before a fight or the violence during it. While certainly echoed in other competitive arenas, this practice is a significant part of combat sports culture. (Credit: Special Olympics Nationale/flickr)

Chapter Outline

3.1 What Is Culture?
3.2 Elements of Culture
3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change
3.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

If you passed someone in a hallway, joined a video conference, or even called into a radio show, it's likely you and the other people involved would exchange some version of the following question : "How are you?" One of you may ask the other. You may exchange a greeting and the question or one of its variants. Generally, we do not consider our responses to these acquaintances as rules. We simply say, "Hello!" and ask, "How was your weekend?" or some other trivial question meant to be a friendly greeting.

We all adhere to various rules, expectations, and standards that are created and maintained in our specific culture. These rules and expectations have meaning, and there are many ways by which the meanings can be misinterpreted or misunderstood. When we do not meet those expectations, we may receive some form of disapproval such as a look or comment informing us that we did something unacceptable.

Consider what would happen if you stopped and informed everyone who asked "Hi, how are you?" exactly how you were doing that day, and in detail. In U.S. society, you would violate norms of 'greeting.' Perhaps if you were in a different situation, such as having coffee with a good friend, that question might warrant a detailed response.

These examples are all aspects of culture, which is comprised of shared *values* (ideals), *beliefs* which strengthen the values, *norms* and *rules* that maintain the values, *language* so that the values can be taught, *symbols* that form the language people must learn,

arts and *artifacts*, and the people's collective *identities* and *memories*. Sociologically, we examine in which situation and context a certain behavior is expected and in which it is not. People who interact within a shared culture create and enforce these expectations. Sociologists examine these circumstances and search for patterns.

In everyday conversation, people in the U.S. rarely distinguish between the terms culture and society, but the terms have different meanings, and the distinction is important to a sociologist. A culture represents the values, beliefs, norms, language, symbols, and practices of a group, while society represents the people who share a culture. Neither society or culture could exist without the other.

Within the U.S., many groups of people share a community and a culture. By "community," sociologists refer to a definable region of a society, real *terra firma*—as small as a neighborhood (Brooklyn, or "the east side of town"), as large as a country (Ethiopia, Nepal or the U.S.), or somewhere in between (in the U.S., this might include someone who identifies with Southern or Midwestern society).

In this chapter, we examine the relationship between culture and society in greater detail and pay special attention to the elements and forces that shape culture, including diversity and social changes. A final discussion examines the theoretical perspectives from which sociologists research culture.

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3.2: What Is Culture?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between culture and society
- Explain material versus nonmaterial culture
- Discuss the concept of cultural universals as it relates to society
- Compare and contrast ethnocentrism and xenocentrism

Humans are social creatures. According to Smithsonian Institution research, humans have been forming groups for almost 3 million years in order to survive. Living together, people formed common habits and behaviors, from specific methods of childrearing to preferred techniques for obtaining food.

Almost every human behavior, from shopping to marriage, is learned. In the U.S., marriage is generally seen as an individual choice made by two adults, based on mutual feelings of love. In other nations and in other times, marriages have been arranged through an intricate process of interviews and negotiations between entire families. In Papua New Guinea, almost 30 percent of women marry before the age of 18, and 8 percent of men have more than one wife (National Statistical Office, 2019). To people who are not from such a culture, arranged marriages may seem to have risks of incompatibility or the absence of romantic love. But many people from cultures where marriages are arranged, which includes a number of highly populated and modern countries, often prefer the approach because it reduces stress and increases stability (Jankowiak 2021).

Being familiar with unwritten rules helps people feel secure and at ease. Knowing to look left instead of right for oncoming traffic while crossing the street can help avoid serious injury and even death. Knowing unwritten rules is also fundamental in understanding humor in different cultures. Humor is common to all societies, but what makes something funny is not. Americans may laugh at a scene in which an actor falls; in other cultures, falling is never funny. Most people want to live their daily lives confident that their behaviors will not be challenged or disrupted. But even an action as seemingly simple as commuting to work evidences a great deal of cultural propriety, that is, there are a lot of expected behaviors. And many interpretations of them.



Figure 3.2: How would a visitor from a rural region act and feel on this crowded Hong Kong train? (Credit: Eric Chan/flickr)

Take the case of going to work on public transportation. Whether people are commuting in Egypt, Ireland, India, Japan, and the U.S., many behaviors will be the same and may reveal patterns. Others will be different. In many societies that enjoy public transportation, a passenger will find a marked bus stop or station, wait for the bus or train, pay an agent before or after boarding, and quietly take a seat if one is available. But when boarding a bus in Cairo, Egypt, passengers might board while the bus is moving, because buses often do not come to a full stop to take on patrons. In Dublin, Ireland, bus riders would be expected to extend an arm to indicate that they want the bus to stop for them. And when boarding a commuter train in Mumbai, India, passengers must squeeze into overstuffed cars amid a lot of pushing and shoving on the crowded platforms. That kind of behavior might be considered rude in other societies, but in Mumbai it reflects the daily challenges of getting around on a train system that is taxed to capacity.

Culture can be material or nonmaterial. Metro passes and bus tokens are part of material culture, as are the buses, subway cars, and the physical structures of the bus stop. Think of material culture as items you can touch-they are *tangible*. Nonmaterial culture, in contrast, consists of the ideas, attitudes, and beliefs of a society. These are things you cannot touch. They are *intangible*. You may *believe* that a line should be formed to enter the subway car or that other passengers should not stand so close to you. Those *beliefs* are intangible because they do not have physical properties and can be touched.

Material and nonmaterial aspects of culture are linked, and physical objects often symbolize cultural ideas. A metro pass is a material object, but it represents a form of nonmaterial culture, namely, capitalism, and the acceptance of paying for transportation. Clothing, hairstyles, and jewelry are part of material culture, but the appropriateness of wearing certain clothing for specific events reflects nonmaterial culture. A school building belongs to material culture symbolizing education, but the teaching methods and educational standards are part of education's nonmaterial culture.

As people travel from different regions to entirely different parts of the world, certain material and nonmaterial aspects of culture become dramatically unfamiliar. What happens when we encounter different cultures? As we interact with cultures other than our

own, we become more aware of the differences and commonalities between others and our own. If we keep our sociological imagination awake, we can begin to understand and accept the differences. Body language and hand gestures vary around the world, but some body language seems to be shared across cultures: When someone arrives home later than permitted, a parent or guardian meeting them at the door with crossed arms and a frown on their face means the same in Russia as it does in the U.S. as it does in Ghana.

Cultural Universals

Although cultures vary, they also share common elements. Cultural universals are patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies. One example of a cultural universal is the family unit: every human society recognizes a family structure that regulates sexual reproduction and the care of children. Even so, how that family unit is defined and how it functions vary. In many Asian cultures, for example, family members from all generations commonly live together in one household. In these cultures, young adults continue to live in the extended household family structure until they marry and join their spouse's household, or they may remain and raise their nuclear family within the extended family's homestead. In the U.S., by contrast, individuals are expected to leave home and live independently for a period before forming a family unit that consists of parents and their offspring. Other cultural universals include customs like funeral rites, weddings, and celebrations of births. However, each culture may view and conduct the ceremonies quite differently.

Anthropologist George Murdock first investigated the existence of cultural universals while studying systems of kinship around the world. Murdock found that cultural universals often revolve around basic human survival, such as finding food, clothing, and shelter, or around shared human experiences, such as birth and death or illness and healing. Through his research, Murdock identified other universals including language, the concept of personal names, and, interestingly, jokes. Humor seems to be a universal way to release tensions and create a sense of unity among people (Murdock, 1949). Sociologists consider humor necessary to human interaction because it helps individuals navigate otherwise tense situations.

Sociological Research: Is Music a Cultural Universal?

Imagine that you are sitting in a theater, watching a film. The movie opens with the protagonist sitting on a park bench with a grim expression on their face. The music starts to come in. The first slow and mournful notes play in a minor key. As the melody continues, the heroine turns her head and sees a man walking toward her. The music gets louder, and the sounds don't seem to go together – as if the orchestra is intentionally playing the wrong notes. You tense up as you watch, almost hoping to stop. The character is clearly in danger.

Now imagine that you are watching the same movie – the exact same footage – but with a different soundtrack. As the scene opens, the music is soft and soothing, with a hint of sadness. You see the protagonist sitting on the park bench with a grim expression. Suddenly, the music swells. The woman looks up and sees a man walking toward her. The notes are high and bright, and the pace is bouncy. You feel your heart rise in your chest. This is a happy moment.

Music has the ability to evoke emotional responses. In television shows, movies, commercials, and even the background music in a store, music has a message and seems to easily draw a response from those who hear it – joy, sadness, fear, victory. Are these types of musical cues cultural universals?

In 2009, a team of psychologists, led by Thomas Fritz of the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig, Germany, studied people's reactions to music that they'd never heard (Fritz et al., 2009). The research team traveled to Cameroon, Africa, and asked Mafa tribal members to listen to Western music. The tribe, isolated from Western culture, had never been exposed to Western culture and had no context or experience within which to interpret its music. Even so, as the tribal members listened to a Western piano piece, they were able to recognize three basic emotions: happiness, sadness, and fear. Music, the study suggested, is a sort of universal language.

Researchers also found that music can foster a sense of wholeness within a group. In fact, scientists who study the evolution of language have concluded that originally language (an established component of group identity) and music were one (Darwin, 1871). Additionally, since music is largely nonverbal, the sounds of music can cross societal boundaries more easily than words. Music allows people to make connections, where language might be a more difficult barricade. As Fritz and his team found, music and the emotions it conveys are cultural universals.

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

Although human societies have much in common, cultural differences are far more prevalent than cultural universals. For example, while all cultures have language, analysis of conversational etiquette reveals tremendous differences. In some Middle Eastern cultures, it is common to stand close to others in conversation. Americans keep more distance and maintain a large “personal space.” Additionally, behaviors as simple as eating and drinking vary greatly from culture to culture. Some cultures use tools to put the food in the mouth while others use their fingers. If your professor comes into an early morning class holding a mug of liquid, what do you assume they are drinking? In the U.S., it’s most likely filled with coffee, not Earl Grey tea, a favorite in England, or Yak Butter tea, a staple in Tibet.

Some travelers pride themselves on their willingness to try unfamiliar foods, like the late celebrated food writer Anthony Bourdain (1956-2017). Often, however, people express disgust at another culture's cuisine. They might think that it’s gross to eat raw meat from a donkey or parts of a rodent, while they don’t question their own habit of eating cows or pigs.

Such attitudes are examples of ethnocentrism, which means to evaluate and judge another culture based on one’s own cultural norms. Ethnocentrism is believing your group is the correct measuring standard and if other cultures do not measure up to it, they are wrong. As sociologist William Graham Sumner (1906) described the term, it is a belief or attitude that one’s own culture is better than all others. Almost everyone is a little bit ethnocentric.

A high level of appreciation for one’s own culture can be healthy. A shared sense of community pride, for example, connects people in a society. But ethnocentrism can lead to disdain or dislike of other cultures and could cause misunderstanding, stereotyping, and conflict. Individuals, government, non-government, private, and religious institutions with the best intentions sometimes travel to a society to “help” its people, because they see them as uneducated, backward, or even inferior. Cultural imperialism is the deliberate imposition of one’s own cultural values on another culture.

Colonial expansion by Portugal, Spain, Netherlands, and England grew quickly in the fifteenth century was accompanied by severe cultural imperialism. European colonizers often viewed the people in these new lands as uncultured savages who needed to adopt Catholic governance, Christianity, European dress, and other cultural practices.

A modern example of cultural imperialism may include the work of international aid agencies who introduce agricultural methods and plant species from developed countries into areas that are better served by indigenous varieties and agricultural approaches to the particular region. Another example would be the deforestation of the Amazon Basin as indigenous cultures lose land to timber corporations.



Figure 3.3: Experiencing an entirely new practice may lead to a high degree of interest or a level of criticism. The Indegenous people of Sagada, in the Philippines, have for thousands of years placed the bodies of deceased people into coffins hung on the cliffs near their villages. Some visitors may find this practice admirable, while others may think it's inappropriate. (Credit: Arian Zwegers/flickr)

When people find themselves in a new culture, they may experience disorientation and frustration. In sociology, we call this culture shock. In addition to the traveler's biological clock being 'off', a traveler from Chicago might find the nightly silence of rural Montana unsettling, not peaceful. Now, imagine that the 'difference' is cultural. An exchange student from China to the U.S. might be annoyed by the constant interruptions in class as other students ask questions—a practice that is considered rude in China. Perhaps the Chicago traveler was initially captivated with Montana's quiet beauty and the Chinese student was originally excited to see a U.S.- style classroom firsthand. But as they experience unanticipated differences from their own culture, they may experience ethnocentrism as their excitement gives way to discomfort and doubts about how to behave appropriately in the new situation. According to many authors, international students studying in the U.S. report that there are personality traits and behaviors expected of them. Black African students report having to learn to 'be Black in the U.S.' and Chinese students report that they are naturally expected to be good at math. In African countries, people are identified by country or kin, not color. Eventually, as people learn more about a culture, they adapt to the new culture for a variety of reasons.

Culture shock may appear because people aren't always expecting cultural differences. Anthropologist Ken Barger (1971) discovered this when he conducted a participatory observation in an Inuit community in the Canadian Arctic. Originally from Indiana, Barger hesitated when invited to join a local snowshoe race. He knew he would never hold his own against these experts. Sure enough, he finished last, to his mortification. But the tribal members congratulated him, saying, "You really tried!" In Barger's own culture, he had learned to value victory. To the Inuit people, winning was enjoyable, but their culture valued survival skills essential to their environment: how hard someone tried could mean the difference between life and death. Over the course of his stay, Barger participated in caribou hunts, learned how to take shelter in winter storms, and sometimes went days with little or no food to share among tribal members. Trying hard and working together, two nonmaterial values, were indeed much more important than winning.

During his time with the Inuit tribe, Barger learned to engage in cultural relativism. Cultural relativism is the practice of assessing a culture by its own standards rather than viewing it through the lens of one's own culture. Practicing cultural relativism requires an open mind and a willingness to consider, and even adapt to, new values, norms, and practices.

However, indiscriminately embracing everything about a new culture is not always possible. Even the most culturally relativist people from egalitarian societies—ones in which women have political rights and control over their own bodies—question whether the widespread practice of female genital mutilation in countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan should be accepted as a part of cultural tradition. Sociologists attempting to engage in cultural relativism, then, may struggle to reconcile aspects of their own culture with aspects of a culture that they are studying. Sociologists may take issue with the practices of female genital mutilation in many countries to ensure virginity at marriage just as some male sociologists might take issue with scarring of the flesh to show membership. Sociologists work diligently to keep personal biases out of research analysis.

Sometimes when people attempt to address feelings of ethnocentrism and develop cultural relativism, they swing too far to the other end of the spectrum. Xenocentrism is the opposite of ethnocentrism, and refers to the belief that another culture is superior to one's own. (The Greek root word xeno-, pronounced "ZEE-no," means "stranger" or "foreign guest.") An exchange student who goes home after a semester abroad or a sociologist who returns from the field may find it difficult to associate with the values of their own culture after having experienced what they deem a more upright or nobler way of living. An opposite reaction is xenophobia, an irrational fear or hatred of different cultures.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for sociologists studying different cultures is the matter of keeping a perspective. It is impossible for anyone to overcome all cultural biases. The best we can do is strive to be aware of them. Pride in one's own culture doesn't have to lead to imposing its values or ideas on others. And an appreciation for another culture shouldn't preclude individuals from studying it with a critical eye. This practice is perhaps the most difficult for all social scientists.

Sociology in the Real World: Overcoming Culture Shock

During her summer vacation, Caitlin flew from Chicago, Illinois to Madrid, Spain to visit Maria, the exchange student she had befriended the previous semester. In the airport, she heard rapid, musical Spanish being spoken all around her.

Exciting as it was, she felt isolated and disconnected. Maria's mother kissed Caitlin on both cheeks when she greeted her. Her imposing father kept his distance. Caitlin was half asleep by the time supper was served—at 10 p.m. Maria's family sat at the table for hours, speaking loudly, gesturing, and arguing about politics, a taboo dinner subject in Caitlin's house. They served wine and toasted their honored guest. Caitlin had trouble interpreting her hosts' facial expressions, and did not realize she should make the next toast. That night, Caitlin crawled into a strange bed, wishing she had not come. She missed her home and felt overwhelmed by the new customs, language, and surroundings. She'd studied Spanish in school for years—why hadn't it prepared her for this?

What Caitlin did not realize was that people depend not only on spoken words but also on body language, like gestures and facial expressions, to communicate. Cultural norms and practices accompany even the smallest nonverbal signals (DuBois, 1951). They help people know when to shake hands, where to sit, how to converse, and even when to laugh. We relate to others through a shared set of cultural norms, and ordinarily, we take them for granted.

For this reason, culture shock is often associated with traveling abroad, although it can happen in one's own country, state, or even hometown. Anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (1960) is credited with first coining the term "culture shock." In his studies, Oberg found that most people are excited at first to encounter a new culture. But bit by bit, they become stressed by interacting with people from a different culture who speak another language and use different regional expressions. There is new food to digest, new daily schedules to follow, and new rules of etiquette to learn. Living with this constant stress can make people feel incompetent and insecure. People react to frustration in a new culture, Oberg found, by initially rejecting it and glorifying one's own culture. An American visiting Italy might long for a "real" pizza or complain about the unsafe driving habits of Italians.

It helps to remember that culture is learned. Everyone is ethnocentric to an extent, and identifying with one's own country is natural. Caitlin's shock was minor compared to that of her friends Dayar and Mahlika, a Turkish couple living in married student housing on campus. And it was nothing like that of her classmate Sanai. Sanai had been forced to flee war-torn Bosnia with her family when she was fifteen. After two weeks in Spain, Caitlin had developed more compassion and understanding for what those people had gone through. She understood that adjusting to a new culture takes time. It can take weeks or months to recover from culture shock, and it can take years to fully adjust to living in a new culture.

By the end of Caitlin's trip, she had made new lifelong friends. Caitlin stepped out of her comfort zone. She had learned a lot about Spain, but discovered a lot about herself and her own culture.



Figure 3.4: Experiencing new cultures offers an opportunity to practice cultural relativism. (Credit: OledSidorenko/flickr)

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3.3: Elements of Culture

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate values, beliefs, and norms
- Explain the significance of symbols and language to a culture
- Explain the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
- Discuss the role of social control within culture

Values and Beliefs

The first, and perhaps most crucial, elements of culture we will discuss are values and beliefs. Value does not mean monetary worth in sociology, but rather ideals, or principles and standards members of a culture hold in high regard. Most cultures in any society hold "knowledge" (education) in high regard. *Values* are deeply embedded and are critical for learning a culture's *beliefs*, which are the tenets or convictions that people hold to be true. Individual cultures in a society have personal beliefs, but they also shared collective values. To illustrate the difference, U.S. citizens may believe in the American Dream—that anyone who works hard enough will be successful and wealthy. Underlying this belief is the American value that wealth is important. In other cultures, success may be tied less to wealth and more to having many healthy children. Values shape a society by suggesting what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly, sought or avoided.

Consider the value that the U.S. places upon youth. Children represent innocence and purity, while a youthful adult appearance signifies sexuality. Shaped by this value, individuals spend millions of dollars each year on cosmetic products and surgeries to look young and beautiful. The U.S. also has an individualistic culture, meaning people place a high value on individuality and independence. In contrast, many other cultures are collectivist, meaning the welfare of the group takes priority over that of the individual. Fulfilling a society's values can be difficult. Marital monogamy is valued, but many spouses engage in infidelity. Cultural diversity and equal opportunities for all people are valued in the U.S., yet the country's highest political offices have been dominated by white men.

Values often suggest how people should behave, but they don't accurately reflect how people do behave. Values portray an ideal culture, the standards society would like to embrace and live up to. But ideal culture differs from real culture. In an ideal culture, there would be no traffic accidents, murders, poverty, or racial tension. But in real culture, police officers, lawmakers, educators, and social workers constantly strive to prevent or address these issues. American teenagers are encouraged to value celibacy. However, the number of unplanned pregnancies among teens reveals that the ideal alone is not enough to spare teenagers the potential consequences of having sex.

One of the ways societies strive to maintain its values is through rewards and punishments. When people observe the norms of society and uphold its values, they are often rewarded. A boy who helps an elderly woman board a bus may receive a smile and a "thank you." A business manager who raises profit margins may receive a quarterly bonus. People sanction unwanted or inappropriate behaviors by withholding support, approval, or permission, or by implementing sanctions. We may think of 'sanction' as a negative term, but sanctions are forms of social control, ways to encourage conformity to cultural norms or rules. Sometimes people conform to norms in anticipation or expectation of positive sanctions. Receiving good grades, for instance, may mean praise from parents and teachers. Sanctions can also be negative. . A boy who shoves an elderly woman aside to board the bus first may receive frowns or even a scolding from other passengers. A business manager who drives away customers will likely be fired. Breaking norms and rejecting values can lead to cultural sanctions such as earning a negative label like 'lazy' or to legal sanctions, such as traffic tickets, fines, or imprisonment. Utilizing social control encourages most people to conform regardless of whether authority figures (such as law enforcement) are present.

Values are not static. They change across time and between groups as people evaluate, debate, and change collective social beliefs. Values also vary from culture to culture. For example, cultures differ in their values about what kinds of physical closeness are appropriate in public. It's rare to see two male friends or coworkers holding hands in the U.S. where that behavior often symbolizes romantic feelings. But in many nations, masculine physical intimacy is considered natural in public. This difference in cultural values came to light when people reacted to photos of former president G.W. Bush holding hands with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia in 2005. Simple gestures, such as hand-holding, carry great symbolic differences across cultures.



Figure 3.5: In many parts of Africa and the Middle East, it is considered normal for men to hold hands in friendship. How would US citizens react to these two soldiers? (Credit: Geordie Mott/Wikimedia Commons)

Norms

So far, many of the examples in this chapter have described how people are *expected* to behave in certain situations—for example, buying food or boarding a bus. These examples describe the visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured, or what sociologists call norms. Norms are behaviors that reflect compliance with what cultures and societies have defined as good, right, and important. Most members adhere to them.

Formal norms are established, written rules existing in all societies. They support many social institutions, such as the military, criminal justice and healthcare systems, and public schools. Functionalists may question what *purpose* these norms serve, conflict theorists might be interested in *who* creates, benefits, and suffers under these formal norms, and symbolic interactionists wonder about how a group that benefits interacts. Laws are formal norms, but so are employee manuals, college entrance exam requirements, and "no running" signs at swimming pools. Formal norms are the most specific and clearly stated of the various types of norms, and they are the most strictly enforced. But they are enforced to varying degrees.

For example, private property is highly valued in the U.S. Thieves can be fined, imprisoned, or both. People safeguard valuable possessions by locking their doors, buying a safe, and installing alarm systems on homes and cars. A less strictly enforced social norm is driving while intoxicated. While it's against the law to drive drunk, drinking is for the most part an acceptable social behavior. And though there are laws to punish drunk driving, there are few systems in place to prevent the crime.

There are plenty of formal norms, but the list of informal norms—casual behaviors that are generally and widely conformed to—is longer. People learn informal norms by observation, imitation, and general socialization. Some informal norms are taught directly — "Kiss your Aunt Edna" or "Use your napkin"—while others are learned by observation, including understanding consequences when someone else violates a norm. Informal norms dictate appropriate behaviors without the need of written rules and so may be difficult to learn when you are new to or not familiar with the culture.

Although informal norms define personal interactions, they extend into other systems as well. In the U.S., there are informal norms regarding behavior at fast food restaurants. Customers line up to order their food and leave when they are done. They don't sit down at a table with strangers, sing loudly as they prepare their condiments, or nap in a booth. Most people don't commit even harmless breaches of informal norms.

Sociological Research: Breaching Experiments

Sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1917–2011) studied people's customs in order to find out how societal rules and norms not only influence behavior but also shape social order. He believed that members of society together create a social order (Weber,

2011). His resulting book, *Studies in Ethno-methodology* (1967) discusses people's assumptions about the social makeup of their communities.

One of Garfinkel's research methods was known as a "breaching experiment," in which the researcher behaves in a socially awkward manner in order to test the sociological concepts of social norms and conformity. The participants are not aware an experiment is in progress, but their response is recorded. For example, if the experimenter is, say, a man in a business suit, and he skips down the sidewalk or hops on one foot, a passersby is likely to stare at him with surprised expressions. But the experimenter does not simply "act weird" in public. Rather, the point is to deviate from a specific social norm in a small way, to subtly break some form of social etiquette, and see what happens.

For example, he set up a simple game of tic-tac-toe. One player was asked beforehand to mark Xs and Os not in the boxes but on the lines dividing the spaces instead. The other player, in the dark about the study, was flabbergasted and did not know how to continue. The second player's outrage, anger, puzzlement, or other emotion suggested that a cultural norms had been violated.

There are many rules about speaking with strangers in public. It is okay to tell a woman you like her shoes. It is not okay to ask if you can try them on. It is okay to stand in line behind someone at the ATM. It is not okay to look over his shoulder as he makes a transaction. It is okay to sit beside someone on a crowded bus. It's weird to sit beside a stranger in a half-empty bus.

For some breaches, the researcher directly engages with innocent bystanders. An experimenter might strike up a conversation in a public bathroom, where it's common to respect each other's privacy. In a grocery store, an experimenter might take a food item out of another person's grocery cart, saying, "That looks good! I think I'll try it." An experimenter might sit down at a table with others in a fast-food restaurant or follow someone around a museum and study the same paintings. In those cases, the bystanders are pressured to respond, and their discomfort illustrates how much we depend on social norms. Breaching experiments uncover and explore the many unwritten social rules we live by.

Norms may be further classified as either mores or folkways. Mores (mor-ays) are norms that embody the moral views and principles of a group. They often have a religious foundation. Violating them can have serious consequences. The strongest mores are protected with laws and other formal sanctions. In most societies, for instance, homicide is considered immoral, and it's punishable by law (a formal norm). But more often, mores are judged and guarded by public sentiment (an informal norm). People who violate mores are seen as shameful. They can even be shunned or banned from some groups.

The mores of the U.S. school system require that a student's writing be in the student's own words or use special forms (such as quotation marks and a whole system of citation) for crediting other writers. Submitting or publishing another person's words as if they are one's own has a name—plagiarism. The consequences for violating this norm are often severe and can result in expulsion from school or termination from employment.

Unlike mores, folkways are norms without any moral underpinnings. Rather, folkways direct appropriate behavior in the day-to-day practices and expressions of a culture. We can think of them as 'traditions'—things we do because we 'always have.' They indicate whether to shake hands or kiss on the cheek when greeting another person. They specify whether to wear a tie and blazer or a T-shirt and sandals to an event. In Canada, women can smile and say hello to men on the street. In Egypt, that's not acceptable. In regions in the southern U.S., bumping into an acquaintance means stopping to chat. It's considered rude not to, no matter how busy one is. In other regions, people guard their privacy and value time efficiency. A simple nod of the head is enough. Other accepted folkways in the U.S. may include holding the door open for a stranger or giving someone a gift on their birthday. The rules regarding these folkways may change from culture to culture. A folkway in one culture could be extremely rude in another.

Folkways are actions that people everywhere take for granted. People need to act without thinking in order to get seamlessly through daily routines. They can't stop and analyze every action (Sumner, 1906). Folkways might be small actions, learned by observation and imitated, but they are by no means trivial. An important folkway in many cultures is kissing Grandmother on the cheek. Fail to do so and you will likely be scolded.

Symbols and Culture

Humans, consciously and subconsciously, are always striving to make sense of their surrounding world. Symbols—such as gestures, signs, objects, signals, and words—help people understand that world. They provide communication methods to understanding experiences by conveying recognizable meanings that are shared by societies.

The world is filled with symbols. Sports uniforms, company logos, and traffic signs are symbols. In some cultures, a gold ring is a symbol of marriage. Some symbols are highly functional; stop signs, for instance, provide useful instruction. As physical objects, they belong to material culture, but because they function as symbols, they also convey nonmaterial cultural meanings. Some symbols are valuable only in what they represent. Trophies, blue ribbons, or gold medals, for example, represent accomplishments. But many objects have both material and nonmaterial symbolic value.



(a) (b)

Figure 3.6: Some road signs are universal. But how would you interpret the signage on the right? (Credit: (a) Andrew Bain/flickr; (b) HonzaSoukup/flickr)

Symbols often get noticed when they are out of context. Used unconventionally, they convey strong messages. A stop sign placed on the door of a college building makes a political statement, as does a camouflage military jacket worn in an antiwar protest. Together, the semaphore signals for “N” and “D” represent nuclear disarmament—and form the well-known peace sign (Westcott, 2008). Some college students wear pajamas and bedroom slippers to class, clothing that was formerly associated only with privacy and bedtime. By wearing the outfit, students are defying traditional cultural norms.

Some symbols represent only one side of the story and elicit strong emotions, which can lead to social unrest. Their presence is a reminder of a nation’s worst times and not something to celebrate. Many of these symbols are targets of vandalism as the destruction of these representations is symbolic. Effigies representing public figures are burned to demonstrate anger at certain leaders. In 1989, crowds tore down the Berlin Wall, a decades-old symbol of the division between East and West Germany, communism, and capitalism. In the U.S. beginning in 2019, statues associated with slavery and the Civil War were removed from state capitols, college campuses, and public parks. In Germany, any display of Hitler or Nazi memorabilia or to deny the Holocaust is illegal.

While different cultures have varying systems of symbols, one system is common to all: language. Whatever its form, people learn social and cultural norms through it.

Language and Symbols

Language is a system that uses symbols with which people communicate and through which culture is transmitted. Letters (which make up words), pictographs, and hand gestures are all symbols that create a language used for communication. Sign language, for example, requires an intimate knowledge not only of an alphabet but also of signs that represent entire words and the meaning indicated by certain facial expressions or postures. Its grammar differs from the spoken language. As spoken language is different across regions, nations and cultures, and can even differ by the age of the person, so too does sign language.

All language systems contain the same basic elements that are effective in communicating ideas - object, subject, action. A written language system consists of symbols that refer to spoken sound. Taken together, these symbols convey specific meanings. The English language uses a combination of twenty-six letters to create words. These twenty-six letters make up over 600,000 recognized words (OED Online, 2011). We can compare the reliance on tone and inflection to Mandarin Chinese. It contains over 8,000 characters, but the same character may symbolize different concepts depending on the tone used.

English today contains an English and French version for the same concept. For example, in the English version, one eats, but in French version, one dines. In the English version, we meet someone. In the French version, we encounter someone. Readers of American English may be surprised by the inclusion of a ‘u’ in some spellings of words like ‘behaviour’ or ‘flavour.’ Americans have dropped that ‘u’ that writers of British English include. Billions of people speak English, and there are almost as many pronunciations of it.

Rules for speaking and writing vary even within cultures, most notably by region. Do you eat a grinder, a sub, or a hero/gyro? Do you refer to a can of carbonated liquid as “soda” or “pop”? Is a household entertainment room a “family room,” “rec room,” or “den”? When leaving a restaurant, do you ask your server for a “check,” the “ticket,” or your “bill”? Language is constantly evolving and adding new words as societies create new ideas. In this age of technology, many cultures have adapted almost instantly to new nouns such as “e-mail” and “Internet,” and verbs such as “downloading,” “texting,” and “blogging.” These would have considered nonsense words just the world twenty-five years ago.

Language and Culture

Even while it constantly evolves, language shapes our perception of reality and our behavior. In the 1920s, linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf advanced this idea which became known as Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or linguistic relativity. It is based on the idea that people experience their world through their language, and therefore understand their world through the cultural meanings embedded in their language. The hypothesis suggests that language shapes thought and thus behavior (Swoyer, 2003). For example, words have attached meanings beyond their definition that can influence thought and behavior. In the U.S. where the number thirteen is associated with bad luck, many high-rise buildings do not have a 13th floor. In Japan, however, the number four is considered unlucky, since it is pronounced similarly to the Japanese word for “death.”

Many sociologists believe that language can have a broad and lasting impact on perception. In 2002, Lera Boroditsky and her colleagues conducted experiments on native German and Spanish speakers in English. Unlike English, these languages assign genders to nouns. In German, for example, the word for sun, die Sonne, is feminine, but the word for moon, der Mond, is masculine. The team chose a set of nouns with opposite genders in German and Spanish and asked participants to provide adjectives to describe them. They found that German speakers used more masculine adjectives than Spanish speakers when describing a noun that was grammatically masculine in German but feminine in Spanish. For example, the word for key is masculine in German and feminine in Spanish. German speakers described keys as hard, heavy, jagged, metal, serrated, and useful, while Spanish speakers used the adjectives, golden, intricate, little, lovely, shiny, and tiny. The team concluded that gender perceptions acquired in a person’s native language carry forward to how they see the world even when they switch to a language without grammatical genders (Boroditsky, Schmidt, and Phillips, 2002).

Some sociologists also believe the structure of language can have consequences on both individual and group behavior. For example, a series of studies have found that Finland has a significantly higher rate of workplace accidents than Sweden despite the fact that the languages have similar workplace regulations (Salminen & Johansson, 2000). John A. Lucy explained this discrepancy through differences in the structure of these languages. Swedish places a greater emphasis on the timing of movement in three-dimensional space. Consequently, Lucy argued, the Swedish factories are physically arranged in a manner that supports the smooth running of the product process. Finnish factors experience frequent disruptions, so that workers must rush and have more accidents (Lucy, 1997).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been interpreted to suggest that if a word does not exist in a language then users of that language cannot have the experience. Studies have shown, for instance, that unless people have access to the word “ambivalent,” they don’t

recognize having conflicting positive and negative feelings about an issue as 'ambivalence.' However, the hypothesis should not suggest that people do not have conflicting feelings but rather that they interpret the feelings differently.

In addition to using spoken language, people communicate without words. Nonverbal communication is symbolic, and, as in the case of language, is learned through one's culture. Some gestures are nearly universal; some are not. Smiles often indicate positive reinforcement in the U.S., whereas in some cultures it is rude as you do not know the person. A thumbs-up in Russia and Australia is an offensive curse (Passero, 2002). Other gestures vary in meaning depending on the situation and the person. A wave of the hand can mean many things, depending on how it's done and for whom. It may mean "hello," "goodbye," "no thank you," or "I'm royalty." Winks convey a variety of messages, including "We have a secret," "I'm only kidding," or "I'm attracted to you." From a distance, a person may "read" the emotional situation of people just by watching their body language and facial expressions. However, many cultures communicate with lots of physicality, which people outside that culture may interpret as an argument. So, for example, you might believe two people are arguing when, in fact, they are simply having a regular conversation.

Social Policy and Debate: Is the U.S. Bilingual?

When she was six, Lucy and her family immigrated to the United States and attended a school that allowed for the use of both English and Spanish. Lucy's teacher and many staff were bilingual (fluent in English and Spanish), and the district offered books in both languages. While she was being driven to learn English, the dual-language option helped to ensure that she did not become lost and get behind in her learning of all subjects. Having math, science, and computing taught in both languages helped her understand those concepts and skills. Within two years of enrolling in the school, Lucy was getting nearly all of her instruction in English, and rarely used the Spanish-language books or resources. While she still had trouble with some intricacies of English, her math progress was above grade level and she did well in other subjects as well.

Some people might believe that Lucy would have learned faster had she been instructed only in English. But research indicates that is not the case. Johns Hopkins University researchers conducted a series of studies on the effects of bilingual education across multiple subjects (Slavin et al. 2008). They found that students taught in both their native tongue and English make better progress than those taught only in English.

Legally, the U.S. has no official language. But many believe English to be the rightful language of the U.S., and over thirty states have passed laws specifying English as their official tongue. Proponents of English-only laws suggest that a national ruling will save money on translation, printing, and human resource costs, including funding for bilingual teachers. They argue that setting English as the official language will encourage non-English speakers to learn English faster and adapt to the culture of the U.S. more easily (Mount 2010). Groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) oppose making English the official language and claim that it violates the rights of non-English speakers. English-only laws, they believe, deny the reality of our nation's diversity and unfairly target non-English speakers. They point to the fact that much of the debate on this topic has risen since 1970, a period during which the U.S. has experienced new waves of immigration from Asia and Mexico.

Today, a lot of product information gets written in multiple languages. Enter a store like Home Depot and you'll find signs in both English and Spanish. Buy a children's product and the safety warnings could be presented in multiple languages. While marketers are financially motivated to reach the largest number of consumers possible, this trend also may help people become accustomed to a culture of bilingualism.

Studies show that most US immigrants eventually abandon their native tongues and become fluent in English. Bilingual education helps with that transition. Today, Lucy is an ambitious and high-achieving college student. Fluent in both English and Spanish, Lucy is studying law enforcement—a field that seeks bilingual employees. The same bilingualism that contributed to her success in grade school will help her thrive professionally as a law officer serving her community.



Figure 3.7: Many signs—on streets and in stores—include both English and Spanish. What effect does this have on members of society? What effect does it have on our culture? (Credit: istolethetv/flickr)

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3.4: Cultural Diversity

Learning Objectives

- Define subculture and counterculture and give one example of each.
- Distinguish cultural relativism and ethnocentrism.

These cow and pig examples remind us that material and nonmaterial cultures often make sense only in the context of a given society. If that is true, then it is important for outsiders to become familiar with other societies and to appreciate their cultural differences. These differences are often referred to as cultural diversity. Cultural diversity also occurs within a single society, where subcultures and countercultures can both exist.

Learning From Other Societies

Saving Dogs and Cats in South Korea

Sometimes citizens can make a difference. Dog ownership has recently been increasing in South Korea, a nation in which dogs have traditionally been preferred more as a source of food than as pets. Two individuals who can claim credit for the more humane treatment of dogs there are Kyenan Kum and Haesun Park, two women who founded the Korea Animal Protection and Education Society (KAPES; www.koreananimals.org/index.htm) in 2007.

The mission of KAPES is to educate South Koreans about the humane treatment of dogs and cats and to promote compassionate treatment of these pets. Kyenan Kum had previously founded the International Aid for Korean Animals (IAKA) organization in 1997, to achieve the same goals. During the next 10 years, IAKA advocated for the more humane treatment of pets and publicized their plight to other nations to help bring international pressure to bear upon South Korea. In 2007 IAKA's efforts proved successful when the Korean government strengthened its Animal Protection Law. With stronger legal protections for pets in place, Kum and Park decided it was now time to focus on convincing the public that pets should be treated humanely, and they founded KAPES to achieve this goal. In December 2008, Park received an award from the Ministry of Agriculture for her efforts, which have included the holding of animal protection festivals and advocating for government funding for animal shelters.

It is not easy to confront a deeply embedded cultural practice as Kyenan Kum and Haesun Park have done. Their example offers inspiration to Americans and other citizens who also dedicate their lives to various kinds of social reforms.

A subculture refers to a group that shares the central values and beliefs of the larger culture but still retains certain values, beliefs, and norms that make it distinct from the larger culture. A good example of a U.S. subculture is the Amish, who live primarily in central Pennsylvania and parts of Ohio and shun electricity and other modern conveniences, including cars, tractors, and telephones. Their way of life is increasingly threatened by the expansion of non-Amish businesses and residences into Amish territory (Rifkin, 2009).Rifkin, G. (2009, January 8). The Amish flock from farms to small businesses. *The New York Times*, p. B3. Since the 1970s, development has cost Lancaster County, Pennsylvania—where many Amish live—thousands of acres of farming land. Some Amish families have moved to other states or left farming to start small businesses, where some do use cell phones and computers. Despite these concessions to modern development, for the most part the Amish live the way they always have. Most still do not drive cars or even ride bikes. The case of the Amish dramatically illustrates the persistence of an old-fashioned subculture and its uneasy fit with the larger, dominant culture.



Figure 3.4.1: The Amish in the United States are a subculture that shuns electricity and many other modern conveniences. (CC BY-SA 3.0; it:Utente:TheCadExpert)

A counterculture is a group whose values and beliefs directly oppose those of the larger culture and even reject it. Perhaps the most discussed example of a counterculture is the so-called youth counterculture of the 1960s, often referred to as the hippies but also comprising many other young people who did not fit the "tuned-out" image of the hippies and instead were politically engaged against U.S. government policy in Vietnam and elsewhere (Roszak, 1969).Roszak, T. (1969). *The making of a counterculture*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. A contemporary example of a U.S. counterculture is the survivalists, whose extreme antigovernment views and hoarding of weapons fit them into the counterculture category (Mitchell, 2002).Mitchell, R. G., Jr. (2002). *Dancing at Armageddon: Survivalism and chaos in modern times*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Cultural Relativism and Ethnocentrism

The fact of cultural diversity raises some important but difficult questions of cultural relativism and ethnocentrism. Cultural relativism refers to the belief that we should not judge any culture as superior or inferior to another culture. In this view, all cultures have their benefits and disadvantages, and we should not automatically assume that our own culture is better and "their" culture is worse. Ethnocentrism, the opposite view, refers to the tendency to judge another culture by the standards of our own and to the belief that our own culture is indeed superior to another culture. When we think of cow worship in India, it is easy to be amused by it and even to make fun of it. That is why anthropologist Marvin Harris's analysis was so important, because it suggests that cow worship is in fact very important for the Indian way of life.



Figure 3.4.1: © Thinkstock

Dowry deaths are relatively common in certain parts of India and Pakistan. Should we practice cultural relativism and not disapprove of dowry deaths? Or is it fair to condemn this practice, even if it is one that many people in these nations accept?

Some scholars think cultural relativism is an absolute, that we should never judge another culture's beliefs and practices as inferior to our own. Other scholars think cultural relativism makes sense up to a point, but that there are some practices that should be condemned, even if they are an important part of another culture, because they violate the most basic standards of humanity. For example, a common practice in areas of India and Pakistan is *dowry deaths*, where a husband and his relatives murder the husband's wife because her family has not provided the dowry they promised when the couple got married (Kethineni & Srinivasan, 2009).Kethineni, S., & Srinivasan, M. (2009). Police handling of domestic violence cases in Tamil Nadu, India. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 25*, 202–213.Often they burn the wife in her kitchen with cooking oil or gasoline and make it look like an accident. The number of such dowry deaths is estimated to be at least several hundred every year and perhaps as many as several thousand. Should we practice cultural relativism and not disapprove of dowry deaths? Or is it fair to condemn this practice, even if it is one that many people in those nations accept?

Because dowry death is so horrible, you might be sure we should not practice cultural relativism for this example. However, other cultural practices such as cow worship might sound odd to you but are not harmful, and you would probably agree we should accept these practices on their own terms. Other practices lie between these two extremes. Consider the eating of dog meat, which was mentioned in the "Learning From Other Societies" box. In China, South Korea, and other parts of Asia, dog meat is considered a delicacy, and people sometimes kill dogs to eat them (Dunlop, 2008).Dunlop, F. (2008, August 4). It's too hot for dog on the menu. *The New York Times*, p. A19. As one observer provocatively asked about eating dog meat, "For a Westerner, eating it can feel a little strange, but is it morally different from eating, say, pork? The dogs brought to table in China are not people's pets, but are raised as food, like pigs. And pigs, of course, are also intelligent and friendly" (Dunlop, 2008).Dunlop, F. (2008, August 4). It's too hot for dog on the menu. *The New York Times*, p. A19. Should we accept the practice of eating dog meat on its own terms? Is it any worse than eating pork or slaughtering cattle in order to eat beef? If an Asian immigrant killed and ate a dog in the United States, should that person be arrested for engaging in a practice the person grew up with? Cultural relativism and ethnocentrism certainly raise difficult issues in today's increasingly globalized world.

Conclusion

- Subcultures and countercultures are two types of alternative cultures that may exist amid the dominant culture.
- Cultural relativism and ethnocentrism are often in tension, and it is sometimes difficult to determine whether it is appropriate to condemn behaviors that one's own culture finds repugnant but that another culture considers appropriate.

For Your Review

1. This section discussed the eating of dog meat in some other cultures. Many Americans and Europeans condemn this practice. Do you think it is appropriate to condemn eating dog meat, or do you think such criticism violates cultural relativism and is thus inappropriate? Explain your answer.

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3.5: High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Discuss the roles of both high culture and pop culture within society
- Differentiate between subculture and counterculture
- Explain the role of innovation, invention, and discovery in culture
- Describe the role of cultural lag and globalization in cultural change

It may seem obvious that there are a multitude of cultural differences between societies in the world. After all, we can easily see that people vary from one society to the next. It's natural to think that a young woman from a village in rural Kenya in Eastern Africa would have a different view of the world from a young woman from urban Mumbai, India—one of the most populated cities in the world.

Additionally, each culture has its own internal variations. Sometimes the differences between cultures are not as large as the differences within cultures. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu wrote about *cultural capital*, which consists of material goods, non-material attitudes, and knowledge that are specific to a certain economic class. Bourdieu grouped cultural capital into three categories: *embodied* (a regional dialect), *objectified* (possessions), and *institutionalized* (academic credentials). In the U.S., some group culture into three categories as well: high, low, and pop (for popular).

High, Low, and Popular Culture

Can you identify the Chief Financial Officer of three major corporations? How about the name of the server at three local hangouts? How many books do you own? How many social media sites do you visit? Is your family listed on the Social Register©? Have you ever heard of the Social Register©? In each pair, one type of knowledge is considered high culture and the other low culture.

This could be considered stereotyping by economic class rather than by race or gender, but sociologists use the term high culture to describe the *pattern* of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in the highest or elite class segments of a society. People often associate high culture with intellectualism, political power, and prestige. In America, high culture also tends to be associated with wealth. Events considered high culture can be expensive, formal, and exclusive – attending a ballet, seeing a play, listening to a live symphony performance, or attending a prestigious university. Similarly, low culture is associated with the pattern of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in the lowest class segments of a society.

The term popular culture refers to the pattern of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in mainstream society. Popular culture events might include a parade, a baseball game, or the season finale of a television show. Music, anime, and cosplay are pieces of popular culture. Popular culture is accessible by most and is expressed and spread via commercial and social media outlets such as radio, television, movies, the music industry, publishers, and corporate-run websites. You can share a discussion of favorite football teams with a new coworker or comment on a reality show when making small talk in line at the grocery store. But if you tried to launch into a deep discussion on the classical Greek play *Antigone*, few members of U.S. society today would be familiar with it. Although high culture may be considered by some as superior to popular culture, the lines between high culture and popular culture vary over time and place. Shakespearean plays, considered to be popular culture when they were written, are now part of our society's high culture. Five hundred years from now, will our descendants consider *Dancing with the Stars* as fine performance art?

Subculture and Counterculture



Figure 3.8: Cosplayers are a distinct subculture (a smaller cultural group within the larger culture) in the United States. And within the larger subculture are subgroups, such as this one emulating D.C. Comics characters. (Credit: Pat Loika)

A subculture is just what it sounds like—a smaller cultural group within a larger culture. People of a subculture are part of the larger culture but also share a specific identity within a smaller group.*

Thousands of subcultures exist within the U.S. Ethnic and racial groups share the language, food, and customs of their heritage. Other subcultures are formed through shared experiences. Biker culture revolves around an interest in motorcycles. Some subcultures are formed by people who possess traits or preferences that differ from the majority of a society's population. The body modification community embraces aesthetic additions to the human body, such as tattoos, piercings, and certain forms of plastic surgery. But even as members of a subculture band together, they still identify with and participate in the larger society.

Sociologists distinguish subcultures from countercultures, which reject some of the larger culture's norms and values. In contrast to subcultures, which operate relatively smoothly within the larger society, countercultures might actively defy larger society by developing their own set of rules and norms to live by, sometimes even creating communities that operate outside of greater society. Counterculture members are 'against' the dominant ruling culture and want to install their own values. Sub-culture members may want to change some things but established procedures are followed.

Cults, a word derived from culture, are also considered counterculture groups. The group "Yearning for Zion" (YFZ) in Eldorado, Texas, existed outside the mainstream and the limelight, until its leader was accused of statutory rape and underage marriage. The sect's formal norms clashed too severely to be tolerated by US law, and in 2008, authorities raided the compound and removed more than two hundred women and children from the property. Many cults claim to be spiritual, often establishing themselves as a religion. When each of the three Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) in the world began, they were treated as cults and suffered much oppression because of it.

Cultural Change

Cultures continually change because new items are added to material culture every day and in turn, meanings are assigned to them (non-material), which affects other cultural components. For example, a new technology, such as railroads or smartphones, might introduce new ways of traveling or communicating. New ideas, such as flash mobs or crowdfunding, enter a culture . Sociologists identify two broad categories of change as innovation (meaning new) and diffusion (to spread out). Material cultural change happens when new items are *discovered* or *invented* or enter a culture as a result of *globalization*.

Innovation: Discovery and Invention

An innovation refers to an object or concept's initial appearance in society—it is innovative because it is new. Innovations are discovered or invented. *Discoveries* make known previously unknown but existing aspects of reality. In 1610, when Galileo looked through his telescope and discovered Saturn, the planet was already there, but until then, no one had known about it. When Christopher Columbus encountered Hispaniola, the island was, of course, already well known to its inhabitants. However, his discovery was new knowledge for Europeans, and it opened the way to changes in European culture, as well as to the cultures of the discovered lands. For example, new foods such as potatoes and tomatoes transformed the European diet, and horses brought from Europe changed hunting practices of Great Plains Native Americans.

Inventions result when something new is formed from existing objects or concepts—when things are put together in an entirely new manner. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, electric appliances were invented at an astonishing pace. Cars, airplanes, vacuum cleaners, lamps, radios, telephones, and televisions were all new inventions. Inventions may shape a culture by replacing older ways of carrying out tasks, being integrated into current practices, or creating new activities. Their adoption reflects (and may shape) cultural values, and their use may introduce new norms and practices.

Consider the rise of mobile phones. As more and more people began carrying these devices, phone conversations no longer were restricted to homes, offices, and phone booths. People on trains, in restaurants, and in other public places became annoyed by listening to one-sided conversations. New norms and behaviors were needed for cell phone use. Some people pushed for the idea that those who are out in the world should pay attention to their companions and surroundings. Fortunately, technology found a workaround: texting, which enables quiet communication surpassed phone conversations as the primary way to communicate anywhere, everywhere.

When the pace of innovation increases, it can lead to generation gaps. Technological gadgets that catch on quickly with one generation are sometimes dismissed by an older generation that is skeptical or struggles to adopt them. The older generation might tune into a musician performing on public television while the younger generation prefers a livestream. A culture's objects and ideas can cause not just generational but cultural gaps. Material culture tends to diffuse more quickly than nonmaterial culture; technology can spread through society in a matter of months, but it can take generations for the ideas and beliefs of society to change including methods for researching or learning information (e.g., library versus Internet search).

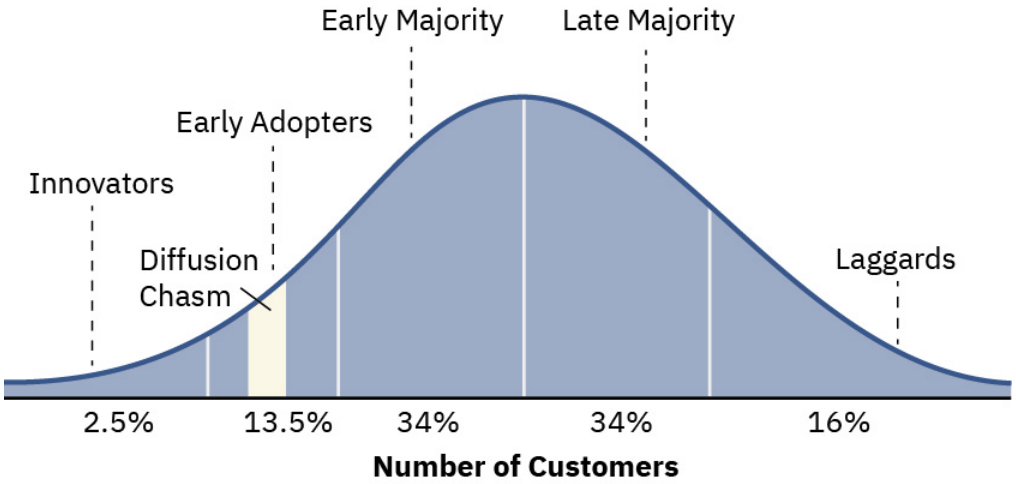


Figure 3.9: Technology Adoption Lifecycle — Sociologist Everett Rogers (1962) developed a model of the diffusion of innovations. As consumers gradually adopt a new innovation, the item grows toward 100 percent usage, or complete saturation within a society. This graph is frequently used in business, sales, technology, and cultural innovations. It can be used to describe how quickly different groups adopt (or begin using) a new technology or a new slang word, but note it is just a framework: not every innovation follows this exact pattern, but it provides a good foundation for discussion and prediction. (Graph attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

Coined by sociologist William F. Ogburn (1957), the term culture lag refers to the time that passes between the introduction of a new item of material culture and its social acceptance. Culture lag can also cause tangible problems. The infrastructure of the U.S., built a hundred years ago or more, is having trouble supporting today's more heavily populated and fast-paced life. Yet there is a lag in conceptualizing solutions to infrastructure problems. Municipalities struggle with traffic control, increased air pollution, and limited parking, which are all symptoms of culture lag. Although people are becoming aware of the consequences, overuse, or lack of resources, addressing these needs takes time.

Diffusion and Globalization

Another way material and nonmaterial culture crosses borders is through diffusion. Like a gas in a laboratory experiment, the item or idea spreads throughout. Diffusion relates to the process of the integration of cultures into the mainstream while globalization refers to the promotion and increase of interactions between different regions and populations around the globe resulting in the integration of markets and interdependence of nations fostered through trade.

Ideas concepts, or artifacts are often diffused, or spread, to individuals and groups, resulting in new social practices. People might develop a new appreciation of Thai noodles or Italian gelato (ice cream). Access to television and the Internet has brought the lifestyles and values portrayed in U.S. sitcoms into homes around the globe and vice versa. Twitter feeds from public demonstrations in one nation have encouraged political protesters in other countries. When this kind of diffusion occurs, ideas from one culture are introduced into another, often before the associated material objects. The graph above displays when diffusion typically occurs, essentially driving an innovation to spread beyond its earliest adopters to the wider majority of people.

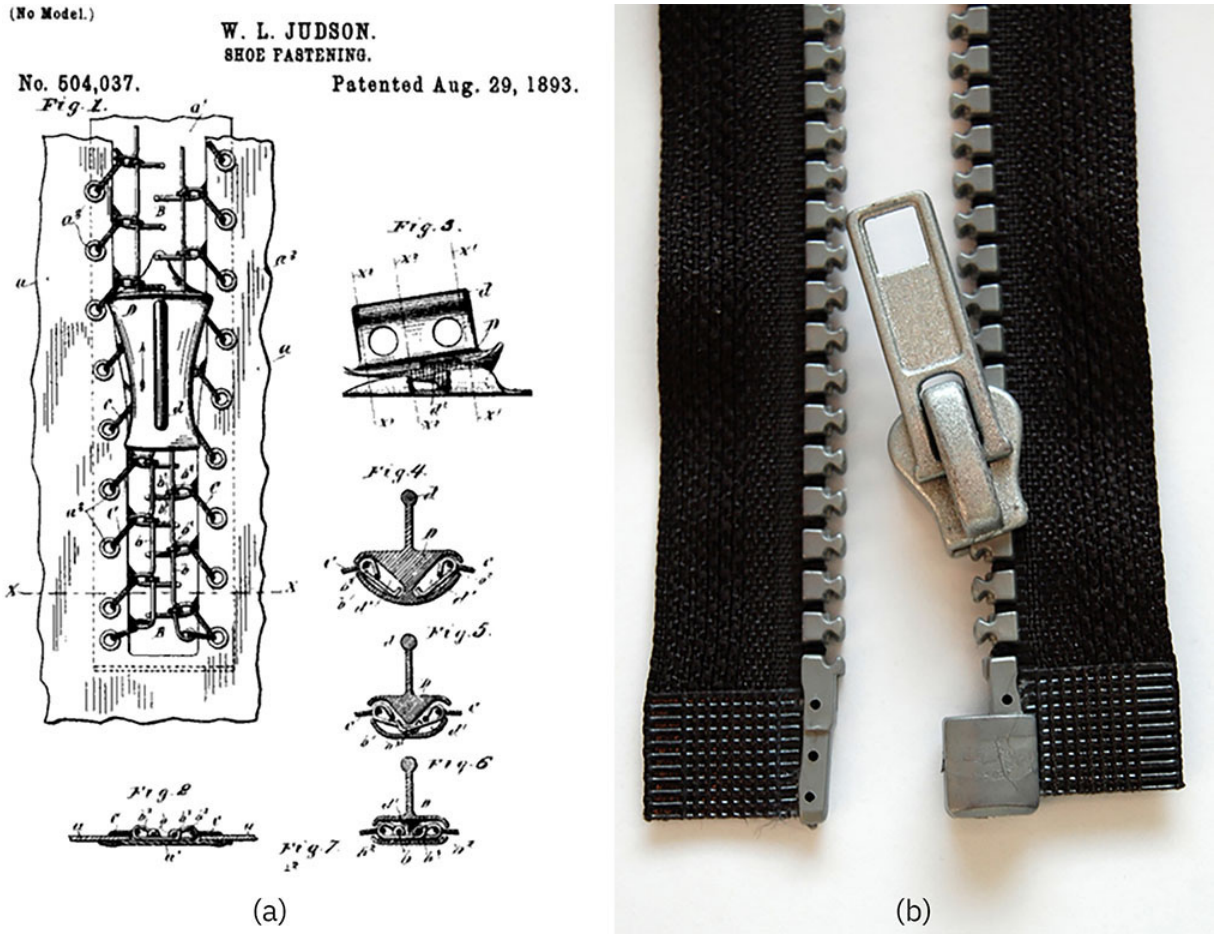


Figure 3.10: Officially patented in 1893 as the “clasp locker” (left), the zipper did not diffuse through society for many decades. Today, it is immediately recognizable around the world. (Credit: (a) US Patent Office/Wikimedia Commons; (b) Rabensteiner/Wikimedia Commons).

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3.6: Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section you should be able to:

- Discuss the major theoretical approaches to cultural interpretation

Music, fashion, technology, and values—all are products of culture. But what do they mean? How do sociologists perceive and interpret culture based on these material and nonmaterial items? Let's finish our analysis of culture by reviewing them in the context of three theoretical perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Functionalists view society as a system in which all parts work—or function—together to create society as a whole. They often use the human body as an analogy. Looking at life in this way, *societies need culture to exist*. Cultural norms function to support the fluid operation of society, and cultural values guide people in making choices. Just as members of a society work together to fulfill a society's needs, culture exists to meet its members' social and personal needs.

Functionalists also study culture in terms of values. For example, education is highly valued in the U.S. The culture of education—including material culture such as classrooms, textbooks, libraries, educational technology, dormitories and non-material culture such as specific teaching approaches—demonstrates how much emphasis is placed on the value of educating a society's members. In contrast, if education consisted of only providing guidelines and some study material without the other elements, that would demonstrate that the culture places a lower value on education.



Figure 3.11: This statue of Superman stands in the center of Metropolis, Illinois. His pedestal reads "Truth—Justice—The American Way." How would a functionalist interpret this statue? What does it reveal about the values of American culture? (Credit: David Wilson/flickr)

Functionalists view the different categories of culture as serving many functions. Having membership in a culture, a subculture, or a counterculture brings camaraderie and social cohesion and benefits the larger society by providing places for people who share similar ideas.

Conflict theorists, however, view social structure as inherently unequal, based on power differentials related to issues like class, gender, race, and age. For a conflict theorist, established educational methods are seen as reinforcing the dominant societal culture and issues of privilege. The historical experiences of certain groups— those based upon race, sex, or class, for instance, or those that portray a negative narrative about the dominant culture—are excluded from history books. For a long time, U.S. History education omitted the assaults on Native American people and society that were part of the colonization of the land that became the United States. A more recent example is the recognition of historical events like race riots and racially based massacres like the Tulsa Massacre, which was widely reported when it occurred in 1921 but was omitted from many national historical accounts of that period of time. When an episode of HBO's *Watchmen* showcased the event in stunning and horrific detail, many people expressed surprise that it had occurred and it hadn't been taught or discussed (Ware 2019).

Historical omission is not restricted to the U.S. North Korean students learn of their benevolent leader without information about his mistreatment of large portions of the population. According to defectors and North Korea experts, while famines and dire economic conditions are obvious, state media and educational agencies work to ensure that North Koreans do not understand how different their country is from others (Jacobs 2019).

Inequities exist within a culture's value system and become embedded in laws, policies, and procedures. This inclusion leads to the oppression of the powerless by the powerful. A society's cultural norms benefit some people but hurt others. Women were not allowed to vote in the U.S. until 1920, making it hard for them to get laws passed that protected their rights in the home and in the workplace. Same-sex couples were denied the right to marry in the U.S. until 2015. Elsewhere around the world, same-sex marriage is only legal in 31 of the planet's 195 countries.

At the core of conflict theory is the effect of economic production and materialism. Dependence on technology in rich nations *versus* a lack of technology and education in poor nations. Conflict theorists believe that a society's system of material production has an effect on the rest of culture. People who have less power also have fewer opportunities to adapt to cultural change. This view contrasts with the perspective of functionalism. Where functionalists would see the purpose of culture—traditions, folkways, values—as helping individuals navigate through life and societies run smoothly, conflict theorists examine socio-cultural struggles, including the power and privilege created for some by using and reinforcing a dominant culture that sustains their position in society.

Symbolic interactionism is the sociological perspective that is most concerned with the face-to-face interactions and cultural meanings between members of society. It is considered a micro-level analysis. Instead of looking how access is different between the rich and poor, interactionists see culture as being created and maintained by the ways people interact and in how individuals interpret each other's actions. In this perspective, people perpetuate cultural ways. Proponents of this theory conceptualize human interaction as a continuous process of deriving meaning from both objects in the environment and the actions of others. Every object and action has a symbolic meaning, and language serves as a means for people to represent and communicate interpretations of these meanings to others. Symbolic interactionists perceive culture as highly dynamic and fluid, as it is dependent on how meaning is interpreted and how individuals interact when conveying these meanings. Interactionists research changes in language. They study additions and deletions of words, the changing meaning of words, and the transmission of words in an original language into different ones.



Figure 3.12: Sometimes external observers may believe that people from a culture dress a certain way based on images from a parade or special event. In reality, these two people may wear business suits or jeans and T-shirts when they are not participating in a flower parade. While people may not always outwardly express their cultural identity or use items related to their culture, special events often bring out those expressions. (Credit: John Shedrick)

We began this chapter by asking, “What is culture?” Culture is comprised of values, beliefs, norms, language, practices, and artifacts of a society. Because culture is learned, it includes how people think and express themselves. While we may like to consider ourselves individuals, we must acknowledge the impact of culture on us and our way of life. We inherit language that shapes our perceptions and patterned behavior, including those of family, friends, faith, and politics.

To an extent, culture is a social comfort. After all, sharing a similar culture with others is precisely what defines societies. Nations would not exist if people did not coexist culturally. There could be no societies if people did not share heritage and language, and civilization would cease to function if people did not agree on similar values and systems of social control.

Culture is preserved through transmission from one generation to the next, but it also evolves through processes of innovation, discovery, and cultural diffusion. As such, cultures are social constructions. The society approves or disapproves of items or ideas, which are therefore included or not in the culture. We may be restricted by the confines of our own culture, but as humans we have the ability to question values and make conscious decisions. No better evidence of this freedom exists than the amount of cultural diversity around the world. The more we study another culture, the better we become at understanding our own.

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3.7: Key Terms

beliefs | tenets or convictions that people hold to be true
countercultures | groups that reject and oppose society's widely accepted cultural patterns
cultural universals | patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies
culture | shared beliefs, values, and practices
culture lag | the gap of time between the introduction of material culture and nonmaterial culture's acceptance of it
diffusion | the spread of material and nonmaterial culture from one culture to another
discoveries | things and ideas found from what already exists
ethnocentrism | the evaluation and judgment of another culture based on one's own cultural norms
folkways | direct, appropriate behavior in the day-to-day practices and expressions of a culture
formal norms | established, written rules
globalization | the integration of international trade and finance markets
high culture | the cultural patterns of a society's elite
ideal culture | the standards a society would like to embrace and live up to
informal norms | casual behaviors that are generally and widely conformed to
innovations | new objects or ideas introduced to culture for the first time
inventions | a combination of pieces of existing reality into new forms
language | a symbolic system of communication
mores | the moral views and principles of a group
norms | the visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured
popular culture | mainstream, widespread patterns among a society's population
real culture | the way society really is based on what actually occurs and exists
sanctions | a way to authorize or formally disapprove of certain behaviors
Sapir-Whorf hypothesis | the way that people understand the world based on their form of language
social control | a way to encourage conformity to cultural norms
society | people who live in a definable community and who share a culture
subcultures | groups that share a specific identification, apart from a society's majority, even as the members exist within a larger society
symbols | gestures or objects that have meanings associated with them that are recognized by people who share a culture
values | a culture's standard for discerning what is good and just in society

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3.8: Section Summary

3.1 What Is Culture?

Though “society” and “culture” are often used interchangeably, they have different meanings. A society is a group of people sharing a community and culture. The term culture generally describes the shared values, beliefs, norms, language, practices, and artifacts of these people, and includes material and nonmaterial elements. Our experience of cultural difference is influenced by our ethnocentrism (judging others using your cultural standards) and Xenocentrism (belief that another culture is superior). Sociologists practice cultural relativism (assessing others using their own cultural standards) although it is quite difficult.

3.2 Elements of Culture

A culture consists of many elements, such as the values and beliefs of its society. Culture is also governed by norms, including laws, mores (norms that embody moral views), and folkways (traditions without any moral underpinnings). The symbols and language of a society are key to developing and conveying culture. In a nutshell, the four main components are values, beliefs, norms, language, practices, and artifacts.

3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

Sociologists recognize that there is a dominant culture or cultural practice that is dominant often characterized as the norm in a society as well as different types of cultures within societies. Societies also consist of many subcultures (a smaller cultural group within a larger culture). Some arese as a result of a shared identity or interest. Countercultures reject the dominant culture’s values and create their own cultural rules and norms. Cultural change can happen through invention or discovery. Cultures evolve via new ideas and new ways of thinking. In many modern cultures, the cornerstone of innovation is technology, the rapid growth of which can lead to cultural lag (time from creation or introduction to social acceptance). Technology is also responsible for the spread of both material and nonmaterial culture that contributes to globalization (the increase of movement and exchange of goods and ideas all over the planet).

3.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

There are three major theoretical approaches toward the interpretation of culture. A functionalist perspective acknowledges that the many parts of culture work together as a system to fulfill society’s needs. Functionalists view culture as a reflection of society’s values. Conflict theorists see culture as inherently unequal, reinforcing inequalities in gender, class, race, and age. Symbolic interactionists are primarily interested in culture as experienced in the daily interactions, interpretations, and exchanges between individuals and the symbols that comprise a culture. Various cultural and sociological occurrences can be explained by these theories. Each theory provides a different perspective or lens to help understand culture in societies.

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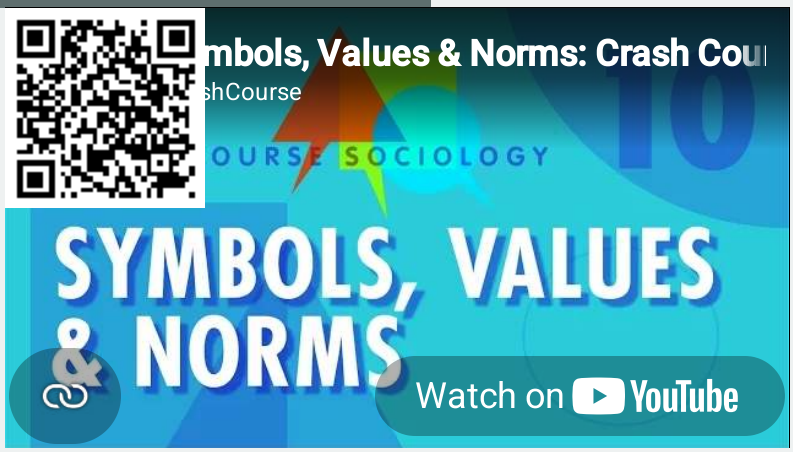
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3.10: Crash Course Video- Symbols, Values, and Norms

Symbols, Values, & Norms: Crash Course Sociology #10



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Socialization

In the following sections, we will examine the importance of the complex process of socialization and how it takes place through interaction with many individuals, groups, and social institutions. We will explore how socialization is not only critical to children as they develop but how it is also a lifelong process through which we become prepared for new social environments and expectations in every stage of our lives. But first, we will turn to scholarship about self-development, the process of coming to recognize a sense of self, a "self" that is then able to be socialized.

4.1: Introduction
4.2: Theories of Self-Development
4.3: Why Socialization Matters
4.4: Agents of Socialization
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4.1: Introduction



Figure 5.1: Emergency workers are prepared to treat patients with a wide array of illnesses and injuries. Beyond their medical training, they build skills in decision making, teamwork, communication, and stress management. These abilities can be extremely valuable throughout the workers' life and careers, even if they move into other areas of employment. However, fast and efficient decision making doesn't always translate to less intense environments. (Credit: COD Newsroom/Flickr)

Chapter Outline

5.1 Theories of Self-Development
5.2 Why Socialization Matters
5.3 Agents of Socialization
5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

When Noel was fifteen, they saw a flyer about joining the volunteer ambulance corps. Noel was intrigued: They had an interest in pursuing medicine, and liked volunteering, but ambulance work seemed like something for older people with professional training. At the information session, Noel learned that junior members of the ambulance corps could help with supplies and communications, and were allowed to ride on ambulance calls to assist the Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). Noel was thrilled and signed up right away.

Noel was amazed by how confidently the EMTs—some just a few years older than Noel—made consequential decisions. The EMTs relied heavily on their training and guidelines, but they did so quickly. And upon arriving at the hospital with a patient, Noel was similarly impacted by the efficiency of the nurses, doctors, and other staff. Noel developed a deep level of respect for that level of decisiveness and the expertise it required.

Over their college years, Noel found themselves drawn toward the more strategic aspects of medicine, and pursued a degree in healthcare administration. Meanwhile, they did get an EMT certification and joined the college emergency services team; later on, while in grad school, Noel was a part-time professional EMT in a small city. With good grades and varied experience, Noel was recruited into a great job several states away.

After interning in an urban hospital and spending years as an EMT, Noel had come to expect a degree of urgency in medicine. Hospital administration was certainly not an ambulance facility, but the slow pace of Noel's job was agonizing. Every inventory list, bill of lading, email reply, and even meeting schedule went through at several people for approval. Noel enjoyed the job, but was used to working more quickly.

One day, Noel was looking over an equipment bill and noticed a serious error that no one else had caught. Nearly $250,000 in overpayment was about to be paid to a supplier. Noel immediately called the accounting department. No answer. Then they sent a group Slack message and fired off an email to their boss and a few other people involved with the billing and payment process. Noel was about to head across the building to address the issue in person, but finally a message popped up: "Good eye, Noel. We'll hold this payment until we clear things up."

Toward the end of the day, Noel received a message from their manager, Tracy, asking them to stop by. Tracy's office was crowded with three other people, including the director of accounting. Expecting to be congratulated, Noel was shocked when Tracy began outlining all the things Noel had done wrong.

"Your frantic messaging and over-the-top language was incredibly disruptive...almost irresponsible," Tracy said.

"But I was right," Noel replied in a louder voice than they intended.

"Right or wrong," Tracy said, "you should have told your contact in accounting and waited to see the outcome. Instead, you panicked."

"I did call accounting, but when I didn't hear back, I needed to take the next step. I wasn't panicking; I was being decisive." As Noel said this, they were thinking of all the times they had saved someone's life by making good decisions.

Tracy sighed. "Decisiveness isn't good when it's disruptive. You caused five people to drop everything and start investigating. A few thought it was their fault." Noel started to protest but Tracy shook her head. "I understand that you are coming from a faster-paced environment, and I can tell you've been frustrated. But if you're going to work here, you're going to have to work within our culture. Instead of pushing against how we do things, try to appreciate them. Otherwise, no one will be happy, least of all you." Tracy told Noel to take the evening to think about it and come back for a talk the next morning.

Who was correct in this situation? Noel saved the hospital hundreds of thousands of dollars, or at least the hours of managing the refund process. Tracy, with broader responsibilities, was considering the long-term impacts of Noel's style, and how Noel, as a talented member of the team, will function within the team.

Tracy was concerned about the organization’s culture. Culture, as discussed in the chapter on the topic, is the shared beliefs, values and practices of a group. Countries, societies, religions, and sports teams all have culture, and companies do, too. When you interview for a job, it will likely come up. Researchers who study organizations find that when workers aren't properly incorporated into the corporate culture, they begin a cycle of mutual disappointment, where workers are likely to reject company values and ultimately leave or be fired (Cebollero 2019).

Why didn't Noel enjoy the job, and why were people put off by Noel's approach? For the most part, Noel wasn't prepared for the pacing and style; their previous experience was in opposition to the culture of the hospital. Company culture is easier to learn if someone is predisposed to it, while others might need time to unlearn past behaviors (Schein 1988). Experts indicate that the responsibility for such adaptation is shared between the new employee and the company.

How could Noel have learned, and what could Tracy have done to help? Company culture is learned the same way that other types of culture are learned: through observing and adapting to the norms and values, understanding and applying beliefs, and, in general, seeking to be productive as a member of the group. Just like a child learns how to behave during a play-date or school day, people learn to be productive partners through an ongoing process called socialization.

Socialization is the process through which people are taught to be proficient members of a society. It describes the ways that people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society’s beliefs, and to be aware of societal values. *Socialization* is not the same as *socializing* (interacting with others, like family and friends); to be precise, it is a sociological process that occurs through socializing.

While Noel's story is about a relatively advanced stage of life, socialization is crucial for early childhood. Even the most basic of human activities are learned. Learning to crawl and then walk are major milestones, but as any parent, guardian, or family member of a toddler knows, other minor accomplishments can be life-altering for the child: climbing stairs, safely getting out of bed, sitting

in a regular chair, and drinking from a regular cup. Likewise, family behaviors and values must be learned, sometimes through observation and sometimes through active instruction.

In the following sections, we will examine the importance of the complex process of socialization and how it takes place through interaction with many individuals, groups, and social institutions. We will explore how socialization is not only critical to children as they develop but how it is also a lifelong process through which we become prepared for new social environments and expectations in every stage of our lives. But first, we will turn to scholarship about self-development, the process of coming to recognize a sense of self, a "self" that is then able to be socialized.

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4.2: Theories of Self-Development

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate psychological and sociological theories of self-development
- Explain the process of moral development

When we are born, we have a genetic makeup and biological traits. However, who we are as human beings develops through social interaction. Many scholars, both in the fields of psychology and in sociology, have described the process of self-development as a precursor to understanding how that "self" becomes socialized.

Psychological Perspectives on Self-Development

Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was one of the most influential modern scientists to put forth a theory about how people develop a sense of self. He divided the maturation process into stages, and posited that people's self-development is closely linked to their early stages of development.

According to Freud, failure to properly engage in or disengage from a specific stage results in emotional and psychological consequences throughout adulthood.

Psychologist Erik Erikson (1902–1994) created a theory of personality development based, in part, on the work of Freud. However, Erikson believed the personality continued to change over time and was never truly finished. His theory includes eight stages of development, beginning with birth and ending with death. According to Erikson, people move through these stages throughout their lives. In contrast to Freud's focus on psychosexual stages and basic human urges, Erikson's view of self-development gave credit to more social aspects, like the way we negotiate between our own base desires and what is socially accepted (Erikson 1982).

Jean Piaget (1896–1980) was a psychologist who focused on the role of social interactions in child development. He recognized that the development of self evolved through a negotiation between the world as it exists in one's mind and the world that exists as it is experienced socially (Piaget 1954). All three of these thinkers have contributed to our modern understanding of self-development.

Psychologist Harry Harlow (1905–1981) is known for studying the role of social relationships in human development by observing the impact of isolation and maternal deprivation on the development of young rhesus monkeys. Harlow found that the monkeys, when subjected to isolation, exhibit disturbed behaviors, including self-harm, and had a difficult time integrating when reconnected with other monkeys. Harlow also introduced isolated monkeys to simulated surrogate mothers, some that were covered in cloth while others were constructed out of wire. Based on observed behaviors, the young monkeys appeared to develop attachment with the cloth mothers and lean on them for emotional support. More than seven decades later, this experiment continues to inform the research of psychologists, sociologists, and those interested in human development.

Sociological Research: Sociology or Psychology: What's the Difference?

You might be wondering: if sociologists and psychologists are both interested in people and their behavior, how are these two disciplines different? What do they agree on, and where do their ideas diverge? The answers are complicated, but the distinction is important to scholars in both fields.

As a general difference, we might say that while both disciplines are interested in human behavior, psychologists are focused on how the mind influences that behavior, while sociologists study the role of society in shaping behavior. Psychologists are interested in people's mental development and how their minds process their world. Sociologists are more likely to focus on how different aspects of society contribute to an individual's relationship with his world. Another way to think of the difference is that psychologists tend to look inward (mental health, emotional processes), while sociologists tend to look outward (social institutions, cultural norms, interactions with others) to understand human behavior.

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) was the first to make this distinction in research, when he attributed differences in suicide rates among people to social causes (religious differences) rather than to psychological causes (like their mental wellbeing) (Durkheim 1897). Today, we see this same distinction. For example, a sociologist studying how a couple gets to the point of their first kiss on a date might focus her research on cultural norms for dating, social patterns of sexual activity over time, or

how this process is different for seniors than for teens. A psychologist would more likely be interested in the person's earliest sexual awareness or the mental processing of sexual desire.

Sometimes sociologists and psychologists have collaborated to increase knowledge. In recent decades, however, their fields have become more clearly separated as sociologists increasingly focus on large societal issues and patterns, while psychologists remain honed in on the human mind. Both disciplines make valuable contributions through different approaches that provide us with different types of useful insights.

Sociological Theories of Self-Development

One of the pioneering contributors to sociological perspectives was Charles Cooley (1864–1929). He asserted that people's self understanding is constructed, in part, by their perception of how others view them—a process termed "the looking glass self" (Cooley 1902).

Later, George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) studied the self, a person's distinct identity that is developed through social interaction. In order to engage in this process of "self," an individual has to be able to view him or herself through the eyes of others. That's not an ability that we are born with (Mead 1934). Through socialization we learn to put ourselves in someone else's shoes and look at the world through their perspective. This assists us in becoming self-aware, as we look at ourselves from the perspective of the "other." The case of Danielle, for example, illustrates what happens when social interaction is absent from early experience: Danielle had no ability to see herself as others would see her. From Mead's point of view, she had no "self."

How do we go from being newborns to being humans with "selves?" Mead believed that there is a specific path of development that all people go through. During the preparatory stage, children are only capable of imitation: they have no ability to imagine how others see things. They copy the actions of people with whom they regularly interact, such as their caregivers. This is followed by the play stage, during which children begin to take on the role that one other person might have. Thus, children might try on a parent's point of view by acting out "grownup" behavior, like playing dress-up and acting out the "mom" role, or talking on a toy telephone the way they see adults do.

During the game stage, children learn to consider several roles at the same time and how those roles interact with each other. They learn to understand interactions involving different people with a variety of purposes. For example, a child at this stage is likely to be aware of the different responsibilities of people in a restaurant who together make for a smooth dining experience (someone seats you, another takes your order, someone else cooks the food, while yet another clears away dirty dishes).

Finally, children develop, understand, and learn the idea of the generalized other, the common behavioral expectations of general society. By this stage of development, an individual is able to imagine how he or she is viewed by one or many others—and thus, from a sociological perspective, to have a "self" (Mead 1934; Mead 1964).

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Moral development is an important part of the socialization process. The term refers to the way people learn what society considered to be "good" and "bad," which is important for a smoothly functioning society. Moral development prevents people from acting on unchecked urges, instead considering what is right for society and good for others. Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) was interested in how people learn to decide what is right and what is wrong. To understand this topic, he developed a theory of moral development that includes three levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional.

In the preconventional stage, young children, who lack a higher level of cognitive ability, experience the world around them only through their senses. It isn't until the teen years that the conventional theory develops, when youngsters become increasingly aware of others' feelings and take those into consideration when determining what's "good" and "bad." The final stage, called postconventional, is when people begin to think of morality in abstract terms, such as Americans believing that everyone has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. At this stage, people also recognize that legality and morality do not always match up evenly (Kohlberg 1981). When hundreds of thousands of Egyptians turned out in 2011 to protest government corruption, they were using postconventional morality. They understood that although their government was legal, it was not morally correct.

Gilligan's Theory of Moral Development and Gender

Another sociologist, Carol Gilligan (1936–), recognized that Kohlberg's theory might show gender bias since his research was only conducted on male subjects. Would females study subjects have responded differently? Would a female social scientist notice different patterns when analyzing the research? To answer the first question, she set out to study differences between how boys and girls developed morality. Gilligan's research suggested that boys and girls do have different understandings of morality. Boys

appeared to have a justice perspective, by placing emphasis on rules and laws. Girls, on the other hand, seem to have a care and responsibility perspective; they consider people's reasons behind behavior that seems morally wrong.

While Gilligan is correct that Kohlberg's research should have included both male and female subjects, her study has been scientifically discredited due to its small sample size. The results Gilligan noted in this study also have not been replicated by subsequent researchers. The differences Gilligan observed were not an issue of the development of morality, but an issue of socialization. Differences in behavior between males and females is the result of gender socialization that teaches boys and girls societal norms and behaviors expected of them based on their sex (see "What a Pretty Little Lady").

Gilligan also recognized that Kohlberg's theory rested on the assumption that the justice perspective was the right, or better, perspective. Gilligan, in contrast, theorized that neither perspective was "better": the two norms of justice served different purposes. Ultimately, she explained that boys are socialized for a work environment where rules make operations run smoothly, while girls are socialized for a home environment where flexibility allows for harmony in caretaking and nurturing (Gilligan 1982; Gilligan 1990).

Sociology in the Real World: What a Pretty Little Lady!

"What a cute dress!" "I like the ribbons in your hair." "Wow, you look so pretty today."

According to Lisa Bloom, author of *Think: Straight Talk for Women to Stay Smart in a Dumbed Down World*, most of us use pleasantries like these when we first meet little girls. "So what?" you might ask.

Bloom asserts that we are too focused on the appearance of young girls, and as a result, our society is socializing them to believe that how they look is of vital importance. And Bloom may be on to something. How often do you tell a little boy how attractive his outfit is, how nice looking his shoes are, or how handsome he looks today? To support her assertions, Bloom cites, as one example, that about 50 percent of girls ages three to six worry about being fat (Bloom 2011). We're talking about kindergarteners who are concerned about their body image. Sociologists are acutely interested in of this type of gender socialization, by which societal expectations of how boys and girls should *be*—how they should behave, what toys and colors they should like, and how important their attire is—are reinforced.

One solution to this type of gender socialization is being experimented with at the Egalia preschool in Sweden, where children develop in a genderless environment. All the children at Egalia are referred to with neutral terms like "friend" instead of "he" or "she." Play areas and toys are consciously set up to eliminate any reinforcement of gender expectations (Haney 2011). Egalia strives to eliminate all societal gender norms from these children's preschool world.

Extreme? Perhaps. So what is the middle ground? Bloom suggests that we start with simple steps: when introduced to a young girl, ask about her favorite book or what she likes. In short, engage with her mind … not her outward appearance (Bloom 2011).

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4.3: Why Socialization Matters

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the importance of socialization both for individuals and society
- Explain the nature versus nurture debate

Socialization is critical both to individuals and to the societies in which they live. It illustrates how completely intertwined human beings and their social worlds are. First, it is through teaching culture to new members that a society perpetuates itself. If new generations of a society don't learn its way of life, it ceases to exist. Whatever is distinctive about a culture must be transmitted to those who join it in order for a society to survive. For U.S. culture to continue, for example, children in the United States must learn about cultural values related to democracy: they have to learn the norms of voting, as well as how to use material objects such as voting machines. They may learn these through watching their parents or guardians vote, or, in some schools, by using real machines in student government elections. Of course, some would argue that it's just as important in U.S. culture for the younger generation to learn the etiquette of eating in a restaurant or the rituals of tailgate parties at football games. In fact, there are many ideas and objects that people in the United States teach children about in hopes of keeping the society's way of life going through another generation.



Figure 5.2: Can you use your hands to eat? Who should pay? Do you stand when someone else gets up, and is that dependent on their gender? The dining manners and customs of different cultures are learned by socialization. (Credit: Kurman Communications/flickr)

Socialization is just as essential to us as individuals. Social interaction provides the means via which we gradually become able to see ourselves through the eyes of others, and how we learn who we are and how we fit into the world around us. In addition, to function successfully in society, we have to learn the basics of both material and nonmaterial culture, everything from how to dress ourselves to what's suitable attire for a specific occasion; from when we sleep to what we sleep on; and from what's considered

appropriate to eat for dinner to how to use the stove to prepare it. Most importantly, we have to learn language—whether it's the dominant language or one common in a subculture, whether it's verbal or through signs—in order to communicate and to think. As we saw with Danielle, without socialization we literally have no self.

Nature versus Nurture

Some experts assert that who we are is a result of nurture—the relationships and caring that surround us. Others argue that who we are is based entirely in genetics. According to this belief, our temperaments, interests, and talents are set before birth. From this perspective, then, who we are depends on nature.

One way researchers attempt to measure the impact of nature is by studying twins. Some studies have followed identical twins who were raised separately. The pairs shared the same genetics but in some cases were socialized in different ways. Instances of this type of situation are rare, but studying the degree to which identical twins raised apart are the same and different can give researchers insight into the way our temperaments, preferences, and abilities are shaped by our genetic makeup versus our social environment.

For example, in 1968, twin girls were put up for adoption, separated from each other, and raised in different households. The adoptive parents, and certainly the babies, did not realize the girls were one of five pairs of twins who were made subjects of a scientific study (Flam 2007).

In 2003, the two women, then age thirty-five, were reunited. Elyse Schein and Paula Bernstein sat together in awe, feeling like they were looking into a mirror. Not only did they look alike but they also behaved alike, using the same hand gestures and facial expressions (Spratling 2007). Studies like these point to the genetic roots of our temperament and behavior.

Though genetics and hormones play an important role in human behavior, sociology's larger concern is the effect society has on human behavior, the "nurture" side of the nature versus nurture debate. What race were the twins? From what social class were their parents? What about gender? Religion? All these factors affected the lives of the twins as much as their genetic makeup and are critical to consider as we look at life through the sociological lens.

Big Picture: The Life of Chris Langan, the Smartest Man You've Never Heard Of

Bouncer. Firefighter. Factory worker. Cowboy. Chris Langan spent the majority of his adult life just getting by with jobs like these. He had no college degree, few resources, and a past filled with much disappointment. Chris Langan also had an IQ of over 195, nearly 100 points higher than the average person (Brabham 2001). So why didn't Chris become a neurosurgeon, professor, or aeronautical engineer? According to Macolm Gladwell (2008) in his book *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Chris didn't possess the set of social skills necessary to succeed on such a high level—skills that aren't innate but learned.

Gladwell looked to a recent study conducted by sociologist Annette Lareau in which she closely shadowed 12 families from various economic backgrounds and examined their parenting techniques. Parents from lower income families followed a strategy of "accomplishment of natural growth," which is to say they let their children develop on their own with a large amount of independence; parents from higher-income families, however, "actively fostered and accessed a child's talents, opinions, and skills" (Gladwell 2008). These parents were more likely to engage in analytical conversation, encourage active questioning of the establishment, and foster development of negotiation skills. The parents were also able to introduce their children to a wide range of activities, from sports to music to accelerated academic programs. When one middle-class child was denied entry to a gifted and talented program, the mother petitioned the school and arranged additional testing until her daughter was admitted. Lower-income parents, however, were more likely to unquestioningly obey authorities such as school boards. Their children were not being socialized to comfortably confront the system and speak up (Gladwell 2008).

What does this have to do with Chris Langan, deemed by some the smartest man in the world (Brabham 2001)? Chris was born in severe poverty, moving across the country with an abusive and alcoholic stepfather. His genius went largely unnoticed. After accepting a full scholarship to Reed College, he lost his funding after his mother failed to fill out necessary paperwork. Unable to successfully make his case to the administration, Chris, who had received straight A's the previous semester, was given F's on his transcript and forced to drop out. After he enrolled in Montana State, an administrator's refusal to rearrange his class schedule left him unable to find the means necessary to travel the 16 miles to attend classes. What Chris had in brilliance, he lacked in practical intelligence, or what psychologist Robert Sternberg defines as "knowing what to say to whom, knowing when to say it, and knowing how to say it for maximum effect" (Sternberg et al. 2000). Such knowledge was never part of his socialization.

Chris gave up on school and began working an array of blue-collar jobs, pursuing his intellectual interests on the side. Though he's recently garnered attention for his "Cognitive Theoretic Model of the Universe," he remains weary of and resistant to the educational system.

As Gladwell concluded, "He'd had to make his way alone, and no one—not rock stars, not professional athletes, not software billionaires, and not even geniuses—ever makes it alone" (2008).



Figure 5.3: Identical twins may look alike, but their differences can give us clues to the effects of socialization. These twins chose the same career path, but many twins do not. (Credit: Senior Airman Lauren Douglas/U.S. Air Force)

Sociologists all recognize the importance of socialization for healthy individual and societal development. But how do scholars working in the three major theoretical paradigms approach this topic? Structural functionalists would say that socialization is essential to society, both because it trains members to operate successfully within it and because it perpetuates culture by transmitting it to new generations. Without socialization, a society's culture would perish as members died off. A conflict theorist might argue that socialization reproduces inequality from generation to generation by conveying different expectations and norms to those with different social characteristics. For example, individuals are socialized differently by gender, social class, and race. As in Chris Langan's case, this creates different (unequal) opportunities. An interactionist studying socialization is concerned with face-to-face exchanges and symbolic communication. For example, dressing baby boys in blue and baby girls in pink is one small way we convey messages about differences in gender roles.

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4.4: Agents of Socialization

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Evaluate the roles of families and peer groups in socialization
- Describe how people are socialized through institutions like schools, workplaces, and the government

Socialization helps people learn to function successfully in their social worlds. How does the process of socialization occur? How do we learn to use the objects of our society's material culture? How do we come to adopt the beliefs, values, and norms that represent its nonmaterial culture? This learning takes place through interaction with various agents of socialization, like peer groups and families, plus both formal and informal social institutions.

Social Group Agents

Social groups often provide the first experiences of socialization. Families, and later peer groups, communicate expectations and reinforce norms. People first learn to use the tangible objects of material culture in these settings, as well as being introduced to the beliefs and values of society.

Family

Family is the first agent of socialization. Mothers and fathers, siblings and grandparents, plus members of an extended family, all teach a child what he or she needs to know. For example, they show the child how to use objects (such as clothes, computers, eating utensils, books, bikes); how to relate to others (some as "family," others as "friends," still others as "strangers" or "teachers" or "neighbors"); and how the world works (what is "real" and what is "imagined"). As you are aware, either from your own experience as a child or from your role in helping to raise one, socialization includes teaching and learning about an unending array of objects and ideas.

Keep in mind, however, that families do not socialize children in a vacuum. Many social factors affect the way a family raises its children. For example, we can use sociological imagination to recognize that individual behaviors are affected by the historical period in which they take place. Sixty years ago, it would not have been considered especially strict for a father to hit his son with a wooden spoon or a belt if he misbehaved, but today that same action might be considered child abuse.

Sociologists recognize that race, social class, religion, and other societal factors play an important role in socialization. For example, poor families usually emphasize obedience and conformity when raising their children, while wealthy families emphasize judgment and creativity (National Opinion Research Center 2008). This may occur because working-class parents have less education and more repetitive-task jobs for which it is helpful to be able to follow rules and conform. Wealthy parents tend to have better educations and often work in managerial positions or careers that require creative problem solving, so they teach their children behaviors that are beneficial in these positions. This means children are effectively socialized and raised to take the types of jobs their parents already have, thus reproducing the class system (Kohn 1977). Likewise, children are socialized to abide by gender norms, perceptions of race, and class-related behaviors.

In Sweden, for instance, stay-at-home fathers are an accepted part of the social landscape. A government policy provides subsidized time off work—480 days for families with newborns—with the option of the paid leave being shared between mothers and fathers. As one stay-at-home dad says, being home to take care of his baby son "is a real fatherly thing to do. I think that's very masculine" (Associated Press 2011). Close to 90 percent of Swedish fathers use their paternity leave (about 340,000 dads); on average they take seven weeks per birth (The Economist, 2014). How do U.S. policies—and our society's expected gender roles—compare? How will Swedish children raised this way be socialized to parental gender norms? How might that be different from parental gender norms in the United States?



Figure 5.4: The socialized roles of parents and guardians vary by society. (Credit: Quaries.com/flickr)

Peer Groups

A peer group is made up of people who are similar in age and social status and who share interests. Peer group socialization begins in the earliest years, such as when kids on a playground teach younger children the norms about taking turns, the rules of a game, or how to shoot a basket. As children grow into teenagers, this process continues. Peer groups are important to adolescents in a new way, as they begin to develop an identity separate from their parents and exert independence. Additionally, peer groups provide their own opportunities for socialization since kids usually engage in different types of activities with their peers than they do with their families. Peer groups provide adolescents' first major socialization experience outside the realm of their families. Interestingly, studies have shown that although friendships rank high in adolescents' priorities, this is balanced by parental influence.

Institutional Agents

The social institutions of our culture also inform our socialization. Formal institutions—like schools, workplaces, and the government—teach people how to behave in and navigate these systems. Other institutions, like the media, contribute to socialization by inundating us with messages about norms and expectations.

School

Most U.S. children spend about seven hours a day, 180 days a year, in school, which makes it hard to deny the importance school has on their socialization (U.S. Department of Education 2004). Students are not in school only to study math, reading, science, and other subjects—the manifest function of this system. Schools also serve a latent function in society by socializing children into behaviors like practicing teamwork, following a schedule, and using textbooks.



Figure 5.5: These kindergarteners aren't just learning to read and write; they are being socialized to norms like keeping their hands to themselves, standing in line, and playing together. (Credit: woodleywonderworks/flickr)

School and classroom rituals, led by teachers serving as role models and leaders, regularly reinforce what society expects from children. Sociologists describe this aspect of schools as the hidden curriculum, the informal teaching done by schools.

For example, in the United States, schools have built a sense of competition into the way grades are awarded and the way teachers evaluate students (Bowles and Gintis 1976). When children participate in a relay race or a math contest, they learn there are winners and losers in society. When children are required to work together on a project, they practice teamwork with other people in cooperative situations. The hidden curriculum prepares children for the adult world. Children learn how to deal with bureaucracy, rules, expectations, waiting their turn, and sitting still for hours during the day. Schools in different cultures socialize children differently in order to prepare them to function well in those cultures. The latent functions of teamwork and dealing with bureaucracy are features of U.S. culture.

Schools also socialize children by teaching them about citizenship and national pride. In the United States, children are taught to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Most districts require classes about U.S. history and geography. As academic understanding of history evolves, textbooks in the United States have been scrutinized and revised to update attitudes toward other cultures as well as perspectives on historical events; thus, children are socialized to a different national or world history than earlier textbooks may have done. For example, information about the mistreatment of African Americans and Native American Indians more accurately reflects those events than in textbooks of the past.

Big Picture: Controversial Textbooks

On August 13, 2001, twenty South Korean men gathered in Seoul. Each chopped off one of his own fingers because of textbooks. These men took drastic measures to protest eight middle school textbooks approved by Tokyo for use in Japanese middle schools. According to the Korean government (and other East Asian nations), the textbooks glossed over negative events in Japan's history at the expense of other Asian countries.

In the early 1900s, Japan was one of Asia's more aggressive nations. For instance, it held Korea as a colony between 1910 and 1945. Today, Koreans argue that the Japanese are whitewashing that colonial history through these textbooks. One major

criticism is that they do not mention that, during World War II, the Japanese forced Korean women into sexual slavery. The textbooks describe the women as having been "drafted" to work, a euphemism that downplays the brutality of what actually occurred. Some Japanese textbooks dismiss an important Korean independence demonstration in 1919 as a "riot." In reality, Japanese soldiers attacked peaceful demonstrators, leaving roughly 6,000 dead and 15,000 wounded (Crampton 2002).

The protest affirms that textbooks are a significant tool of socialization in state-run education systems.

The Workplace



Figure 5.6: Workplace socialization occurs informally and formally, and may include material and non-material culture (Credit: U.S. Department of Agriculture/flickr).

Just as children spend much of their day at school, many U.S. adults at some point invest a significant amount of time at a place of employment. Although socialized into their culture since birth, workers require new socialization into a workplace, in terms of both material culture (such as how to operate the copy machine) and nonmaterial culture (such as whether it's okay to speak directly to the boss or how to share the refrigerator). In the chapter introduction, Noel did not fully embrace the culture of their new company. Importantly, the obligation of such socialization is not simply on the worker: Organizational behavior and other business experts place responsibility on companies; organizations must have strong onboarding and socialization programs in order to build satisfaction, productivity, and workplace retention (Cebollero 2019).

Different jobs require different types of socialization. In the past, many people worked a single job until retirement. Today, the trend is to switch jobs at least once a decade. Between the ages of eighteen and forty-six, the average Baby Boomer of the younger set held 11.3 different jobs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). This means that people must become socialized to, and socialized by, a variety of work environments.

Religion

While some religions are informal institutions, here we focus on practices followed by formal institutions. Religion is an important avenue of socialization for many people. The United States is full of synagogues, temples, churches, mosques, and similar religious communities where people gather to worship and learn. Like other institutions, these places teach participants how to interact with the religion's material culture (like a mezuzah, a prayer rug, or a communion wafer). For some people, important ceremonies related to family structure—like marriage and birth—are connected to religious celebrations. Many religious institutions also uphold gender norms and contribute to their enforcement through socialization. From ceremonial rites of passage that reinforce the family unit to power dynamics that reinforce gender roles, organized religion fosters a shared set of socialized values that are passed on through society.

Government

Although we do not think about it, many of the rites of passage people go through today are based on age norms established by the government. To be defined as an "adult" usually means being eighteen years old, the age at which a person becomes legally

responsible for him- or herself. And sixty-five years old is the start of “old age” since most people become eligible for senior benefits at that point.

Each time we embark on one of these new categories—senior, adult, taxpayer—we must be socialized into our new role. Seniors must learn the ropes of Medicare, Social Security benefits, and senior shopping discounts. When U.S. males turn eighteen, they must register with the Selective Service System within thirty days to be entered into a database for possible military service. These government dictates mark the points at which we require socialization into a new category.

Mass Media

Mass media distribute impersonal information to a wide audience, via television, newspapers, radio, and the Internet. With the average person spending over four hours a day in front of the television (and children averaging even more screen time), media greatly influences social norms (Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout 2005). People learn about objects of material culture (like new technology and transportation options), as well as nonmaterial culture—what is true (beliefs), what is important (values), and what is expected (norms).

Sociology in the Real World: Girls and Movies



Figure 5.7: Some researchers, parents, and children's advocates are concerned about the effects of raising girls within what they call "princess culture." Many place blame on entertainment companies, such as Disney, for its portrayals of girls in its movies.

Movies aimed at young people have featured a host of girls and women leads. *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* gave way to *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *and Mulan*. In many of those cases, if the character is not a princess to begin with, she typically ends the movie by marrying a prince or, in the case of Mulan, a military general. Although not all “princesses” in Disney movies play a passive role in their lives, they typically find themselves needing to be rescued by a man, and the happy ending they all search for includes marriage.

Alongside this prevalence of princesses, many parents are expressing concern about the culture of princesses that Disney has created. Peggy Orenstein addresses this problem in her popular book, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*. Orenstein wonders why

every little girl is expected to be a “princess” and why pink has become an all-consuming obsession for many young girls. Another mother wondered what she did wrong when her three-year-old daughter refused to do “nonprincessy” things, including running and jumping. The effects of this princess culture can have negative consequences for girls throughout life. An early emphasis on beauty and can lead to reduced interest in math and science among girls, as well as avoiding educational scenarios that are "typically feminine" (Coyne 2016).

Others acknowledge these issues, but find princess movies and "princess culture" less alarming. Some remind concerned parents that children have an array of media and activities around them, and the children may be happy wearing their princess outfit while digging for worms or going to hockey practice, which run counter to feminine stereotypes (Wagner 2019). Others indicate that rather than disallowing princess movies and merchandise, engaging with the children as they enjoy them might be more effective. And many people acknowledge that girls and women are often currently portrayed differently than they were in years past.

Disney seems to have gotten the message about the concerns. Its 2009 *Tiana and the Frog* was specifically billed as "a princess movie for people who don't like princess movies," and features a talented chef and business owner—who didn't need a man to rescue her—as its main character. *Brave*'s Merida and the title character in *Moana* seem to go out of their way to separate themselves from traditional princesses, and undertake great acts of bravery to help others. *Frozen* focuses on sisterly love rather than romantic love. And though she was never meant to be a princess, *Star Wars*' Rey was the go-to girls Halloween costume for years after she was introduced in the movies.

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4.5: Socialization Across the Life Course

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain how socialization occurs and recurs throughout life
- Apply socialization to age-related transition points
- Describe when and how resocialization occurs

Socialization isn't a one-time or even a short-term event. We aren't "stamped" by some socialization machine as we move along a conveyor belt and thereby socialized once and for all. In fact, socialization is a lifelong process.

In the United States, socialization throughout the life course is determined greatly by age norms and "time-related rules and regulations" (Settersten 2002). As we grow older, we encounter age-related transition points that require socialization into a new role, such as becoming school age, entering the workforce, or retiring. For example, the U.S. government mandates that all children attend school. Child labor laws, enacted in the early twentieth century, nationally declared that childhood be a time of learning, not of labor. In countries such as Niger and Sierra Leone, however, child labor remains common and socially acceptable, with little legislation to regulate such practices (UNICEF 2012).

Big Picture: Life After High School Around the World

In the United States, recent high school graduates have increasingly been focusing on college attendance. In recent years, about two-thirds of high school graduates are enrolled in college between their teen years and age twenty-four. About one-third of the same population primarily participates in the work force, meaning that they are employed or are looking for employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). Of those who attend college, most (about 69 percent) are considered immediate enrollers, meaning that they begin college in the first fall academic term immediately after their high school graduation (NCES 2020).

Other countries, especially high-income nations in Western Europe, have similar trends in college education, but fewer students start immediately. Gap years, overseas experiences, or mandatory wait times all lead students to a wide array of pre-college destinations. In Denmark, for example numbers of students who take a "year out" are so high that the government has sought to give students cash bonuses for attending immediately (Anderson 2009). For several decades, only about 25 percent of Denmark's high school graduates enrolled in college right away, and that number continued to drop in the 2010s, with a record low of only 15 percent in 2018 (Ritzau 2019). Compare that to the U.S. numbers mentioned above, where over two thirds of the students enroll in college immediately. And note that in Denmark, college is almost universally free.

In the United States, this life transition point is socialized quite differently. Taking a year off much less common than some other countries, but has certainly picked up in recent years. In most cases, U.S. youth are encouraged to select a few target colleges or potential workforce options by their late teens, and to get started on those pathways soon after high school. As mentioned above, many U.S. students do not attend college, but most of those students are in the workforce (including the military).

Other nations have entirely different approaches based on available educational institutions, financial circumstances, and family needs. In some nations, students often go to college soon after high school, but do so in other countries (including the U.S.). Dozens of nations require military conscription—military service—for men, and a few (such as Sweden, Israel, Norway, Eritrea, and Venezuela) for women as well.

How might your life be different if you lived in one of these other countries? Can you think of similar social norms—related to life age-transition points—that vary from country to country?

Many of life's social expectations are made clear and enforced on a cultural level. Through interacting with others and watching others interact, the expectation to fulfill roles becomes clear. While in elementary or middle school, the prospect of having a boyfriend or girlfriend may have been considered undesirable. The socialization that takes place in high school changes the expectation. By observing the excitement and importance attached to dating and relationships within the high school social scene, it quickly becomes apparent that one is now expected not only to be a child and a student, but also a significant other. Graduation from formal education—high school, vocational school, or college—involves socialization into a new set of expectations.

Educational expectations vary not only from culture to culture, but also from class to class. While middle- or upper-class families may expect their daughter or son to attend a four-year university after graduating from high school, other families may expect their child to immediately begin working full-time, as many within their family have done before.

Sociology in the Real World: The Long Road to Adulthood for Millennials

Socialization differences also vary by generation. As you will see in the chapter on Aging and the Elderly, Millennials (those born from the early 1980's to the middle 1990's) have very different attitudes about when childhood ends, the prime of life begins, and when people become "old." (Preview: Millennials thought childhood ended later and people became old earlier than did Baby Boomers and Gen Xers at the same age.)

Millennials were deeply affected by the financial Recession in 2008. While the recession was in full swing, many were in the process of entering, attending, or graduating from high school and college. With employment prospects at historical lows, large numbers of graduates were unable to find work, sometimes moving back in with their parents and struggling to pay back student loans.

According to the *New York Times*, this economic stall caused the Millennials to postpone what most Americans consider to be adulthood: “The traditional cycle seems to have gone off course, as young people remain untethered to romantic partners or to permanent homes, going back to school for lack of better options, traveling, avoiding commitments, competing ferociously for unpaid internships or temporary (and often grueling) Teach for America jobs, forestalling the beginning of adult life” (Henig 2010). The term Boomerang Generation describes recent college graduates, for whom lack of adequate employment upon college graduation often leads to a return to the parental home (Davidson, 2014).

The five milestones that define adulthood, Henig writes, are “completing school, leaving home, becoming financially independent, marrying, and having a child” (Henig 2010). These social milestones are taking longer for Millennials to attain, if they’re attained at all. Sociologists wonder what long-term impact this generation’s situation may have on society as a whole.

In the process of socialization, adulthood brings a new set of challenges and expectations, as well as new roles to fill. As the aging process moves forward, social roles continue to evolve. Pleasures of youth, such as wild nights out and serial dating, become less acceptable in the eyes of society. Responsibility and commitment are emphasized as pillars of adulthood, and men and women are expected to “settle down.” During this period, many people enter into marriage or a civil union, bring children into their families, and focus on a career path. They become partners or parents instead of students or significant others.

Just as young children pretend to be doctors or lawyers, play house, and dress up, adults also engage in anticipatory socialization, the preparation for future life roles. Examples would include a couple who cohabitate before marriage or soon-to-be parents who read infant care books and prepare their home for the new arrival. As part of anticipatory socialization, adults who are financially able begin planning for their retirement, saving money, and looking into future healthcare options. The transition into any new life role, despite the social structure that supports it, can be difficult.

About a decade after the nation began to recover from the Recession, it was hit by another. Millennials, who had entered a very challenging employment situation, were saddled with debt and had very little in savings. By July 2020, the Millennial unemployment rate was 11.5 percent, which was actually higher than their unemployment rate during the 2008 Recession. Gen Z, the group of people born after the Millennials, fared even worse—with an 18 percent unemployment rate (Hoffower 2020). The cycle of financial insecurity and the potential socialization impacts may happen again in this decade.

Resocialization

In the process of resocialization, old behaviors that were helpful in a previous role are removed because they are no longer of use. Resocialization is necessary when a person moves to a senior care center, goes to boarding school, or serves a sentence in the prison system. In the new environment, the old rules no longer apply. The process of resocialization is typically more stressful than normal socialization because people have to unlearn behaviors that have become customary to them. While resocialization has a specific meaning, many organizations consider their training or retraining processes to embody elements of resocialization.

The most common way resocialization occurs is in a total institution where people are isolated from society and are forced to follow someone else’s rules. A ship at sea is a total institution, as are religious convents, prisons, or some cult organizations. They are places cut off from a larger society. The 6.9 million Americans who lived in prisons and penitentiaries at the end of 2012 are also members of this type of institution (U.S. Department of Justice 2012).

Many individuals are resocialized into an institution through a two-part process. First, members entering an institution must leave behind their old identity through what is known as a degradation ceremony. In a degradation ceremony, new members lose the aspects of their old identity and are given new identities. The process is sometimes gentle. To enter a senior care home, an elderly person often must leave a family home and give up many belongings which were part of his or her long-standing identity. Though caretakers guide the elderly compassionately, the process can still be one of loss. In many cults, this process is also gentle and happens in an environment of support and caring.

In other situations, the degradation ceremony can be more extreme. New prisoners lose freedom, rights (including the right to privacy), and personal belongings. When entering the military, soldiers have their hair cut short. Their old clothes are removed, and they wear matching uniforms. These individuals must give up any markers of their former identity in order to be resocialized into an identity as a "soldier."



Figure 5.8: In basic training, members of the Air Force are taught to walk, move, and look like each other. (Credit: Staff Sergeant Desiree N. Palacios, U.S. Air Force/Wikimedia Commons)

After new members of an institution are stripped of their old identity, they build a new one that matches the new society. In the military, soldiers go through basic training together, where they learn new rules and bond with one another. They follow structured schedules set by their leaders. Soldiers must keep their areas clean for inspection, learn to march in correct formations, and salute when in the presence of superiors.

Learning to deal with life after having lived in a total institution requires yet another process of resocialization. In the U.S. military, soldiers learn discipline and a capacity for hard work. They set aside personal goals to achieve a mission, and they take pride in the accomplishments of their units. Many soldiers who leave the military transition these skills into excellent careers. Others have significant challenges upon leaving, uncertain about the outside world and what to do next. The process of resocialization to civilian life is not a simple one.

Other types of organizations may utilize or extend the concept of resocialization with regard to changing people's behaviors. Corporate trainers (and training researchers) sometimes emphasize the need for trainees to shed their old behaviors and adopt entirely new ones. When the people return to their jobs after training, they may be called to leave their old behaviors behind. Similarly, if an entire team goes for training, they may be called to leave their culture behind (Weinbauer-Heidel 2019). Not all

such training would apply the resocialization metaphor, but behavioral or personal-professional areas such as stress management or priority/project management might borrow from resocialization principles in order to make the training effective.

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4.6: Key Terms

anticipatory socialization | the way we prepare for future life roles

degradation ceremony | the process by which new members of a total institution lose aspects of their old identities and are given new ones

generalized other | the common behavioral expectations of general society

hidden curriculum | the informal teaching done in schools that socializes children to societal norms

moral development | the way people learn what is “good” and “bad” in society

nature | the influence of our genetic makeup on self-development

nurture | the role that our social environment plays in self-development

peer group | a group made up of people who are similar in age and social status and who share interests

resocialization | the process by which old behaviors are removed and new behaviors are learned in their place

self | a person’s distinct sense of identity as developed through social interaction

socialization | the process wherein people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society’s beliefs, and to be aware of societal values

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4.7: Section Summary

5.1 Theories of Self-Development

Psychological theories of self-development have been broadened by sociologists who explicitly study the role of society and social interaction in self-development. Charles Cooley and George Mead both contributed significantly to the sociological understanding of the development of self. Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan developed their ideas further and researched how our sense of morality develops. Gilligan added the dimension of gender differences to Kohlberg's theory.

5.2 Why Socialization Matters

Socialization is important because it helps uphold societies and cultures; it is also a key part of individual development. Research demonstrates that who we are is affected by both nature (our genetic and hormonal makeup) and nurture (the social environment in which we are raised). Sociology is most concerned with the way that society's influence affects our behavior patterns, made clear by the way behavior varies across class and gender.

5.3 Agents of Socialization

Our direct interactions with social groups, like families and peers, teach us how others expect us to behave. Likewise, a society's formal and informal institutions socialize its population. Schools, workplaces, and the media communicate and reinforce cultural norms and values.

5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

Socialization is a lifelong process that reoccurs as we enter new phases of life, such as adulthood or senior age. Resocialization is a process that removes the socialization we have developed over time and replaces it with newly learned rules and roles. Because it involves removing old habits that have been built up, resocialization can be a stressful and difficult process.

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4.9: Video- What Would You Do?

Mom argues with child over gender appropriate toys | What Would You Do



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Society and Social Interaction

In sociology, social interaction is a dynamic, changing sequence of social actions between individuals or groups A social interaction is an exchange between two or more individuals and is a building block of society. Social interactions can be studied between groups of two (dyads), three (triads) or larger social groups. By interacting with one another, people design rules, institutions and systems within which they seek to live. Symbols are used to communicate the expectations of a given society to those new to it.

5.1: Introduction
5.2: Types of Societies
5.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Society
5.4: Social Constructions of Reality
5.5: Key Terms
5.6: Section Summary
5.7: References
5.8: Dramaturgy

Thumbnail: Looking north up Broadway from 43d Street, New York, USA. (Public Domain; Jim.henderson)

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5.1: Introduction



Figure 4.1: Some aspects of teenage life cross societal boundaries, while others are distinct. (Credit: USAID/flickr)

Chapter Outline

4.1 Types of Societies
4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society
4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

It was a school day, and Inayah woke up at 5:15 a.m, checked her phone, and began a few chores. Her aunt had gone to work, but had left a pile of vegetables for be cut for dinner. After taking care of that, Inayah gathered and organized the laundry, then woke up her younger cousin and sister. She led them in prayers, gave them breakfast, and dressed for school. Inayah was running late, so she didn't have time to record a full video. Instead she took a few pictures and posted a good-morning clip, updated her status on another platform, and went to check on the younger girls.

Twenty minutes later, Inayah was fixing her sister's uniform and calling to her cousin to hurry along. She loaded them up with their school bags and one sack of laundry each. The three girls walked the two kilometers to the bus station, dropping the laundry at the cleaner on the way. The ride to school took about thirty minutes.

Inayah had grown up about sixty kilometers away, where her parents still lived. She usually saw them on weekends. She had previously attended a boarding school, but those had become dangerous due to kidnappings or other trouble. Inayah's new school was not quite as good as the old one, but she was still learning. She did particularly well in math and economics.

After school and the bus ride back, Inayah sent her sister and her cousin to the house while she stayed in town with some friends. The girls sat at the picnic tables near the basketball courts, where groups of other teenagers and some adults usually came to play. She didn't talk to any of the boys there, but she had met several of them at her uncle's store. The girls recorded a few videos together, started on their homework, and after about an hour, headed home to help with dinner.

How does Inayah's day compare with yours? How does it compare to the days of teenagers you know? Inayah interacts with her family and friends based on individual relationships and personalities, but societal norms and acceptable behaviors shape those

interactions. Someone from outside of her community might feel that her society's expectations are too challenging, while others may feel they are too lenient. But Inayah may disagree with both perspectives. She might have taken those societal expectations as her own.

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5.2: Types of Societies

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the difference between preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial societies
- Explain the role of environment on preindustrial societies
- Interpret the ways that technology impacts societal development



Figure 4.2: How does technology influence a society? Here, a NASA engineer is working with samples of a coating typically used in space flight, and which now may play a role in preserving artifacts and scientific specimens on earth. The space program is expensive, but throughout its history it has provided the U.S. significant advantages in scientific innovations. (Credit: NASA Goddard Space Flight Center/flickr)

In sociological terms, society refers to a group of people who live in a definable community and share the same cultural components. On a broader scale, society consists of the people and institutions around us, our shared beliefs, and our cultural ideas. Typically, many societies also share a political authority.

Consider China and the United States. Both are technologically advanced, have dense networks of transportation and communications, rely on foreign trading partners for large portions of their economies, focus on education as a way to advance their citizens, and have large and expensive militaries. Both countries have citizens that may be largely satisfied with their governments and ways of life, while still holding some degree of distrust or discontent regarding their leaders. And both have a rural versus urban disparity that can cause tension and economic inequality among the population. An individual family or even a whole office full of people in one of the countries may look and act very similarly to families or offices in the other country.

But what is different? In China, a far greater percentage of people may be involved in manufacturing than America. Many of China's cities didn't evolve from ports, transit centers, or river confluences hundreds of years ago, but are newly created urban centers inhabited by recent transplants from other locations. While citizens in the U.S. can openly express their dissatisfaction with their government through social activism in person or, especially, online, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are banned in China, and the press is controlled by the government. Their appearance might be very similar, but the two countries are very different societies.

Sociologist Gerhard Lenski Jr. (1924–2015) defined societies in terms of their technological sophistication. As a society advances, so does its use of technology. Societies with rudimentary technology depend on the fluctuations of their environments, while industrialized societies have more control over the impact of their surroundings and thus develop different cultural features. This distinction is so important that sociologists generally classify societies along a spectrum of their level of industrialization—from preindustrial to industrial to postindustrial.

Preindustrial Societies

Before the Industrial Revolution and the widespread use of machines, societies were small, rural, and dependent largely on local resources. Economic production was limited to the amount of labor a human being could provide, and there were few specialized occupations. The very first occupation was that of hunter-gatherer.

Hunter-Gatherer

Hunter-gatherer societies demonstrate the strongest dependence on the environment of the various types of preindustrial societies. As the basic structure of human society until about 10,000–12,000 years ago, these groups were based around kinship or tribes. Hunter-gatherers relied on their surroundings for survival—they hunted wild animals and foraged for uncultivated plants for food. When resources became scarce, the group moved to a new area to find sustenance, meaning they were nomadic. These societies were common until several hundred years ago, but today only a few hundred remain in existence, such as indigenous Australian tribes sometimes referred to as "aborigines," or the Bambuti, a group of pygmy hunter-gatherers residing in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Hunter-gatherer groups are quickly disappearing as the world's population explodes.

Pastoral

Changing conditions and adaptations led some societies to rely on the domestication of animals where circumstances permitted. Roughly 7,500 years ago, human societies began to recognize their ability to tame and breed animals and to grow and cultivate their own plants. Pastoral societies, such as the Maasai villagers, rely on the domestication of animals as a resource for survival. Unlike earlier hunter-gatherers who depended entirely on existing resources to stay alive, pastoral groups were able to breed livestock for food, clothing, and transportation, and they created a surplus of goods. Herding, or pastoral, societies remained nomadic because they were forced to follow their animals to fresh feeding grounds. Around the time that pastoral societies emerged, specialized occupations began to develop, and societies commenced trading with local groups.

Sociology in the Real World: Where Societies Meet—The Worst and the Best

When cultures meet, technology can help, hinder, and even destroy. The Exxon Valdez oil spillage in Alaska nearly destroyed the local inhabitants' entire way of life. Oil spills in the Nigerian Delta have forced many of the Ogoni tribe from their land and forced removal has meant that over 100,000 Ogoni have sought refuge in the country of Benin (University of Michigan, n.d.). And the massive Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2006 drew great attention as it occurred in the United States. Environmental disasters continue as Western technology and its need for energy expands into less developed (peripheral) regions of the globe.

Of course not all technology is bad. We take electric light for granted in the United States, Europe, and the rest of the developed world. Such light extends the day and allows us to work, read, and travel at night. It makes us safer and more productive. But regions in India, Africa, and elsewhere are not so fortunate. Meeting the challenge, one particular organization, Barefoot College, located in District Ajmer, Rajasthan, India, works with numerous less developed nations to bring solar electricity, water solutions, and education. The focus for the solar projects is the village elders. The elders agree to select two grandmothers to be trained as solar engineers and choose a village committee composed of men and women to help operate the solar program.

The program has brought light to over 450,000 people in 1,015 villages. The environmental rewards include a large reduction in the use of kerosene and in carbon dioxide emissions. The fact that the villagers are operating the projects themselves helps minimize their sense of dependence.



Figure 4.3: Otherwise skeptical or hesitant villagers are more easily convinced of the value of the solar project when they realize that the “solar engineers” are their local grandmothers. (Credit: Abri le Roux/flickr)

Horticultural

Around the same time that pastoral societies were on the rise, another type of society developed, based on the newly developed capacity for people to grow and cultivate plants. Previously, the depletion of a region’s crops or water supply forced pastoral societies to relocate in search of food sources for their livestock. Horticultural societies formed in areas where rainfall and other conditions allowed them to grow stable crops. They were similar to hunter-gatherers in that they largely depended on the environment for survival, but since they didn’t have to abandon their location to follow resources, they were able to start permanent settlements. This created more stability and more material goods and became the basis for the first revolution in human survival.

Agricultural

While pastoral and horticultural societies used small, temporary tools such as digging sticks or hoes, agricultural societies relied on permanent tools for survival. Around 3000 B.C.E., an explosion of new technology known as the Agricultural Revolution made farming possible—and profitable. Farmers learned to rotate the types of crops grown on their fields and to reuse waste products such as manure as fertilizer, which led to better harvests and bigger surpluses of food. New tools for digging and harvesting were made of metal, and this made them more effective and longer lasting. Human settlements grew into towns and cities, and particularly bountiful regions became centers of trade and commerce.

This is also the age in which people had the time and comfort to engage in more contemplative and thoughtful activities, such as music, poetry, and philosophy. This period became referred to as the “dawn of civilization” by some because of the development of leisure and humanities. Craftspeople were able to support themselves through the production of creative, decorative, or thought-provoking aesthetic objects and writings.

As resources became more plentiful, social classes became more divisive. Those who had more resources could afford better living and developed into a class of nobility. Difference in social standing between men and women increased. As cities expanded, ownership and preservation of resources became a pressing concern.

Feudal

The ninth century gave rise to feudal societies. These societies contained a strict hierarchical system of power based around land ownership and protection. The nobility, known as lords, placed vassals in charge of pieces of land. In return for the resources that the land provided, vassals promised to fight for their lords.

These individual pieces of land, known as fiefdoms, were cultivated by the lower class. In return for maintaining the land, peasants were guaranteed a place to live and protection from outside enemies. Power was handed down through family lines, with peasant families serving lords for generations and generations. Ultimately, the social and economic system of feudalism failed and was replaced by capitalism and the technological advances of the industrial era.

Industrial Society

In the eighteenth century, Europe experienced a dramatic rise in technological invention, ushering in an era known as the Industrial Revolution. What made this period remarkable was the number of new inventions that influenced people's daily lives. Within a generation, tasks that had until this point required months of labor became achievable in a matter of days. Before the Industrial Revolution, work was largely person- or animal-based, and relied on human workers or horses to power mills and drive pumps. In 1782, James Watt and Matthew Boulton created a steam engine that could do the work of twelve horses by itself.

Steam power began appearing everywhere. Instead of paying artisans to painstakingly spin wool and weave it into cloth, people turned to textile mills that produced fabric quickly at a better price and often with better quality. Rather than planting and harvesting fields by hand, farmers were able to purchase mechanical seeders and threshing machines that caused agricultural productivity to soar. Products such as paper and glass became available to the average person, and the quality and accessibility of education and health care soared. Gas lights allowed increased visibility in the dark, and towns and cities developed a nightlife.

One of the results of increased productivity and technology was the rise of urban centers. Workers flocked to factories for jobs, and the populations of cities became increasingly diverse. The new generation became less preoccupied with maintaining family land and traditions and more focused on acquiring wealth and achieving upward mobility for themselves and their families. People wanted their children and their children's children to continue to rise to the top, and as capitalism increased, so did social mobility.

It was during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of the Industrial Revolution that sociology was born. Life was changing quickly and the long-established traditions of the agricultural eras did not apply to life in the larger cities. Masses of people were moving to new environments and often found themselves faced with horrendous conditions of filth, overcrowding, and poverty. Social scientists emerged to study the relationship between the individual members of society and society as a whole.

It was during this time that power moved from the hands of the aristocracy and "old money" to business-savvy newcomers who amassed fortunes in their lifetimes. Families such as the Rockefellers and the Vanderbilts became the new power players and used their influence in business to control aspects of government as well. Eventually, concerns over the exploitation of workers led to the formation of labor unions and laws that set mandatory conditions for employees. Although the introduction of new technology at the end of the nineteenth century ended the industrial age, much of our social structure and social ideas—like family, childhood, and time standardization—have a basis in industrial society.

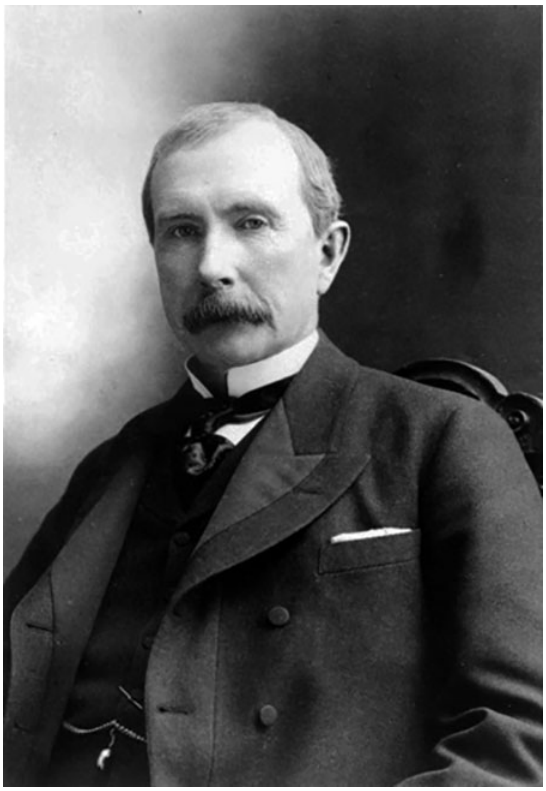


Figure 4.4: John D. Rockefeller, cofounder of the Standard Oil Company, came from an unremarkable family of salesmen and menial laborers. By his death at age 98, he was worth $1.4 billion. In industrial societies, business owners such as Rockefeller hold the majority of the power. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

Postindustrial Society

Information societies, sometimes known as postindustrial or digital societies, are a recent development. Unlike industrial societies that are rooted in the production of material goods, information societies are based on the production of information and services.

Digital technology is the steam engine of information societies, and computer moguls such as Steve Jobs and Bill Gates are its John D. Rockefellers and Cornelius Vanderbilts. Since the economy of information societies is driven by knowledge and not material goods, power lies with those in charge of storing and distributing information. Members of a postindustrial society are likely to be employed as sellers of services—software programmers or business consultants, for example—instead of producers of goods. Social classes are divided by access to education, since without technical skills, people in an information society lack the means for success.

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5.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Society

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe Durkheim's functionalist view of society
- Summarize the conflict theorist view of society
- Explain Marx's concepts of class and alienation
- Identify how symbolic interactionists understand society



Figure 4.5: Warren Buffett's ideas about taxation and spending habits of the very wealthy are controversial, particularly since they raise questions about America's embedded system of class structure and social power. The three major sociological paradigms differ in their perspectives on these issues. (Credit: Medill DC/flickr)

While many sociologists have contributed to research on society and social interaction, three thinkers form the base of modern-day perspectives. Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber developed different theoretical approaches to help us understand the way societies function.

Émile Durkheim and Functionalism

As a functionalist, Émile Durkheim's (1858–1917) perspective on society stressed the necessary interconnectivity of all of its elements. To Durkheim, society was greater than the sum of its parts. He asserted that individual behavior was not the same as collective behavior and that studying collective behavior was quite different from studying an individual's actions. Durkheim called the communal beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society the collective conscience. In his quest to understand what causes individuals to act in similar and predictable ways, he wrote, "If I do not submit to the conventions of society, if in my dress I do not conform to the customs observed in my country and in my class, the ridicule I provoke, the social isolation in which I am kept, produce, although in an attenuated form, the same effects as punishment" (Durkheim 1895). Durkheim also believed that social integration, or the strength of ties that people have to their social groups, was a key factor in social life.

Following the ideas of Comte and Spencer, Durkheim likened society to a living organism, in which each organ plays a necessary role in keeping the being alive. Even the socially deviant members of society are necessary, Durkheim argued, as punishments for deviance affirm established cultural values and norms. That is, punishment of a crime reaffirms our moral consciousness. "A crime is a crime because we condemn it," Durkheim wrote in 1893. "An act offends the common consciousness not because it is criminal, but it is criminal because it offends that consciousness" (Durkheim 1893). Durkheim called these elements of society "social facts." By this, he meant that social forces were to be considered real and existed outside the individual.

As an observer of his social world, Durkheim was not entirely satisfied with the direction of society in his day. His primary concern was that the cultural glue that held society together was failing, and people were becoming more divided. In his book *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), Durkheim argued that as society grew more complex, social order made the transition from mechanical to organic.

Preindustrial societies, Durkheim explained, were held together by mechanical solidarity, a type of social order maintained by the collective conscience of a culture. Societies with mechanical solidarity act in a mechanical fashion; things are done mostly because they have always been done that way. This type of thinking was common in preindustrial societies where strong bonds of kinship and a low division of labor created shared morals and values among people, such as hunter-gatherer groups. When people tend to do the same type of work, Durkheim argued, they tend to think and act alike.

In industrial societies, mechanical solidarity is replaced with organic solidarity, which is social order based around an acceptance of economic and social differences. In capitalist societies, Durkheim wrote, division of labor becomes so specialized that everyone is doing different things. Instead of punishing members of a society for failure to assimilate to common values, organic solidarity allows people with differing values to coexist. Laws exist as formalized morals and are based on restitution rather than revenge.

While the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity is, in the long run, advantageous for a society, Durkheim noted that it can be a time of chaos and "normlessness." One of the outcomes of the transition is something he called social anomie. Anomie—literally, "without law"—is a situation in which society no longer has the support of a firm collective consciousness. Collective norms are weakened. People, while more interdependent to accomplish complex tasks, are also alienated from each other. Anomie is experienced in times of social uncertainty, such as war or a great upturn or downturn in the economy. As societies reach an advanced stage of organic solidarity, they avoid anomie by redeveloping a set of shared norms. According to Durkheim, once a society achieves organic solidarity, it has finished its development.

Karl Marx and Conflict Theory

Karl Marx (1818–1883) is certainly among the most significant social thinkers in recent history. While there are many critics of his work, it is still widely respected and influential. For Marx, society's constructions were predicated upon the idea of "base and superstructure." This term refers to the idea that a society's economic character forms its base, upon which rests the culture and social institutions, the superstructure. For Marx, it is the base (economy) that determines what a society will be like.

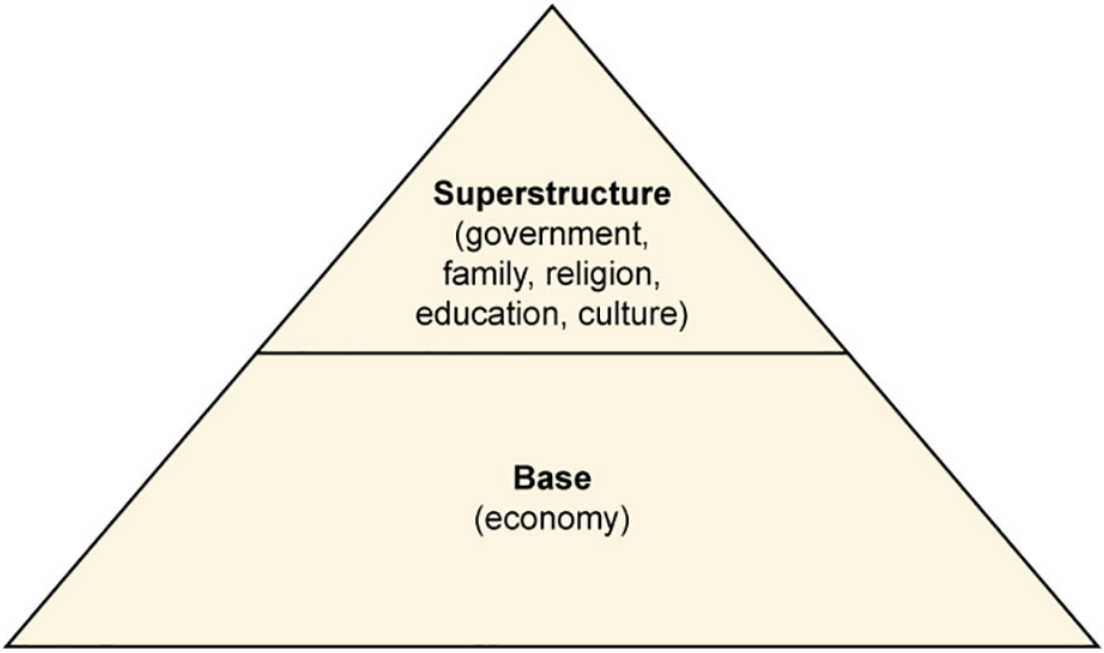


Figure 4.6: Karl Marx asserted that all elements of a society's structure depend on its economic structure.

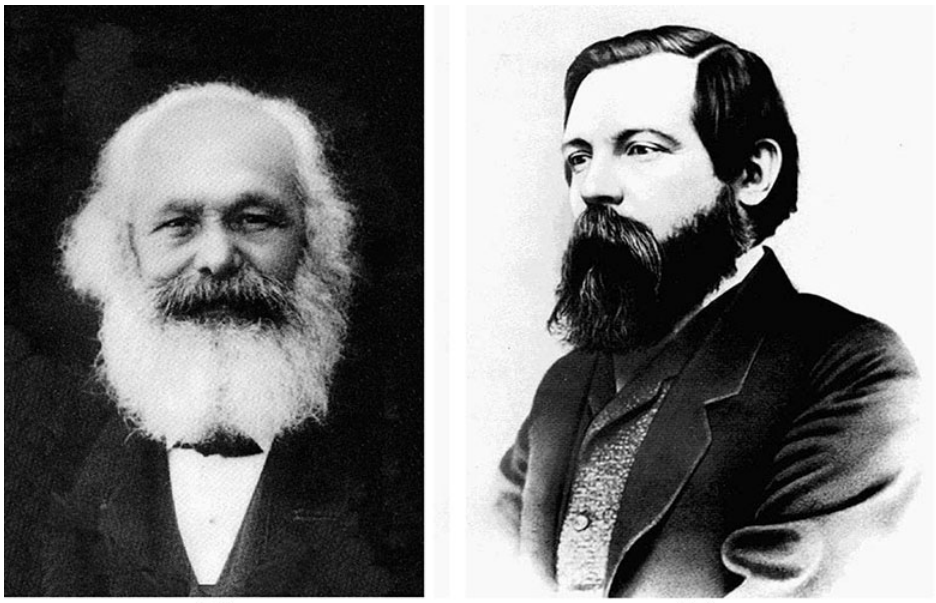
Additionally, Marx saw conflict in society as the primary means of change. Economically, he saw conflict existing between the owners of the means of production—the bourgeoisie—and the laborers, called the proletariat.

Marx maintained that these conflicts appeared consistently throughout history during times of social revolution. These revolutions or "class antagonisms" as he called them, were a result of one class dominating another. Most recently, with the end of feudalism, a new revolutionary class he called the bourgeoisie dominated the proletariat laborers. The bourgeoisie were revolutionary in the sense that they represented a radical change in the structure of society. In Marx's words, "Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—Bourgeoisie and Proletariat" (Marx and Engels 1848).

In the mid-nineteenth century, as industrialization was booming, industrial employers, the "owners of the means of production" in Marx's terms, became more and more exploitative toward the working class. The large manufacturers of steel were particularly ruthless, and their facilities became popularly dubbed "satanic mills" based on a poem by William Blake. Marx's colleague and friend, Frederick Engels, wrote *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* in 1844, which described in detail the horrid conditions.

> *Such is the Old Town of Manchester, and on re-reading my description, I am forced to admit that instead of being exaggerated, it is far from black enough to convey a true impression of the filth, ruin, and uninhabitableness, the defiance of all considerations of cleanliness, ventilation, and health which characterise the construction of this single district, containing at least twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants. And such a district exists in the heart of the second city of England, the first manufacturing city of the world.*

Add to that the long hours, the use of child labor, and exposure to extreme conditions of heat, cold, and toxic chemicals, and it is no wonder that Marx and Engels referred to capitalism, which is a way of organizing an economy so that the things that are used to make and transport products (such as land, oil, factories, ships, etc.) are owned by individual people and companies rather than by the government, as the "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie."



(a) (b)

Figure 4.7: Karl Marx (left) and Friedrich Engels (right) analyzed differences in social power between “have” and “have-not” groups. (Credit: (a) Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) George Lester/Wikimedia Commons)

For Marx, what we do defines who we are. In historical terms, in spite of the persistent nature of one class dominating another, some element of humanity existed. There was at least some connection between the worker and the product, augmented by the natural conditions of seasons and the rise and fall of the sun, such as we see in an agricultural society. But with the bourgeoisie revolution and the rise of industry and capitalism, the worker now worked for wages alone. His relationship to his efforts was no longer of a human nature, but based on artificial conditions.

Marx described modern society in terms of alienation. Alienation refers to the condition in which the individual is isolated and divorced from his or her society, work, or the sense of self. Marx defined four specific types of alienation.

Alienation from the product of one’s labor. An industrial worker does not have the opportunity to relate to the product he labors on. Instead of training for years as a watchmaker, an unskilled worker can get a job at a watch factory pressing buttons to seal pieces together. The worker does not care if he is making watches or cars, simply that the job exists. In the same way, a worker may not even know or care what product to which he is contributing. A worker on a Ford assembly line may spend all day installing windows on car doors without ever seeing the rest of the car. A cannery worker can spend a lifetime cleaning fish without ever knowing what product they are used for.

Alienation from the process of one’s labor. A worker does not control the conditions of her job because she does not own the means of production. If a person is hired to work in a fast food restaurant, she is expected to make the food the way she is taught. All ingredients must be combined in a particular order and in a particular quantity; there is no room for creativity or change. An employee at Burger King cannot decide to change the spices used on the fries in the same way that an employee on a Ford assembly line cannot decide to place a car’s headlights in a different position. Everything is decided by the bourgeoisie who then dictate orders to the laborers.

Alienation from others. Workers compete, rather than cooperate. Employees vie for time slots, bonuses, and job security. Even when a worker clocks out at night and goes home, the competition does not end. As Marx commented in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), “No sooner is the exploitation of the laborer by the manufacturer, so far at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portion of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker.”

Alienation from one’s self. A final outcome of industrialization is a loss of connectivity between a worker and her occupation. Because there is nothing that ties a worker to her labor, there is no longer a sense of self. Instead of being able to take pride in an identity such as being a watchmaker, automobile builder, or chef, a person is simply a cog in the machine.

Taken as a whole, then, alienation in modern society means that an individual has no control over his life. Even in feudal societies, a person controlled the manner of his labor as to when and how it was carried out. But why, then, does the modern working class not rise up and rebel? (Indeed, Marx predicted that this would be the ultimate outcome and collapse of capitalism.)

Another idea that Marx developed is the concept of false consciousness. False consciousness is a condition in which the beliefs, ideals, or ideology of a person are not in the person's own best interest. In fact, it is the ideology of the dominant class (here, the bourgeoisie capitalists) that is imposed upon the proletariat. Ideas such as the emphasis of competition over cooperation, or of hard work being its own reward, clearly benefit the owners of industry. Therefore, workers are less likely to question their place in society and assume individual responsibility for existing conditions.

In order for society to overcome false consciousness, Marx proposed that it be replaced with class consciousness, the awareness of one's rank in society. Instead of existing as a "class in itself," the proletariat must become a "class for itself" in order to produce social change (Marx and Engels 1848), meaning that instead of just being an inert strata of society, the class could become an advocate for social improvements. Only once society entered this state of political consciousness would it be ready for a social revolution.



Figure 4.8: An assembly line worker installs car parts with the aid of complex machinery. Has technology made this type of labor more or less alienating? (Credit: Carol Highsmith/Wikimedia Commons)

Max Weber and Symbolic Interactionism

While Karl Marx may be one of the best-known thinkers of the nineteenth century, Max Weber is certainly one of the greatest influences in the field of sociology. Like the other social thinkers discussed here, he was concerned with the important changes taking place in Western society with the advent of industrialization. And, like Marx and Durkheim, he feared that industrialization would have negative effects on individuals.

Weber's primary focus on the structure of society lay in the elements of class, status, and power. Similar to Marx, Weber saw class as economically determined. Society, he believed, was split between owners and laborers. Status, on the other hand, was based on noneconomic factors such as education, kinship, and religion. Both status and class determined an individual's power, or influence over ideas. Unlike Marx, Weber believed that these ideas formed the base of society.

Weber's analysis of modern society centered on the concept of rationalization. A rational society is one built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition. To Weber, capitalism is entirely rational. Although this leads to efficiency and merit-based success, it can have negative effects when taken to the extreme. In some modern societies, this is seen when rigid routines and strict design lead to a mechanized work environment and a focus on producing identical products in every location.

Another example of the extreme conditions of rationality can be found in Charlie Chaplin's classic film *Modern Times* (1936). Chaplin's character performs a routine task to the point where he cannot stop his motions even while away from the job. Indeed, today we even have a recognized medical condition that results from such tasks, known as "repetitive stress syndrome."

Weber was also unlike his predecessors in that he was more interested in how individuals experienced societal divisions than in the divisions themselves. The symbolic interactionism theory, the third of the three most recognized theories of sociology, is based on Weber's early ideas that emphasize the viewpoint of the individual and how that individual relates to society. For Weber, the culmination of industrialization, rationalization, and the like results in what he referred to as the iron cage, in which the individual is trapped by institutions and bureaucracy. This leads to a sense of "disenchantment of the world," a phrase Weber used to describe the final condition of humanity. Indeed a dark prediction, but one that has, at least to some degree, been borne out (Gerth and Mills 1918). In a rationalized, modern society, we have supermarkets instead of family-owned stores. We have chain restaurants instead of local eateries. Superstores that offer a multitude of merchandise have replaced independent businesses that focused on one product line, such as hardware, groceries, automotive repair, or clothing. Shopping malls offer retail stores, restaurants, fitness centers, even condominiums. This change may be rational, but is it universally desirable?



Figure 4.9: Cubicles are used to maximize individual workspace in an office. Such structures may be rational, but they are also isolating. (Credit: Tim Patterson/flickr)

Big Picture: The Protestant Work Ethic

In a series of essays in 1904, Max Weber presented the idea of the *Protestant work ethic*, a new attitude toward work based on the Calvinist principle of predestination. In the sixteenth century, Europe was shaken by the Protestant Revolution. Religious leaders such as Martin Luther and John Calvin argued against the Catholic Church's belief in salvation through obedience. While Catholic leaders emphasized the importance of religious dogma and performing good deeds as a gateway to Heaven, Protestants believed that inner grace, or faith in God, was enough to achieve salvation.

John Calvin in particular popularized the Christian concept of predestination, the idea that all events—including salvation—have already been decided by God. Because followers were never sure whether they had been chosen to enter Heaven or Hell, they looked for signs in their everyday lives. If a person was hard-working and successful, he was likely to be one of the chosen. If a person was lazy or simply indifferent, he was likely to be one of the damned.

> Weber argued that this mentality encouraged people to work hard for personal gain; after all, why should one help the unfortunate if they were already damned? Over time, the Protestant work ethic spread and became the foundation for capitalism.

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5.4: Social Constructions of Reality

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Interpret the sociological concept of reality as a social construct
- Define roles and describe their places in people's daily interactions
- Explain how individuals present themselves and perceive themselves in a social context



Figure 4.10: Who are we? What role do we play in society? According to sociologists, we construct reality through our interactions with others. In a way, our day-to-day interactions are like those of actors on a stage. (Credit: Jan Lewandowski/flickr)

Until now, we've primarily discussed the differences between societies. Rather than discuss their problems and configurations, we'll now explore how society came to be and how sociologists view social interaction.

In 1966 sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann wrote a book called *The Social Construction of Reality*. In it, they argued that society is created by humans and human interaction, which they call habitualization. Habitualization describes how "any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be … performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort" (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Not only do we construct our own society but we also accept it as it is because others have created it before us. Society is, in fact, "habit."

For example, your school exists as a school and not just as a building because you and others agree that it is a school. If your school is older than you are, it was created by the agreement of others before you. In a sense, it exists by consensus, both prior and current. This is an example of the process of institutionalization, the act of implanting a convention or norm into society. Bear in mind that the institution, while socially constructed, is still quite real.

Another way of looking at this concept is through W.I. Thomas's notable Thomas theorem which states, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928). That is, people's behavior can be determined by their subjective construction of reality rather than by objective reality. For example, a teenager who is repeatedly given a label—overachiever, player, bum—might live up to the term even though it initially wasn't a part of his character.

Like Berger and Luckmann in their description of habitualization, Thomas states that our moral codes and social norms are created by "successive definitions of the situation." This concept is defined by sociologist Robert K. Merton as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Merton explains that with a self-fulfilling prophecy, even a false idea can become true if it is acted upon. One example he gives is of a "bank run." Say for some reason, a number of people falsely fear that their bank is soon to be bankrupt. Because of this false notion, people run to their bank and demand all of their cash at once. As banks rarely, if ever, have that much money on hand, the bank does indeed run out of money, fulfilling the customers' prophecy. Here, reality is constructed by an idea.

Symbolic interactionists offer another lens through which to analyze the social construction of reality. With a theoretical perspective focused on the symbols (like language, gestures, and artifacts) that people use to interact, this approach is interested in how people interpret those symbols in daily interactions. Interactionists also recognize that language and body language reflect our values. One has only to learn a foreign tongue to know that not every English word can be easily translated into another language. The same is true for gestures. While Americans might recognize a "thumbs up" as meaning "great," in Germany it would mean "one" and in Japan it would mean "five." Thus, our construction of reality is influenced by our symbolic interactions.



Figure 4.11: The story line of a self-fulfilling prophecy appears in many literary works, perhaps most famously in the story of Oedipus. Oedipus is told by an oracle that he will murder his father and marry his mother. In going out of his way to avoid his fate, Oedipus inadvertently fulfills it. Oedipus's story illustrates one way in which members of society contribute to the social construction of reality. (Credit: Jean-Antoine-Theodore Giroust/Wikimedia Commons)

Roles and Status

As you can imagine, people employ many types of behaviors in day-to-day life. Roles are patterns of behavior that we recognize in each other that are representative of a person's social status. Currently, while reading this text, you are playing the role of a student. However, you also play other roles in your life, such as "daughter," "neighbor," or "employee." These various roles are each associated with a different status.

Sociologists use the term status to describe the responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to their rank and role in society. Some statuses are ascribed—those you do not select, such as son, elderly person, or female. Others, called achieved

statuses, are obtained by choice, such as a high school dropout, self-made millionaire, or nurse. As a daughter or son, you occupy a different status than as a neighbor or employee. One person can be associated with a multitude of roles and statuses. Even a single status such as “student” has a complex role-set, or array of roles, attached to it (Merton 1957). It is important to note that status refers to the rank in social hierarchy, while role is the behavior expected of a person holding a certain status.

If too much is required of a single role, individuals can experience role strain. Consider the duties of a parent: cooking, cleaning, driving, problem-solving, acting as a source of moral guidance—the list goes on. Similarly, a person can experience role conflict when one or more roles are contradictory. A parent who also has a full-time career can experience role conflict on a daily basis. When there is a deadline at the office but a sick child needs to be picked up from school, which comes first? When you are working toward a promotion but your children want you to come to their school play, which do you choose? Being a college student can conflict with being an employee, being an athlete, or even being a friend. Our roles in life have a great effect on our decisions and who we become.



Figure 4.12: Parents often experience role strain or role conflict as they try to balance different and often urgent competing responsibilities. (Credit: Ran Zwigenberg/flickr)

Presentation of Self

Of course, it is impossible to look inside a person’s head and study what role they are playing. All we can observe is behavior, or role performance. Role performance is how a person expresses his or her role. Sociologist Erving Goffman presented the idea that a person is like an actor on a stage. Calling his theory dramaturgy, Goffman believed that we use “impression management” to present ourselves to others as we hope to be perceived. Each situation is a new scene, and individuals perform different roles depending on who is present (Goffman 1959). Think about the way you behave around your coworkers versus the way you behave around your grandparents versus the way you behave with a blind date. Even if you’re not consciously trying to alter your personality, your grandparents, coworkers, and date probably see different sides of you.

As in a play, the setting matters as well. If you have a group of friends over to your house for dinner, you are playing the role of a host. It is agreed upon that you will provide food and seating and probably be stuck with a lot of the cleanup at the end of the night. Similarly, your friends are playing the roles of guests, and they are expected to respect your property and any rules you may set forth ("Don't leave the door open or the cat will get out."). In any scene, there needs to be a shared reality between players. In this case, if you view yourself as a guest and others view you as a host, there are likely to be problems.

Impression management is a critical component of symbolic interactionism. For example, a judge in a courtroom has many "props" to create an impression of fairness, gravity, and control—like their robe and gavel. Those entering the courtroom are expected to adhere to the scene being set. Just imagine the "impression" that can be made by how a person dresses. This is the reason that attorneys frequently select the hairstyle and apparel for witnesses and defendants in courtroom proceedings.



Figure 4.13: A judge's gavel is known as a prop designed to add gravity and ceremony to the proceedings. (Credit: Brian Turner/flickr)

Goffman's dramaturgy ideas expand on the ideas of Charles Cooley and the looking-glass self. According to Cooley, we base our image on what we think other people see (Cooley 1902). We imagine how we must appear to others, then react to this speculation. We don certain clothes, prepare our hair in a particular manner, wear makeup, use cologne, and the like—all with the notion that our presentation of ourselves is going to affect how others perceive us. We expect a certain reaction, and, if lucky, we get the one we desire and feel good about it. But more than that, Cooley believed that our sense of self is based upon this idea: we imagine how we look to others, draw conclusions based upon their reactions to us, and then we develop our personal sense of self. In other words, people's reactions to us are like a mirror in which we are reflected.

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5.5: Key Terms

achieved status | the status a person chooses, such as a level of education or income

agricultural societies | societies that rely on farming as a way of life

alienation | an individual's isolation from his society, his work, and his sense of self

anomie | a situation in which society no longer has the support of a firm collective consciousness

ascribed status | the status outside of an individual's control, such as sex or race

bourgeoisie | the owners of the means of production in a society

capitalism | a way of organizing an economy so that the things that are used to make and transport products (such as land, oil, factories, ships, etc.) are owned by individual people and companies rather than by the government

class consciousness | the awareness of one's rank in society

collective conscience | the communal beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society

false consciousness | a condition in which the beliefs, ideals, or ideology of a person are not in the person's own best interest

feudal societies | societies that operate on a strict hierarchical system of power based around land ownership and protection

habitualization | the idea that society is constructed by us and those before us, and it is followed like a habit

horticultural societies | societies based around the cultivation of plants

hunter-gatherer societies | societies that depend on hunting wild animals and gathering uncultivated plants for survival

industrial societies | societies characterized by a reliance on mechanized labor to create material goods

information societies | societies based on the production of nonmaterial goods and services

institutionalization | the act of implanting a convention or norm into society

iron cage | a situation in which an individual is trapped by social institutions

looking-glass self | our reflection of how we think we appear to others

mechanical solidarity | a type of social order maintained by the collective consciousness of a culture

organic solidarity | a type of social order based around an acceptance of economic and social differences

pastoral societies | societies based around the domestication of animals

proletariat | the laborers in a society

rationalization | a belief that modern society should be built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition

role conflict | a situation when one or more of an individual's roles clash

role performance | the expression of a role

role strain | stress that occurs when too much is required of a single role

role-set | an array of roles attached to a particular status

roles | patterns of behavior that are representative of a person's social status

self-fulfilling prophecy | an idea that becomes true when acted upon

social integration | how strongly a person is connected to his or her social group

society | a group of people who live in a definable community and share the same cultural components

status | the responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to his or her rank and role in society

Thomas theorem | how a subjective reality can drive events to develop in accordance with that reality, despite being originally unsupported by objective reality

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5.6: Section Summary

4.1 Types of Societies

Societies are classified according to their development and use of technology. For most of human history, people lived in preindustrial societies characterized by limited technology and low production of goods. After the Industrial Revolution, many societies based their economies around mechanized labor, leading to greater profits and a trend toward greater social mobility. At the turn of the new millennium, a new type of society emerged. This postindustrial, or information, society is built on digital technology and nonmaterial goods.

4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

Émile Durkheim believed that as societies advance, they make the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity. For Karl Marx, society exists in terms of class conflict. With the rise of capitalism, workers become alienated from themselves and others in society. Sociologist Max Weber noted that the rationalization of society can be taken to unhealthy extremes.

4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

Society is based on the social construction of reality. How we define society influences how society actually is. Likewise, how we see other people influences their actions as well as our actions toward them. We all take on various roles throughout our lives, and our social interactions depend on what types of roles we assume, who we assume them with, and the scene where interaction takes place.

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5.8: Dramaturgy

Dramaturgy (Dramaturgical Analysis)

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: The Family

6.1: Introduction
6.2: What Is Family?
6.3: Variations in Family Life
6.4: Challenges Families Face
6.5: Key Terms
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6.8: The Traditional Family Dinner

Thumbnail: More than one quarter of U.S. children live in a single-parent household. (Photo courtesy of Ross Griff/flickr)

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6.1: Introduction



Figure 14.1: If we see a young couple in a park, what do we assume about them? Are our assumptions based on what we see, or what we've experienced? (Credit: Jaroslav A. Polák/flickr)

Chapter Outline

14.1 What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?
14.2 Variations in Family Life
14.3 Challenges Families Face

Elena and Cam met through friends when they were in their early twenties. Elena had been out of college for two years and worked in the city procurement office; she took graduate classes in operations management, but she'd need a few more years to finish her Master's. Cam had received extensive computing training while in the Navy, and was a database architect at an insurance company.

In their first few years of dating, the idea of marriage came up mostly through other people. Friends' weddings seemed like monthly events, and "who's next?" small talk was unavoidable. Elena's grandmother and aunts added to the chorus; they talked about their home country, where women were married with a couple of children by the time they reached Elena's age. (Elena often pointed out that they were wrong, and the average age of marriage had been climbing for decades.) These pressures were pretty minor at first. They came in the form of jokes, wedding dress texts, and the occasional insult about Cam's salary. But every once in a while someone would sit Elena down for a serious talk, or corner Cam while he was at a family gathering.

Most of Elena's family predicted that things would change when she earned her graduate degree and could "focus on her family." Things did change; Elena became compliance officer for the office of city services, resulting in almost a ten percent increase in her salary. Cam became a supervisor three months later. They moved out of their apartment, which was in Cam's mother's garage, and into their own place downtown. They were happy. They were committed to each other. They didn't get married.

Five years later, Elena and Cam were still living downtown, but they'd traded their rental for a condo. Aside from work, they co-founded a nonprofit where Elena taught financial literacy and Cam ran computing boot camps for recent immigrants and refugees.

Maybe it was the hundreds of children they met through the organization, or maybe it was seeing their friends' kids, or maybe it was being in her thirties, but Elena realized she wanted to be a mother. They started the adoption process, and eighteen months later welcomed a young girl who had been born in another country.

When did Elena and Cam become a family? Was it when they moved in together? When they adopted the child? Does their not being married matter?

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6.2: What Is Family?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe society's current understanding of family
- Recognize changes in marriage and family patterns
- Differentiate between lines of descent and residence



Figure 14.2: If you asked a small child who is in their family, their response might depend more on their living arrangements than on their understanding of formal family structures.

Marriage and family are key structures in many societies. Many of us learn from a young age that finding and joining the right person is a key to happiness and security. We're told that children need two parents. Many of the tax laws, medical laws, retirement benefit laws, and banking and loan processes seem to favor or assume marriage. Should those assumptions be changed? Is marriage still the foundation of the family and our society?

In 1960, 66 percent of households in America were headed by a married couple. That meant that most children grew up in such households, as did their friends and extended families. Marriage could certainly be seen as the foundation of the culture. By 2010, that number of households headed by married couples had dropped to 45 percent (Luscombe 2014). The approximately 20 percent drop is more than just a statistic; it has significant practical effects. It means that nearly every child in most parts of America is either in or is close to a family that is not headed by a married couple. It means that teachers and counselors and even people who meet children in a restaurant can't assume they live with two married parents. Some view this decline as a problem with outcomes related to values, crime, financial strength, and mental health. Sociologists may study that viewpoint to determine if it is actually true.

What is marriage? Not even sociologists are able to agree on a single meaning. For our purposes, we'll define marriage as a legally recognized social contract between two people, traditionally based on a sexual relationship and implying a permanence of the union. In practicing cultural relativism, we should also consider variations, such as whether a legal union is required, whether more than two people can be involved, or whether the marriage is a religious one or a civil one.

Sociologists are interested in the relationship between the institution of marriage and the institution of family because, historically, marriages are what create a family, and families are the most basic social unit upon which society is built. Both marriage and family create status roles that are sanctioned by society.

The question of what constitutes a family may be an even more difficult one to answer; it's a prime area of debate in family sociology, as well as in politics and religion. Social conservatives tend to define the family in terms of structure with each family member filling a certain role (like father, mother, or child). Sociologists, on the other hand, tend to define family more in terms of the manner in which members relate to one another than on a strict configuration of status roles. Here, we'll define family as a socially recognized group (usually joined by blood, marriage, cohabitation, or adoption) that forms an emotional connection and serves as an economic unit of society. Sociologists identify different types of families based on how one enters into them. A family of orientation refers to the family into which a person is born. A family of procreation describes one that is formed through marriage. These distinctions have cultural significance related to issues of lineage.

Drawing on two sociological paradigms, the sociological understanding of what constitutes a family can be explained by symbolic interactionism as well as functionalism. These two theories indicate that families are groups in which participants view themselves as family members and act accordingly. In other words, families are groups in which people come together to form a strong primary group connection and maintain emotional ties to one another over a long period of time. Such families may include groups of close friends or teammates. In addition, the functionalist perspective views families as groups that perform vital roles for society —both internally (for the family itself) and externally (for society as a whole). Families provide for one another's physical, emotional, and social well-being. Parents care for and socialize children. Later in life, adult children often care for elderly parents. While interactionism helps us understand the subjective experience of belonging to a "family," functionalism illuminates the many purposes of families and their roles in the maintenance of a balanced society (Parsons and Bales 1956). We will go into more detail about how these theories apply to family in the following pages.

Challenges Families Face

People in the United States as a whole are somewhat divided when it comes to determining what does and what does not constitute a family. In a 2010 survey conducted by professors at the University of Indiana, nearly all participants (99.8 percent) agreed that a husband, wife, and children constitute a family. Ninety-two percent stated that a husband and a wife without children still constitute a family. The numbers drop for less traditional structures: unmarried couples with children (83 percent), unmarried couples without children (39.6 percent), gay male couples with children (64 percent), and gay male couples without children (33 percent) (Powell et al. 2010). This survey revealed that children tend to be the key indicator in establishing "family" status: the percentage of individuals who agreed that unmarried couples and gay couples constitute a family nearly doubled when children were added.

The study also revealed that 60 percent of U.S. respondents agreed that if you consider yourself a family, you are a family (a concept that reinforces an interactionist perspective) (Powell 2010). The government, however, is not so flexible in its definition of "family." The U.S. Census Bureau defines a family as "a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together" (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). While this structured definition can be used as a means to consistently track family-related patterns over several years, it excludes individuals such as cohabitating unmarried couples. Legality aside, sociologists would argue that the general concept of family is more diverse and less structured than in years past. Society has given more leeway to the design of a family making room for what works for its members (Jayson 2010).

Family is, indeed, a subjective concept, but it is a fairly objective fact that family (whatever one's concept of it may be) is very important to people in the United States. In a 2010 survey by Pew Research Center in Washington, DC, 76 percent of adults surveyed stated that family is "the most important" element of their life—just one percent said it was "not important" (Pew Research Center 2010). It is also very important to society. President Ronald Reagan notably stated, "The family has always been the cornerstone of American society. Our families nurture, preserve, and pass on to each succeeding generation the values we share and cherish, values that are the foundation of our freedoms" (Lee 2009). While the design of the family may have changed in recent years, the fundamentals of emotional closeness and support are still present. Most responders to the Pew survey stated that their family today is at least as close (45 percent) or closer (40 percent) than the family with which they grew up (Pew Research Center 2010).

As you may have seen in the chapter on Aging and the Elderly, different generations have varying living situations and views on aging. The same goes for living situations with family. The Pew Research Center analyzed living situation of 40-year-olds from different generations. At that age, Millennials indicated that 45 percent of them were not living in a family of their own. In contrast, when Gen Xers and Baby Boomers were about 40 years old (around 2003 and 1987, respectively), an average of 33 percent of them lived outside of a family (Barroso 2020). The dynamic of nearly a 50-50 split between family/non-family for Millennials is very different from a two-third/one third split of Boomers and Gen X.

The data also show that women are having children later in life and that men are much less likely to live in a household with their own children. In 2019, 32 percent of Millennial men were living in a household with their children, compared to 41 percent of Gen

X men in 2003 and 44 percent of Boomer men in 1987 (Barroso 2020). Again, the significant drop off in parenting roles likely has an impact on attitudes toward family.

Alongside the debate surrounding what constitutes a family is the question of what people in the United States believe constitutes a marriage. Many religious and social conservatives believe that marriage can only exist between a man and a woman, citing religious scripture and the basics of human reproduction as support. Social liberals and progressives, on the other hand, believe that marriage can exist between two consenting adults—be they a man and a woman, or a woman and a woman—and that it would be discriminatory to deny such a couple the civil, social, and economic benefits of marriage.

Marriage Patterns

With single parenting and cohabitation (when a couple shares a residence but not a marriage) becoming more acceptable in recent years, people may be less motivated to get married. In a recent survey, 39 percent of respondents answered "yes" when asked whether marriage is becoming obsolete (Pew Research Center 2010). The institution of marriage is likely to continue, but some previous patterns of marriage will become outdated as new patterns emerge. In this context, cohabitation contributes to the phenomenon of people getting married for the first time at a later age than was typical in earlier generations (Glezer 1991). Furthermore, marriage will continue to be delayed as more people place education and career ahead of "settling down."

One Partner or Many?

People in the United States typically equate marriage with monogamy, when someone is married to only one person at a time. In many countries and cultures around the world, however, having one spouse is not the only form of accepted marriage, even if it is the most common. Polygamy, or being married to more than one person at a time, is accepted to varying degrees around the world, with most polygamous societies existing in northern Africa and east Asia (OECD 2019). Instances of polygamy are almost exclusively in the form of a man being married to more than one woman at the same time, rather than a woman being married to more than one man (Altman and Ginat 1996).

While the majority of societies accept polygamy, the majority of people do not practice it. Even in the regions where it is most common, only an average of 11 percent of the population lives in arrangements that include more than one spouse (Kramer 2020). In these relationships, the husbands are often older, wealthy, high-status men (Altman and Ginat 1996). The average plural marriage involves no more than three wives. Negev Bedouin men in Israel, for example, typically have two wives, although it is acceptable to have up to four (Griver 2008). As urbanization increases in these cultures, polygamy is likely to decrease as a result of greater access to mass media, technology, and education (Altman and Ginat 1996).

In the United States, polygamy is illegal. A recent Gallup poll showed that 21 percent of people believe polygamy is morally acceptable, which is a major increase since earlier versions of the same poll. But the poll also found that polygamy was among the least acceptable behaviors considered in the study; for example, polygamy was far less acceptable than consensual sex between teenagers, though it was more acceptable than a married person having an affair (Brenan 2020). The act of entering into marriage while still married to another person is referred to as bigamy and is considered a felony in most states.

Residency and Lines of Descent

When considering one's lineage, most people in the United States look to both their father's and mother's sides. Both paternal and maternal ancestors are considered part of one's family. This pattern of tracing kinship is called bilateral descent. Note that kinship, or one's traceable ancestry, can be based on blood or marriage or adoption. Sixty percent of societies, mostly modernized nations, follow a bilateral descent pattern. Unilateral descent (the tracing of kinship through one parent only) is practiced in the other 40 percent of the world's societies, with high concentration in pastoral cultures (O'Neal 2006).

There are three types of unilateral descent: patrilineal, which follows the father's line only; matrilineal, which follows the mother's side only; and ambilineal, which follows either the father's only or the mother's side only, depending on the situation. In patrilineal societies, such as those in rural China and India, only males carry on the family surname. This gives males the prestige of permanent family membership while females are seen as only temporary members (Harrell 2001). U.S. society assumes some aspects of patrilineal decent. For instance, most children assume their father's last name even if the mother retains her birth name.

In matrilineal societies, inheritance and family ties are traced to women. Matrilineal descent is common in Native American societies, notably the Crow and Cherokee tribes. In these societies, children are seen as belonging to the women and, therefore, one's kinship is traced to one's mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and so on (Mails 1996). In ambilineal societies, which are most common in Southeast Asian countries, parents may choose to associate their children with the kinship of either the mother or

the father. This choice may be based on the desire to follow stronger or more prestigious kinship lines or on cultural customs such as men following their father's side and women following their mother's side (Lambert 2009).

Tracing one's line of descent to one parent rather than the other can be relevant to the issue of residence. In many cultures, newly married couples move in with, or near to, family members. In a patrilocal residence system it is customary for the wife to live with (or near) her husband's blood relatives (or family of orientation). Patrilocal systems can be traced back thousands of years. In a DNA analysis of 4,600-year-old bones found in Germany, scientists found indicators of patrilocal living arrangements (Haak et al 2008). Patrilocal residence is thought to be disadvantageous to women because it makes them outsiders in the home and community; it also keeps them disconnected from their own blood relatives. In China, where patrilocal and patrilineal customs are common, the written symbols for maternal grandmother (*wáipá*) are separately translated to mean "outsider" and "women" (Cohen 2011).

Similarly, in matrilocal residence systems, where it is customary for the husband to live with his wife's blood relatives (or her family of orientation), the husband can feel disconnected and can be labeled as an outsider. The Minangkabau people, a matrilocal society that is indigenous to the highlands of West Sumatra in Indonesia, believe that home is the place of women and they give men little power in issues relating to the home or family (Joseph and Najmabadi 2003). Most societies that use patrilocal and patrilineal systems are patriarchal, but very few societies that use matrilocal and matrilineal systems are matriarchal, as family life is often considered an important part of the culture for women, regardless of their power relative to men.

Stages of Family Life



Figure 14.3: The ability for parents to socialize and the types of events they can attend is often influenced by the ages and characteristics of their children. Preparing to go out with a four-year-old is usually much easier than doing so with a four-month-old, but the four-year-old needs to be watched more carefully. As children grow and families have more children, and perhaps include extended families, members' lives and perspective change. (Credit: Elvert Barnes/flickr)

As we've established, the concept of family has changed greatly in recent decades. Historically, it was often thought that many families evolved through a series of predictable stages. Developmental or "stage" theories used to play a prominent role in family sociology (Strong and DeVault 1992). Today, however, these models have been criticized for their linear and conventional assumptions as well as for their failure to capture the diversity of family forms. While reviewing some of these once-popular theories, it is important to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

The set of predictable steps and patterns families experience over time is referred to as the family life cycle. One of the first designs of the family life cycle was developed by Paul Glick in 1955. In Glick's original design, he asserted that most people will grow up,

establish families, rear and launch their children, experience an "empty nest" period, and come to the end of their lives. This cycle will then continue with each subsequent generation (Glick 1989). Glick's colleague, Evelyn Duvall, elaborated on the family life cycle by developing these classic stages of family (Strong and DeVault 1992):

Table 14.1: This table shows one example of how a "stage" theory might categorize the phases a family goes through.

Stage Theory		
Stage	Family Type	Children
1	Marriage Family	Childless
2	Procreation Family	Children ages 0 to 2.5
3	Preschooler Family	Children ages 2.5 to 6
4	School-age Family	Children ages 6–13
5	Teenage Family	Children ages 13–20
6	Launching Family	Children begin to leave home
7	Empty Nest Family	"Empty nest"; adult children have left home

The family life cycle was used to explain the different processes that occur in families over time. Sociologists view each stage as having its own structure with different challenges, achievements, and accomplishments that transition the family from one stage to the next. For example, the problems and challenges that a family experiences in Stage 1 as a married couple with no children are likely much different than those experienced in Stage 5 as a married couple with teenagers. The success of a family can be measured by how well they adapt to these challenges and transition into each stage. While sociologists use the family life cycle to study the dynamics of family over time, consumer and marketing researchers have used it to determine what goods and services families need as they progress through each stage (Murphy and Staples 1979).

As early "stage" theories have been criticized for generalizing family life and not accounting for differences in gender, ethnicity, culture, and lifestyle, less rigid models of the family life cycle have been developed. One example is the family life course, which recognizes the events that occur in the lives of families but views them as parting terms of a fluid course rather than in consecutive stages (Strong and DeVault 1992). This type of model accounts for changes in family development, such as the fact that in today's society, childbearing does not always occur with marriage. It also sheds light on other shifts in the way family life is practiced. Society's modern understanding of family rejects rigid "stage" theories and is more accepting of new, fluid models.

Sociology in the Real World: The Evolution of Television Families

Whether you grew up watching the Huxtables, the Simpsons, the Kardashians, or the Johnsons, most of the drama or comedy you saw involved the relationships, tensions, challenges, and sometimes ridiculousness of family life. You may have also seen a great deal of change. The 1960s was the height of the suburban U.S. nuclear family on television with shows such as *The Donna Reed Show* and *Father Knows Best*. While some shows of this era portrayed single parents (*My Three Sons* and *Bonanza*, for instance), the single status almost always resulted from being widowed—not divorced or unwed.

Although family dynamics in real U.S. homes were changing, the expectations for families portrayed on television were not. The United States' first reality show, *An American Family* aired on PBS in 1973. The show chronicled Bill and Pat Loud and their children. During the series, the oldest son, Lance, announced to the family that he was gay, and at the series' conclusion, Bill and Pat decided to divorce. Although the Loud's union was among the 30 percent of marriages that ended in divorce in 1973, the family was featured on the cover of the March 12 issue of *Newsweek* with the title "The Broken Family" (Ruoff 2002).

Less traditional family structures in sitcoms gained popularity in the 1980s with shows such as *Diff'rent Strokes* (a widowed man with two adopted African American sons) and *One Day at a Time* (a divorced woman with two teenage daughters). Still, traditional families such as those in *Family Ties* and *The Cosby Show* dominated the ratings. The late 1980s and the 1990s saw the introduction of the dysfunctional family. Shows such as *Roseanne*, *Married with Children*, and *The Simpsons* portrayed traditional nuclear families, but in a much less flattering light than those from the 1960s did (Museum of Broadcast Communications 2011).

In the early 2000s, the nontraditional family has become somewhat of a tradition in television. While many situation comedies focus on single men and women without children, those that do portray families often stray from the classic structure: they include unmarried and divorced parents, adopted children, gay or lesbian couples, and multigenerational households.

In 2009, ABC emphasized the changes in family dynamics with their choice of title for *Modern Family*. The show follows an extended family that includes a divorced and remarried father with one stepchild and his biological adult children—one of whom is in a traditional two-parent household, and the other who is a gay man in a committed relationship raising an adopted daughter. *Black-ish*, which portrays an extended family of African Americans, has at many times dealt with the issue implied by its name: That sometimes what it means to be Black can bring issues of interpretation conflict, especially across generations. For example, the children of the central family have shown interest in "blending in" with their White friends, which brings negative reactions from their grandparents.

Other shows, such as *Shameless*, interweave family diversity with complex and painful issues such as addiction. The series has a large cast of characters representing different groups, and central to the series are the roles of children, rather than parents, as family leaders. "The families on shows like this one aren't as idealistic, but they remain relatable," states television critic Maureen Ryan. "The most successful shows, comedies especially, have families that you can look at and see parts of your family in them" (Respers France 2010).

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6.3: Variations in Family Life

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Recognize variations in family life
- Explain the prevalence and unique characteristics of single parents, blended families, foster care, cohabitation, same-sex couples, and unmarried individuals
- Discuss the social impact of changing family structures

The combination of husband, wife, and children that 99.8 percent of people in the United States believe constitutes a family is not representative of 99.8 percent of U.S. families. According to 2010 census data, only 66 percent of children under seventeen years old live in a household with two married parents. This is a decrease from 77 percent in 1980 (U.S. Census 2011). This two-parent family structure is known as a nuclear family, referring to married parents and children as the nucleus, or core, of the group. Recent years have seen a rise in variations of the nuclear family with the parents not being married. Three percent of children live with two cohabiting parents (U.S. Census 2011).



Figure 14.4: Military families sometimes have to endure long parental absences. The other parent or other family members, including older siblings, often take on more responsibility during deployments. The serving parent faces stress and detachment when they are away. (Credit: The National Guard.)

Single Parents, Blended Families, and Foster Families

Single-parent households are on the rise. In 2017, 32 percent of children lived with a single parent only, up from 25 percent in 2008. Of that 32 percent, 21 percent live with their mother. Four percent live with their father, which is a percentage that is growing

in share; in 1968, for example, only one percent of children lived with a solo father, and three percent lived with a solo father in 2008 (Livingston 2018).

About 16 percent of children are living in blended families, those with step parents and/or step-siblings. This number has remained relatively stable since the 1980s when the Census Bureau began reliably measuring it. Four percent of children live in families with couples who are not married. (That number is partially composed of parents in same-sex relationships who were previously prohibited from getting married.)

In some cases, parents can no longer care for their children. In 2018, three million children lived with a guardian who was neither their biological nor adoptive parent. The causes range from parental mental health issues, drug use, or incarceration, as well as physical or sexual abuse of the children by the parent, or abandonment by the parent. The wide array of causes leads to a similarly wide array of arrangements and types of people and organizations involved. About half of these children live with grandparents, and about 20 percent live with other relatives (ChildStats 2019). Sometimes a grandparent or other relative temporarily assumes care of children, perhaps informally, while other times the arrangement is longer term and the state or city child welfare or similar department is involved.

25 percent of children who do not live with an adoptive or biological parent live with nonrelatives, including foster parents, temporary guardians, or people in other types of relationships with the child or the child's parents. Non-relative foster parents are state-certified adults, who care for children under the guidance and supervision of a relevant agency. Foster parents comply with guideline and are provided with financial support for the children they care for. (Sometimes the term foster parent refers to a relative who cares for the children under agency guidelines, and sometimes these "kinship" foster parents are also provided financial support.)

When children are placed into foster care or other non-parental care, agencies and families usually do their best to keep siblings together. Brothers and sisters usually provide each other with someone to navigate social challenges and provide continuity over time. Studies have shown that siblings placed together show more closeness to their foster caregivers and like living in the foster home more than those not placed with a sibling (Hegar and Rosenthal, 2011). Separating siblings can cause them to worry about each other or their birth families, and slows acceptance of their new home (Affronti, Rittner, & Semanchin Jones, 2015).

Siblings sometimes play more of a parental role themselves, especially when there are large age gaps or if there are very young children involved. These older siblings may take on some parental responsibilities during a divorce or when children are sent to live with others. "Parentified" siblings may have trouble navigating the complexities of parental roles when they themselves are often still very young. These experiences can actually be traumatic and lead to compulsive disorders as well as lifelong issues with relationships and self-care (Lamothe 2017)

Changes in the traditional family structure raise questions about how such societal shifts affect children. U.S. Census statistics have long shown that children living in homes with both parents grow up with more financial and educational advantages than children who are raised in single-parent homes (U.S. Census 1997). Parental marital status seems to be a significant indicator of advancement in a child’s life. Children living with a divorced parent typically have more advantages than children living with a parent who never married; this is particularly true of children who live with divorced fathers. This correlates with the statistic that never-married parents are typically younger, have fewer years of schooling, and have lower incomes (U.S. Census 1997). Six in ten children living with only their mother live near or below the poverty level. Of those being raised by single mothers, 69 percent live in or near poverty compared to 45 percent for divorced mothers (U.S. Census 1997). Though other factors such as age and education play a role in these differences, it can be inferred that marriage between parents is generally beneficial for children.

Cohabitation

Living together before or in lieu of marriage is a growing option for many couples. Cohabitation is when a man and woman live together in a sexual relationship without being married. In 2018, 15 percent of young adults ages 25-34 live with an unmarried partner, up from 12 percent 10 years ago (Gurrentz 2018). This surge in cohabitation is likely due to the decrease in social stigma pertaining to the practice. 69 percent of surveyed Americans believe it is acceptable for adults to live together if they are not currently married or do not plan to get married, while 16 percent say it is acceptable only if they plan to get married. (Horowitz 2019).

Cohabitating couples may choose to live together in an effort to spend more time together or to save money on living costs. Many couples view cohabitation as a “trial run” for marriage. 66 percent of married couples who cohabited but were not engaged saw cohabitation as a step toward marriage. And 44 percent of cohabiting adults who are not yet engaged or married see moving in with their partner as a step toward marriage (Horowitz 2019).

While couples may use this time to “work out the kinks” of a relationship before they wed, the most recent research has found that cohabitation has little effect on the success of a marriage. In fact, those who do not cohabitate before marriage have slightly better rates of remaining married for more than ten years (Jayson 2010). Cohabitation may contribute to the increase in the number of men and women who delay marriage. The median age for marriage is the highest it has ever been since the U.S. Census kept records—age twenty-six for women and age twenty-eight for men (U.S. Census 2010).

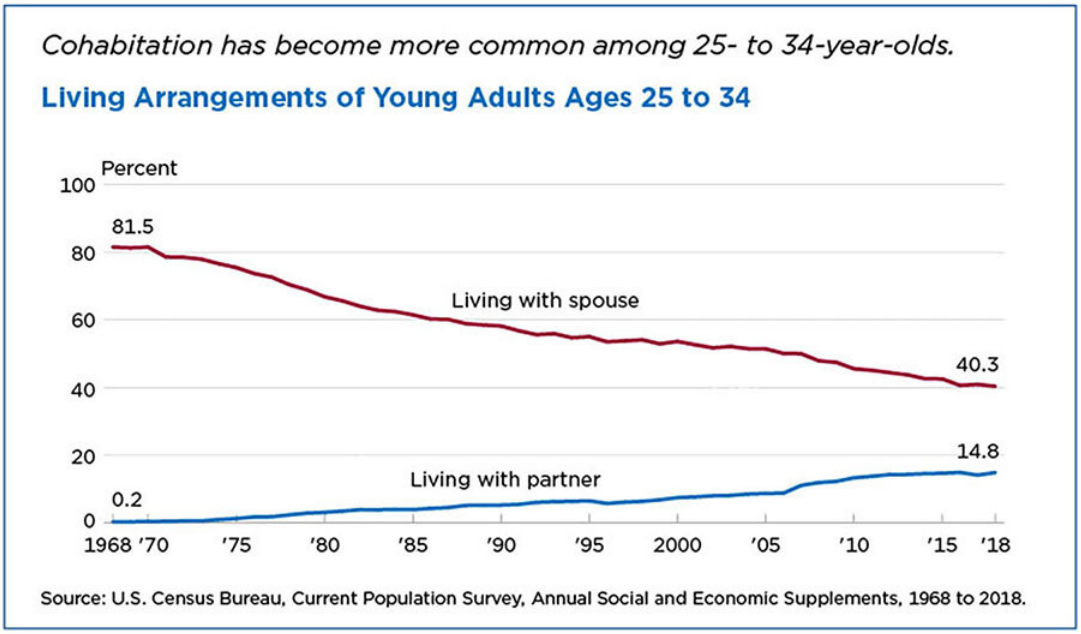


Figure 14.5: As shown by this graph of marital status percentages among young adults, more young people are choosing to delay or opt out of marriage, while the number of people living with a partner has increased. The overall number of people living with either a spouse or a partner has also declined. (Credit: U.S. Census Bureau)

Same-Sex Couples



Figure 14.6: After being together for 23 years, Phyllis Siegel (standing) and Connie Kopolev were the first same-sex couple to marry in New York City. (Credit: TJ Sengal/flickr)

The number of same-sex couples has grown significantly in the past decade. The U.S. Census Bureau reported 594,000 same-sex couple households in the United States, a 50 percent increase from 2000. This increase is a result of more coupling, the growing social acceptance of LGBTQ people, and a subsequent increase in people's willingness to share more about their identity. Nationally, same-sex couple households make up 1.5 percent of the total partner-headed households in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2020). When the 2015 Obergefell vs. Hodges Supreme Court decision legalized same-sex marriage throughout the United States, all federally mandated spousal rights and benefits began apply to same-sex married couples. These have impacts on Social Security and veterans benefits, family leave, and so on. For example, when same-sex marriage was not legal, an LGBTQ person couldn't take the same type of family leave as an opposite sex spouse could if their partner became ill, and could even be prohibited from visiting their partner in the hospital.

In terms of demographics, same-sex couples are not very different from opposite-sex couples. Same-sex couple households have an average age of 52 and an average annual household income of about $107,000; opposite-sex couple households have an average age of 59 and an average household income of $97,000. Same-sex couples are less likely to have children under 18-years-old, with a rate of 14 percent compared to 38 percent of opposite-sex couples; note these include both married and unmarried couples (Census Bureau 2020).

In an analysis of 81 parenting studies, sociologists found no quantifiable data to support the notion that opposite-sex parenting is any better than same-sex parenting. Children of lesbian couples, however, were shown to have slightly lower rates of behavioral problems and higher rates of self-esteem (Biblarz and Stacey 2010). Prior to the nationwide legalization, studies also showed that the rate of suicide among high school students declined in states where same-sex marriage was legal. Suicide is the second-highest cause of death among high school students, and it is a tragic outcome for LGBTQ teenagers who feel unaccepted or vulnerable. The evidence indicates that the legalization of same-sex marriage had positive outcomes for the emotional and mental wellbeing of LGBTQ people (Johns Hopkins University 2017).

Staying Single

About three-in-ten American adults report that they are single, meaning that they are neither married nor in a committed relationship. That group varies greatly by age and gender. Half of men below age 30 are single, compared with about a quarter of men between ages 30-64. About 30 percent of women under 30 are single, and that drops to 19 percent for women between 30 and 60 years-old. There are also differences among racial lines, with White and Hispanic adults less likely to be single than are Black people. Single individuals are found in higher concentrations in large cities or metropolitan areas, with New York City being one of the highest.

Although both single men and single women report social pressure to get married, women are subject to greater scrutiny. Single women are often portrayed as unhappy or in some way lacking something they should have. Single men, on the other hand, are typically portrayed as lifetime bachelors who cannot settle down or simply "have not found the right girl." Single women report feeling insecure and displaced in their families when their single status is disparaged (Roberts 2007). However, single women older than thirty-five years old report feeling secure and happy with their unmarried status, as many women in this category have found success in their education and careers. In general, women feel more independent and more prepared to live a large portion of their adult lives without a spouse or domestic partner than they did in the 1960s (Roberts 2007).

The decision to marry or not to marry can be based on a variety of factors including religion and cultural expectations. Asian individuals are the most likely to marry, while African Americans are the least likely to marry (Venugopal 2011). Additionally, individuals who place no value on religion are more likely to be unmarried than those who place a high value on religion. For Black women, however, the importance of religion made no difference in marital status (Bakalar 2010). In general, being single is not a rejection of marriage; rather, it is a lifestyle that does not necessarily include marriage.

Sociological Research: Deceptive Divorce Rates

It is often cited that half of all marriages end in divorce. This statistic has made many people cynical when it comes to marriage, but it is misleading. Let's take a closer look at the data.

Using National Center for Health Statistics data from 2003 that show a marriage rate of 7.5 (per 1000 people) and a divorce rate of 3.8, it would appear that exactly one half of all marriages failed (Hurley 2005). This reasoning is deceptive, however, because instead of tracing actual marriages to see their longevity (or lack thereof), this compares what are unrelated statistics: that is, the number of marriages in a given year does not have a direct correlation to the divorces occurring that same year. Research published in the *New York Times* took a different approach—determining how many people had ever been married, and of those, how many later divorced. The result? According to this analysis, U.S. divorce rates have only gone as high as 41 percent (Hurley 2005). Another way to calculate divorce rates would be through a cohort study. For instance, we could determine the percentage of marriages that are intact after, say, five or seven years, compared to marriages that have ended in divorce after five or seven years. Sociological researchers must remain aware of research methods and how statistical results are applied. As illustrated, different methodologies and different interpretations can lead to contradictory, and even misleading, results.

Theoretical Perspectives on Marriage and Family

Sociologists study families on both the macro and micro level to determine how families function. Sociologists may use a variety of theoretical perspectives to explain events that occur within and outside of the family.

Functionalism

When considering the role of family in society, functionalists uphold the notion that families are an important social institution and that they play a key role in stabilizing society. They also note that family members take on status roles in a marriage or family. The family—and its members—perform certain functions that facilitate the prosperity and development of society.

Sociologist George Murdock conducted a survey of 250 societies and determined that there are four universal residual functions of the family: sexual, reproductive, educational, and economic (Lee 1985). According to Murdock, the family (which for him includes the state of marriage) regulates sexual relations between individuals. He does not deny the existence or impact of premarital or extramarital sex, but states that the family offers a socially legitimate sexual outlet for adults (Lee 1985). This outlet gives way to reproduction, which is a necessary part of ensuring the survival of society.

Once children are produced, the family plays a vital role in training them for adult life. As the primary agent of socialization and enculturation, the family teaches young children the ways of thinking and behaving that follow social and cultural norms, values,

beliefs, and attitudes. Parents teach their children manners and civility. A well-mannered child reflects a well-mannered parent.

Parents also teach children gender roles. Gender roles are an important part of the economic function of a family. In each family, there is a division of labor that consists of instrumental and expressive roles. Men tend to assume the instrumental roles in the family, which typically involve work outside of the family that provides financial support and establishes family status. Women tend to assume the expressive roles, which typically involve work inside of the family which provides emotional support and physical care for children (Crano and Aronoff 1978). According to functionalists, the differentiation of the roles on the basis of sex ensures that families are well balanced and coordinated. When family members move outside of these roles, the family is thrown out of balance and must recalibrate in order to function properly. For example, if the father assumes an expressive role such as providing daytime care for the children, the mother must take on an instrumental role such as gaining paid employment outside of the home in order for the family to maintain balance and function.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists are quick to point out that U.S. families have been defined as private entities, the consequence of which has been to leave family matters to only those within the family. Many people in the United States are resistant to government intervention in the family: parents do not want the government to tell them how to raise their children or to become involved in domestic issues. Conflict theory highlights the role of power in family life and contends that the family is often not a haven but rather an arena where power struggles can occur. This exercise of power often entails the performance of family status roles. Conflict theorists may study conflicts as simple as the enforcement of rules from parent to child, or they may examine more serious issues such as domestic violence (spousal and child), sexual assault, marital rape, and incest.

The first study of marital power was performed in 1960. Researchers found that the person with the most access to value resources held the most power. As money is one of the most valuable resources, men who worked in paid labor outside of the home held more power than women who worked inside the home (Blood and Wolfe 1960). Conflict theorists find disputes over the division of household labor to be a common source of marital discord. Household labor offers no wages and, therefore, no power. Studies indicate that when men do more housework, women experience more satisfaction in their marriages, reducing the incidence of conflict (Coltrane 2000). In general, conflict theorists tend to study areas of marriage and life that involve inequalities or discrepancies in power and authority, as they are reflective of the larger social structure.

Symbolic Interactionism

Interactionists view the world in terms of symbols and the meanings assigned to them (LaRossa and Reitzes 1993). The family itself is a symbol. To some, it is a father, mother, and children; to others, it is any union that involves respect and compassion. Interactionists stress that family is not an objective, concrete reality. Like other social phenomena, it is a social construct that is subject to the ebb and flow of social norms and ever-changing meanings.

Consider the meaning of other elements of family: “parent” was a symbol of a biological and emotional connection to a child; with more parent-child relationships developing through adoption, remarriage, or change in guardianship, the word “parent” today is less likely to be associated with a biological connection than with whoever is socially recognized as having the responsibility for a child’s upbringing. Similarly, the terms “mother” and “father” are no longer rigidly associated with the meanings of caregiver and breadwinner. These meanings are more free-flowing through changing family roles.

Interactionists also recognize how the family status roles of each member are socially constructed, playing an important part in how people perceive and interpret social behavior. Interactionists view the family as a group of role players or “actors” that come together to act out their parts in an effort to construct a family. These roles are up for interpretation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a “good father,” for example, was one who worked hard to provide financial security for his children. Today, a “good father” is one who takes the time outside of work to promote his children’s emotional well-being, social skills, and intellectual growth—in some ways, a much more daunting task.

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6.4: Challenges Families Face

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the social and interpersonal impact of divorce
- Describe the social and interpersonal impact of family abuse

As the structure of family changes over time, so do the challenges families face. Events like divorce and remarriage present new difficulties for families and individuals. Other long-standing domestic issues such as abuse continue to strain the health and stability of today's families.

Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce, while fairly common and accepted in modern U.S. society, was once a word that would only be whispered and was accompanied by gestures of disapproval. In 1960, divorce was generally uncommon, affecting only 9.1 out of every 1,000 married persons. That number more than doubled (to 20.3) by 1975 and peaked in 1980 at 22.6. Over the last quarter century, divorce rates have dropped steadily and are now similar to those in 1970 (Wang 2020). The dramatic increase in divorce rates after the 1960s has been associated with the liberalization of divorce laws, as well as the shift in societal makeup due to women increasingly entering the workforce (Michael 1978). The decrease in divorce rates can be attributed to three probable factors: First, an increase in the age at which people get married, and second, an increased level of education among those who marry—both of which have been found to promote greater marital stability. The third factor is that the marriage rate itself is going down, and with it the divorce rate. In 2019, there were 16.3 new marriages for every 1,000 women age 15 and over in the United States, down from 17.6 in 2009 (Anderson 2020).

Divorce does not occur equally among all people in the United States; some segments of the U.S. population are more likely to divorce than others. According to the American Community Survey (ACS), men and women in the Northeast and Midwest have the lowest rates of divorce. The South generally has the highest rate of divorce. Divorce rates are likely higher in the South because marriage rates are higher and marriage occurs at younger-than-average ages in this region. In the Northeast, the marriage rate is lower and first marriages tend to be delayed; therefore, the divorce rate is lower (Reynolds 2020). Note that these are generalizations. For example, the District of Columbia has a high marriage rate but among the lowest divorce rate (Anderson 2020).

So what causes divorce? While more young people are choosing to postpone or opt out of marriage, those who enter into the union do so with the expectation that it will last. A great deal of marital problems can be related to stress, especially financial stress. According to researchers participating in the University of Virginia's National Marriage Project, couples who enter marriage without a strong asset base (like a home, savings, and a retirement plan) are 70 percent more likely to be divorced after three years than are couples with at least $10,000 in assets. This is connected to factors such as age and education level that correlate with low incomes.

The addition of children to a marriage creates added financial and emotional stress. Research has established that marriages enter their most stressful phase upon the birth of the first child (Popenoe and Whitehead 2007). This is particularly true for couples who have multiples (twins, triplets, and so on). Married couples with twins or triplets are 17 percent more likely to divorce than those with children from single births (McKay 2010). Another contributor to the likelihood of divorce is a general decline in marital satisfaction over time. As people get older, they may find that their values and life goals no longer match up with those of their spouse (Popenoe and Whitehead 2004).

Divorce is thought to have a cyclical pattern. Children of divorced parents are 40 percent more likely to divorce than children of married parents. And when we consider children whose parents divorced and then remarried, the likelihood of their own divorce rises to 91 percent (Wolfinger 2005). This might result from being socialized to a mindset that a broken marriage can be replaced rather than repaired (Wolfinger 2005). That sentiment is also reflected in the finding that when both partners of a married couple have been previously divorced, their marriage is 90 percent more likely to end in divorce (Wolfinger 2005).



Figure 14.7: A study from Radford University indicated that bartenders are among the professions with the highest divorce rates (38.4 percent). Other traditionally low-wage industries (like restaurant service, custodial employment, and factory work) are also associated with higher divorce rates. (Aamodt and McCoy 2010). (Credit: Daniel Lobo/flickr)

About 15 percent of all married couples involve one partner who is in their second marriage while the other partner is in their first marriage. About 9 percent of married couples are both in their second marriage. (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). The vast majority (91 percent) of remarriages occur after divorce; only 9 percent occur after death of a spouse (Kreider 2006). Most men and women remarry within five years of a divorce, with the median length for men (three years) being lower than for women (4.4 years). This length of time has been fairly consistent since the 1950s. The majority of those who remarry are between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four (Kreider 2006). The general pattern of remarriage also shows that White people are more likely to remarry than Black people.

Marriage the second time around (or third or fourth) can be a very different process than the first. Remarriage lacks many of the classic courtship rituals of a first marriage. In a second marriage, individuals are less likely to deal with issues like parental approval, premarital sex, or desired family size (Elliot 2010). In a survey of households formed by remarriage, a mere 8 percent included only biological children of the remarried couple. Of the 49 percent of homes that include children, 24 percent included only the woman's biological children, 3 percent included only the man's biological children, and 9 percent included a combination of both spouse's children (U.S. Census Bureau 2006).

Children of Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce and remarriage can be stressful on partners and children alike. Divorce is often justified by the notion that children are better off in a divorced family than in a family with parents who do not get along. However, long-term studies determine that to be generally untrue. Research suggests that while marital conflict does not provide an ideal childrearing environment, going through a divorce can be damaging. Children are often confused and frightened by the threat to their family security. They may feel responsible for the divorce and attempt to bring their parents back together, often by sacrificing their own well-being (Amato 2000). Only in high-conflict homes do children benefit from divorce and the subsequent decrease in conflict. The majority of divorces come out of lower-conflict homes, and children from those homes are more negatively impacted by the stress of the divorce than the stress of unhappiness in the marriage (Amato 2000). Studies also suggest that stress levels for children are not improved when a child acquires a stepfamily through marriage. Although there may be increased economic stability, stepfamilies typically have a high level of interpersonal conflict (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994).

Children's ability to deal with a divorce may depend on their age. Research has found that divorce may be most difficult for school-aged children, as they are old enough to understand the separation but not old enough to understand the reasoning behind it. Older teenagers are more likely to recognize the conflict that led to the divorce but may still feel fear, loneliness, guilt, and pressure to

choose sides. Infants and preschool-age children may suffer the heaviest impact from the loss of routine that the marriage offered (Temke 2006).

Proximity to parents also makes a difference in a child's well-being after divorce. Boys who live or have joint arrangements with their fathers show less aggression than those who are raised by their mothers only. Similarly, girls who live or have joint arrangements with their mothers tend to be more responsible and mature than those who are raised by their fathers only. Nearly three-fourths of the children of parents who are divorced live in a household headed by their mother, leaving many boys without a father figure residing in the home (U.S. Census Bureau 2011b). Still, researchers suggest that a strong parent-child relationship can greatly improve a child's adjustment to divorce (Temke 2006).

There is empirical evidence that divorce has not discouraged children in terms of how they view marriage and family. A blended family has additional stress resulting from combining children from the current and previous relationships. The blended family may also have a parent that has different discipline techniques. In a survey conducted by researchers from the University of Michigan, about three-quarters of high school seniors said it was "extremely important" to have a strong marriage and family life. And over half believed it was "very likely" that they would be in a lifelong marriage (Popenoe and Whitehead 2007). These numbers have continued to climb over the last twenty-five years.

Violence and Abuse

Violence and abuse are among the most disconcerting of the challenges that today's families face. Abuse can occur between spouses, between parent and child, as well as between other family members. The frequency of violence among families is a difficult to determine because many cases of spousal abuse and child abuse go unreported. In any case, studies have shown that abuse (reported or not) has a major impact on families and society as a whole.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a significant social problem in the United States. It is often characterized as violence between household or family members, specifically spouses. To include unmarried, cohabitating, and same-sex couples, family sociologists have created the term intimate partner violence (IPV). (Note that healthcare and support personnel, researchers, or victims may use these terms or related ones interchangeably to refer to the same general issue of violence, aggression, and abuse.) Women are the primary victims of intimate partner violence. It is estimated that one in five women has experienced some form of IPV in her lifetime (compared to one in seven men) (Catalano 2007). IPV may include physical violence, such as punching, kicking, or other methods of inflicting physical pain; sexual violence, such as rape or other forced sexual acts; threats and intimidation that imply either physical or sexual abuse; and emotional abuse, such as harming another's sense of self-worth through words or controlling another's behavior. IPV often starts as emotional abuse and then escalates to other forms or combinations of abuse (Centers for Disease Control 2012). IPV includes stalking as well as technological violence (sometimes called cyber aggression), which is committed through communications/social networks or which uses cameras or other technologies to harm victims or control their behavior (Watkins 2016).



Figure 14.8: Many people have experienced intimate partner violence. Note that while data like this are important to consider and hopefully build awareness around IPV, there are gaps in both reporting and information gathering. For example, less information is known about IPV against transgender people, but analysis of various sources indicate that it is 1.7 times more likely to be committed against transgender people than against cisgender people, as described below. (Credit: Centers for Disease Control)

Beyond its tragic outcomes and damaging long-term effects, sociologists and other researchers seeking to understand and prevent IPV and support victims may find a wide variance in the data.

On a global scale, intimate partners kill over 130 women each day. The UN Office of Drugs and Crime reported that, “women continue to pay the highest price as a result of gender inequality, discrimination and negative stereotypes... They are also the most likely to be killed by intimate partners and family” (Doom 2018).

The types of violence can vary significantly according to gender. In 2010, of IPV acts that involved physical actions against women, 57 percent involved physical violence only; 9 percent involved rape and physical violence; 14 percent involved physical violence and stalking; 12 percent involved rape, physical violence, and stalking; and 4 percent involved rape only (CDC 2011). This is vastly different than IPV abuse patterns for men, which show that nearly all (92 percent) physical acts of IVP take the form of physical violence and fewer than 1 percent involve rape alone or in combination (Catalano 2007). Perpetrators of IPV work to establish and maintain dependence in order to hold power and control over their victims, making them feel stupid, crazy, or ugly—in some way worthless.

IPV affects different segments of the population at different rates. The rate of IPV for Native American and Alaskan Native women is higher than any other race (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2017). The rate of IPV for Black women (4.6 per 1,000 persons over the age of twelve) is higher than that for White women (3.1). These numbers have been fairly stable for both racial groups over the last ten years.

Accurate statistics on IPV are difficult to determine, as it is estimated that more than half of nonfatal IPV goes unreported. It is not until victims choose to report crimes that patterns of abuse are exposed. Most victims studied stated that abuse had occurred for at least two years prior to their first report (Carlson, Harris, and Holden 1999). Also, studies and research methods apply a range of categories, which makes comparative or reinforcing data difficult to obtain. For example, some studies may only ask about IPV in two categories (for example, physical and sexual violence only) and may find fewer respondents reporting IPV than do studies that add psychological abuse, stalking, and technological violence.

Sometimes abuse is reported to police by a third party, but it still may not be confirmed by victims. A study of domestic violence incident reports found that even when confronted by police about abuse, 29 percent of victims denied that abuse occurred. Surprisingly, 19 percent of their assailants were likely to admit to abuse (Felson, Ackerman, and Gallagher 2005). According to the National Criminal Victims Survey, victims cite varied reasons why they are reluctant to report abuse, as shown in the table below.

Table 14.2: This chart shows reasons that victims give for why they fail to report abuse to police authorities (Catalano 2007).

Reason Abuse Is Unreported	% Females	% Males
Considered a Private Matter	22	39
Fear of Retaliation	12	5
To Protect the Abuser	14	16
Belief That Police Won’t Do Anything	8	8

IPV against LGBTQ people is generally higher than it is against non-LGBTQ people. Gay men report experiencing IPV in their lifetimes less often (26 percent) than straight men (29 percent) or bisexual men (37 percent). 44 percent of lesbian women report experiencing some type of IPV in their lifetime, compared to 35 percent of straight women. 61 percent of bisexual women report experiencing IPV, a much higher rate than any other sexual orientation frequently studied.

Studies regarding intimate partner violence against transgender people are relatively limited, but several are ongoing. A meta-analysis of available information indicated that physical IPV had occurred in the lifetimes of 38 percent of transgender people, and 25 percent of transgender people had experienced sexual IPV in their lifetimes. Compared with cisgender individuals, transgender individuals were 1.7 times more likely to experience any IPV (Peitzmeier 2020).

Many college students encounter IPV, as well. Overall, psychological violence seems to be the type of IPV college students face most frequently, followed by physical and/or sexual violence (Cho & Huang, 2017). Of high schoolers who report being in a dating relationship, 10% experience physical violence by a boyfriend or girlfriend, 7% experience forced sexual intercourse, and 11% experience sexual dating violence. Seven percent of women and four percent of men who experience IPV are victimized before age 18 (NCJRS 2017). IPV victimization during young adulthood, including the college years, is likely to lead to continuous victimization in adulthood, possibly throughout a lifetime (Greenman & Matsuda, 2016)

Child Abuse

Children are among the most helpless victims of abuse. In 2010, there were more than 3.3 million reports of child abuse involving an estimated 5.9 million children (Child Help 2011). Three-fifths of child abuse reports are made by professionals, including teachers, law enforcement personnel, and social services staff. The rest are made by anonymous sources, other relatives, parents, friends, and neighbors.

Child abuse may come in several forms, the most common being neglect (78.3 percent), followed by physical abuse (10.8 percent), sexual abuse (7.6 percent), psychological maltreatment (7.6 percent), and medical neglect (2.4 percent) (Child Help 2011). Some children suffer from a combination of these forms of abuse. The majority (81.2 percent) of perpetrators are parents; 6.2 percent are other relatives.

Infants (children less than one year old) were the most victimized population with an incident rate of 20.6 per 1,000 infants. This age group is particularly vulnerable to neglect because they are entirely dependent on parents for care. Some parents do not purposely neglect their children; factors such as cultural values, standard of care in a community, and poverty can lead to hazardous level of neglect. If information or assistance from public or private services are available and a parent fails to use those services, child welfare services may intervene (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).



Figure 14.9: Dr. Michael C. Irving's monument for child abuse survivors is composed of handprints and messages of people who have been victims of abuse. (Credit: Harvey K/flickr)

Infants are also often victims of physical abuse, particularly in the form of violent shaking. This type of physical abuse is referred to as shaken-baby syndrome, which describes a group of medical symptoms such as brain swelling and retinal hemorrhage resulting from forcefully shaking or causing impact to an infant's head. A baby's cry is the number one trigger for shaking. Parents may find themselves unable to soothe a baby's concerns and may take their frustration out on the child by shaking him or her violently. Other stress factors, such as a poor economy, unemployment, and general dissatisfaction with parental life, may contribute this type of abuse. While there is no official central registry of shaken-baby syndrome statistics, it is estimated that each year 1,400 babies die or suffer serious injury from being shaken (Barr 2007).

Social Policy and Debate: Corporal Punishment

Physical abuse in children may come in the form of beating, kicking, throwing, choking, hitting with objects, burning, or other methods. Injury inflicted by such behavior is considered abuse even if the parent or caregiver did not intend to harm the child. Other types of physical contact that are characterized as discipline (spanking, for example) are not considered abuse as long as no injury results (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2008).

This issue is rather controversial among modern-day people in the United States. While some parents feel that physical discipline, or corporal punishment, is an effective way to respond to bad behavior, others feel that it is a form of abuse.

> According to a poll conducted by ABC News, 65 percent of respondents approve of spanking and 50 percent said that they sometimes spank their child.
>
> Tendency toward physical punishment may be affected by culture and education. Those who live in the South are more likely than those who live in other regions to spank their child. Those who do not have a college education are also more likely to spank their child (Crandall 2011). Currently, 23 states officially allow spanking in the school system; however, many parents may object and school officials must follow a set of clear guidelines when administering this type of punishment (Crandall 2011). Studies have shown that spanking is not an effective form of punishment and may lead to aggression by the victim, particularly in those who are spanked at a young age (Berlin 2009).

Child abuse occurs at all socioeconomic and education levels and crosses ethnic and cultural lines. Just as child abuse is often associated with stresses felt by parents, including financial stress, parents who demonstrate resilience to these stresses are less likely to abuse (Samuels 2011). Young parents are typically less capable of coping with stresses, particularly the stress of becoming a new parent. Teenage mothers are more likely to abuse their children than their older counterparts. As a parent's age increases, the risk of abuse decreases. Children born to mothers who are fifteen years old or younger are twice as likely to be abused or neglected by age five than are children born to mothers ages twenty to twenty-one (George and Lee 1997).

Drug and alcohol use is also a known contributor to child abuse. Children raised by substance abusers have a risk of physical abuse three times greater than other kids, and neglect is four times as prevalent in these families (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2011). Other risk factors include social isolation, depression, low parental education, and a history of being mistreated as a child. Approximately 30 percent of abused children will later abuse their own children (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2006).

The long-term effects of child abuse impact the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of a child. Injury, poor health, and mental instability occur at a high rate in this group, with 80 percent meeting the criteria of one or more psychiatric disorders, such as depression, anxiety, or suicidal behavior, by age twenty-one. Abused children may also suffer from cognitive and social difficulties. Behavioral consequences will affect most, but not all, of child abuse victims. Children of abuse are 25 percent more likely, as adolescents, to suffer from difficulties like poor academic performance and teen pregnancy, or to engage in behaviors like drug abuse and general delinquency. They are also more likely to participate in risky sexual acts that increase their chances of contracting a sexually transmitted disease (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2006). Other risky behaviors include drug and alcohol abuse. As these consequences can affect the health care, education, and criminal systems, the problems resulting from child abuse do not just belong to the child and family, but to society as a whole.

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6.5: Key Terms

ambilineal | a type of unilateral descent that follows either the father's or the mother's side exclusively

bigamy | the act of entering into marriage while still married to another person

bilateral descent | the tracing of kinship through both parents' ancestral lines

cohabitation | the act of a couple sharing a residence while they are not married

extended family | a household that includes at least one parent and child as well as other relatives like grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins

family | socially recognized groups of individuals who may be joined by blood, marriage, or adoption and who form an emotional connection and an economic unit of society

family life course | a sociological model of family that sees the progression of events as fluid rather than as occurring in strict stages

family life cycle | a set of predictable steps and patterns families experience over time

family of orientation | the family into which one is born

family of procreation | a family that is formed through marriage

intimate partner violence (IPV) | violence that occurs between individuals who maintain a romantic or sexual relationship

kinship | a person's traceable ancestry (by blood, marriage, and/or adoption)

marriage | a legally recognized contract between two or more people in a sexual relationship who have an expectation of permanence about their relationship

matrilineal descent | a type of unilateral descent that follows the mother's side only

matrilocal residence | a system in which it is customary for a husband to live with the his wife's family

monogamy | the act of being married to only one person at a time

nuclear family | two parents (traditionally a married husband and wife) and children living in the same household

patrilineal descent | a type of unilateral descent that follows the father's line only

patrilocal residence | a system in which it is customary for the a wife to live with (or near) the her husband's family

polyandry | a form of marriage in which one woman is married to more than one man at one time

polygamy | the state of being committed or married to more than one person at a time

polygyny | a form of marriage in which one man is married to more than one woman at one time

shaken-baby syndrome | a group of medical symptoms such as brain swelling and retinal hemorrhage resulting from forcefully shaking or impacting an infant's head

unilateral descent | the tracing of kinship through one parent only.

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6.6: Section Summary

14.1 What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?

Sociologists view marriage and families as societal institutions that help create the basic unit of social structure. Both marriage and a family may be defined differently—and practiced differently—in cultures across the world. Families and marriages, like other institutions, adapt to social change.

14.2 Variations in Family Life

People's concepts of marriage and family in the United States are changing. Increases in cohabitation, same-sex partners, and singlehood are altering of our ideas of marriage. Similarly, single parents, same-sex parents, cohabitating parents, and unwed parents are changing our notion of what it means to be a family. While most children still live in opposite-sex, two-parent, married households, that is no longer viewed as the only type of nuclear family.

14.3 Challenges Families Face

Today’s families face a variety of challenges, specifically to marital stability. While divorce rates have decreased in the last twenty-five years, many family members, especially children, still experience the negative effects of divorce. Children are also negatively impacted by violence and abuse within the home, with nearly 6 million children abused each year.

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6.8: The Traditional Family Dinner

The Traditional Family Dinner

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Social Deviance

Tattoos, vegan lifestyles, single parenthood, breast implants, and even jogging were once considered deviant but are now widely accepted. The change process usually takes some time and may be accompanied by significant disagreement, especially for social norms that are viewed as essential. For example, divorce affects the social institution of family, and so divorce carried a deviant and stigmatized status at one time. Marijuana use was once seen as deviant and criminal, but U.S. social norms on this issue are changing.

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Thumbnail: Latin Kings graffiti of the King Master along with the abbreviations "L" and "K" on the sides. The Latin Kings are the largest Hispanic street gang in the US. (Public Domain).

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7.1: Introduction



Figure 7.1: In their push for marijuana legalization, advocates worked to change the notion that cannabis users were associated with criminal behavior. (Credit: Cannabis Culture/flickr)

Chapter Outline

7.1 Deviance and Control
7.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime
7.3 Crime and the Law

After decades of classification as an illegal substance, marijuana is now legal in some form in nearly every state in the country. Most of the others have decriminalized the drug and/or have made it available for medical use. Considering public opinion and the policy stances of governors and legislators just ten or fifteen years ago, this is a remarkable turn of events.

In 2013, the Pew Research Center found for the first time that a majority of people in the United States (52 percent) favored legalizing marijuana. Until that point, most people were in favor of retaining the drug's status as illegal. (The question about marijuana's legal status was first asked in a 1969 Gallup poll, and only 12 percent of U.S. adults favored legalization at that time.) Marijuana had for years been seen as a danger to society, especially to youth, and many people applied stereotypes to users, often considering them lazy or burdens on society, and often conflating marijuana use with negative stereotypes about race. In essence, marijuana users were considered deviants.

Public opinion has certainly changed. That 2013 study showed support for legalization had just gone over the 50 percent mark. By 2019, the number was up to 67 percent. Fully two-thirds of Americans favored permitting some types of legal usage, as well as decriminalization and elimination of jail time for users of the drug (Daniller 2019). Government officials took note, and states began changing their policies. Now, many people who had once shunned cannabis users are finding benefits of the substance, and perhaps rethinking their past opinions.

As in many aspects of sociology, there are no absolute answers about deviance. What people agree is deviant differs in various societies and subcultures, and it may change over time.

Tattoos, vegan lifestyles, single parenthood, breast implants, and even jogging were once considered deviant but are now widely accepted. The change process usually takes some time and may be accompanied by significant disagreement, especially for social norms that are viewed as essential. For example, divorce affects the social institution of family, and so divorce carried a deviant and

stigmatized status at one time. Marijuana use was once seen as deviant and criminal, but U.S. social norms on this issue are changing.

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7.2: Deviance and Control

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Define deviance, and explain the nature of deviant behavior
- Differentiate between methods of social control



Figure 7.2: Are financial crimes deviant? Why do we consider them less harmful than other types of crimes, even though they may impact many more victims? (Credit: Justin Ruckman/flickr)

Wells Fargo CEO John Stumpf was forced to resign after his company enrolled customers in unnecessary auto insurance programs, while also fraudulently creating bank accounts without client consent. Both of these actions are prohibited by a range of laws and regulations. Over a million victims were charged improper fees or overcharged for insurance; some suffered reductions in their credit scores, and an estimated 25,000 people had their cars improperly repossessed. Even though these actions were found to be criminal, no one from Wells Fargo faced jail time, as is common in financial crimes. Deviance does not always align with punishment, and perceptions of its impact vary greatly.

What, exactly, is deviance? And what is the relationship between deviance and crime? According to sociologist William Graham Sumner, deviance is a violation of established contextual, cultural, or social norms, whether folkways, mores, or codified law (1906). It can be as minor as picking your nose in public or as major as committing murder. Although the word “deviance” has a negative connotation in everyday language, sociologists recognize that deviance is not necessarily bad (Schoepflin 2011). In fact, from a structural functionalist perspective, one of the positive contributions of deviance is that it fosters social change. For example, during the U.S. civil rights movement, Rosa Parks violated social norms when she refused to move to the “Black section” of the bus, and the Little Rock Nine broke customs of segregation to attend an Arkansas public school.

“What is deviant behavior?” cannot be answered in a straightforward manner. Whether an act is labeled deviant or not depends on many factors, including location, audience, and the individual committing the act (Becker 1963). Listening to music on your phone on the way to class is considered acceptable behavior. Listening to music during your 2 p.m. sociology lecture is considered rude. Listening to music when on the witness stand before a judge may cause you to be held in contempt of court and consequently fined or jailed.

As norms vary across cultures and time, it also makes sense that notions of deviance change. Sixty years ago, public schools in the United States had dress codes that often banned women from wearing pants to class. Today, it's socially acceptable for women to wear pants, but less so for men to wear skirts. And more recently, the act of wearing or not wearing a mask became a matter of deviance, and in some cases, political affiliation and legality. Whether an act is deviant or not depends on society's response to that act.

Sociology in the Real World: Why I Drive a Hearse

When sociologist Todd Schoepflin ran into his childhood friend Bill, he was shocked to see him driving a hearse for everyday tasks, instead of an ordinary car. A professionally trained researcher, Schoepflin wondered what effect driving a hearse had on his friend and what effect it might have on others on the road. Would using such a vehicle for everyday errands be considered deviant by most people?

Schoepflin interviewed Bill, curious first to know why he drove such an unconventional car. Bill had simply been on the lookout for a reliable winter car; on a tight budget, he searched used car ads and stumbled upon one for the hearse. The car ran well, and the price was right, so he bought it.

Bill admitted that others' reactions to the car had been mixed. His parents were appalled, and he received odd stares from his coworkers. A mechanic once refused to work on it, and stated that it was "a dead person machine." On the whole, however, Bill received mostly positive reactions. Strangers gave him a thumbs-up on the highway and stopped him in parking lots to chat about his car. His girlfriend loved it, his friends wanted to take it tailgating, and people offered to buy it. Could it be that driving a hearse isn't really so deviant after all?

Schoepflin theorized that, although viewed as outside conventional norms, driving a hearse is such a mild form of deviance that it actually becomes a mark of distinction. Conformists find the choice of vehicle intriguing or appealing, while nonconformists see a fellow oddball to whom they can relate. As one of Bill's friends remarked, "Every guy wants to own a unique car like this, and *you* can certainly pull it off." Such anecdotes remind us that although deviance is often viewed as a violation of norms, it's not always viewed in a negative light (Schoepflin 2011).



Figure 7.3: A hearse with the license plate "LASTRYD." How would you view the owner of this car? (Credit: Brian Teutsch/flickr)

Deviance, Crime, and Society

Deviance is a more encompassing term than crime, meaning that it includes a range of activities, some of which are crimes and some of which are not. Sociologists may study both with equal interest, but, as a whole, society views crime as far more significant. Crime preoccupies several levels of government, and it drives concerns among families and communities.

Deviance may be considered relative: Behaviors may be considered deviant based mostly on the circumstances in which they occurred; those circumstances may drive the perception of deviance more than the behavior itself. Relatively minor acts of deviance can have long-term impacts on the person and the people around them. For example, if an adult, who should "know better," spoke loudly or told jokes at a funeral, they may be chastised and forever marked as disrespectful or unusual. But in many cultures, funerals are followed by social gatherings – some taking on a party-like atmosphere – so those same jovial behaviors would be perfectly acceptable, and even encouraged, just an hour later.

As discussed earlier, we typically learn these social norms as children and evolve them with experience. But the relativity of deviance can have significant societal impacts, including perceptions and prosecutions of crime. They may often be based on racial, ethnic, or related prejudices. When 15-year-old Elizabeth Eckford of the Little Rock Nine attempted to enter her legally desegregated high school, she was abiding by the law; but she was considered deviant by the crowd of White people that harassed and insulted her. (These events are discussed in more detail in the Education chapter.)

Consider the example of marijuana legalization mentioned earlier. Why was marijuana illegal in the first place? In fact, it wasn't. Humans have used cannabis openly in their societies for thousands of years. While it was not a widely used substance in the United States, it had been accepted as a medicinal and recreational option, and was neither prohibited nor significantly regulated until the early 1900s. What changed?

In the early 1900s, an influx of immigrants began entering the country from Mexico. These newcomers took up residence in White communities, spoke a different language, and began competing for jobs and resources. They used marijuana more frequently than most Americans. Police and others began to circulate rumors regarding the substance's link to violence and immorality. Newspapers and lawmakers spoke about the "Marijuana Menace" and the "evil weed," and articles and images began to portray it as a corrupting force on America's youth. Beginning in 1916, state after state began passing laws prohibiting marijuana use, and in 1937 Congress passed a federal law banning it (White 2012). Penalties for its usage increased over time, spiking during the War on Drugs, with racially and ethnically disparate applications. But more recently, as discussed in the introduction, marijuana is once again seen as an important medical treatment and an acceptable recreational pursuit. What changed this time?

Perceptions and proclamations of deviance have long been a means to oppress people by labeling their private behavior as criminal. Until the 1970s and 1980s, same-sex acts were prohibited by state laws. It was illegal to be gay or lesbian, and the restrictions extended to simple displays like holding hands. Other laws prohibited clothing deemed "inappropriate" for one's biological sex. As a result, military service members and even war veterans were dishonorably discharged (losing all benefits) if they were discovered to be gay. Police harassed and humiliated LGBTQ people and regularly raided gay bars. And anti-LGBTQ street violence or hate crimes were tacitly permitted because they were rarely prosecuted and often lightly punished. While most states had eliminated their anti-LGBTQ laws by the time the Supreme Court struck them down in 2003, 14 states still had some version of them on the books.

To further explore the relativity of deviance and its relationship to perceptions of crime, consider gambling. Excessive or high-risk gambling is usually seen as deviant, but more moderate gambling is generally accepted. Still, gambling has long been limited in most of the United States, making it a crime to participate in certain types of gambling or to do so outside of specified locations. For example, a state may allow betting on horse races but not on sports. Changes to these laws are occurring, but for decades, a generally non-deviant behavior has been made criminal: When otherwise law-abiding people decided to engage in low-stakes and non-excessive gambling, they were breaking the law. Sociologists may study the essential question arising from this situation: Are these gamblers being deviant by breaking the law, even when the actual behavior at hand is not generally considered deviant?

Social Control

When a person violates a social norm, what happens? A driver caught speeding can receive a speeding ticket. A student who wears a bathrobe to class gets a warning from a professor. An adult belching loudly is avoided. All societies practice social control, the regulation and enforcement of norms. The underlying goal of social control is to maintain social order, an arrangement of practices and behaviors on which society's members base their daily lives. Think of social order as an employee handbook and social control as a manager. When a worker violates a workplace guideline, the manager steps in to enforce the rules; when an employee is doing an exceptionally good job at following the rules, the manager may praise or promote the employee.

The means of enforcing rules are known as sanctions. Sanctions can be positive as well as negative. Positive sanctions are rewards given for conforming to norms. A promotion at work is a positive sanction for working hard. Negative sanctions are punishments for violating norms. Being arrested is a punishment for shoplifting. Both types of sanctions play a role in social control.

Sociologists also classify sanctions as formal or informal. Although shoplifting, a form of social deviance, may be illegal, there are no laws dictating the proper way to scratch your nose. That doesn't mean picking your nose in public won't be punished; instead, you will encounter informal sanctions. Informal sanctions emerge in face-to-face social interactions. For example, wearing flip-flops to an opera or swearing loudly in church may draw disapproving looks or even verbal reprimands, whereas behavior that is seen as positive—such as helping an elderly person carry grocery bags across the street—may receive positive informal reactions, such as a smile or pat on the back.

Formal sanctions, on the other hand, are ways to officially recognize and enforce norm violations. If a student violates a college's code of conduct, for example, the student might be expelled. Someone who speaks inappropriately to the boss could be fired. Someone who commits a crime may be arrested or imprisoned. On the positive side, a soldier who saves a life may receive an official commendation.

The table below shows the relationship between different types of sanctions.

Table 7.1 Informal/Formal Sanctions : Formal and informal sanctions may be positive or negative. Informal sanctions arise in social interactions, whereas formal sanctions officially enforce norms.

	Informal	Formal
Positive	An expression of thanks	A promotion at work
Negative	An angry comment	A parking fine

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7.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the functionalist view of deviance in society through four sociologist's theories
- Explain how conflict theory understands deviance and crime in society
- Describe the symbolic interactionist approach to deviance, including labeling and other theories



Figure 7.4: Functionalists believe that deviance plays an important role in society and can be used to challenge people's views. Protesters, such as these PETA members, often use this method to draw attention to their cause. (Credit: David Shankbone/flickr)

Why does deviance occur? How does it affect a society? Since the early days of sociology, scholars have developed theories that attempt to explain what deviance and crime mean to society. These theories can be grouped according to the three major sociological paradigms: functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory.

Functionalism

Sociologists who follow the functionalist approach are concerned with the way the different elements of a society contribute to the whole. They view deviance as a key component of a functioning society. Strain theory, social disorganization theory, and cultural deviance theory represent three functionalist perspectives on deviance in society.

Émile Durkheim: The Essential Nature of Deviance

Émile Durkheim believed that deviance is a necessary part of a successful society. One way deviance is functional, he argued, is that it challenges people's present views (1893). For instance, when Black students across the United States participated in sit-ins during the civil rights movement, they challenged society's notions of segregation. Moreover, Durkheim noted, when deviance is punished, it reaffirms currently held social norms, which also contributes to society (1893). Seeing a student given detention for skipping class reminds other high schoolers that playing hooky isn't allowed and that they, too, could get detention.

Durkheim's point regarding the impact of punishing deviance speaks to his arguments about law. Durkheim saw laws as an expression of the "collective conscience," which are the beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society. "A crime is a crime because we condemn it," he said (1893). He discussed the impact of societal size and complexity as contributors to the collective conscience and the development of justice systems and punishments. For example, in large, industrialized societies that were largely bound together by the interdependence of work (the division of labor), punishments for deviance were generally less severe. In smaller, more homogeneous societies, deviance might be punished more severely.

Robert Merton: Strain Theory

Sociologist Robert Merton agreed that deviance is an inherent part of a functioning society, but he expanded on Durkheim's ideas by developing strain theory, which notes that access to socially acceptable goals plays a part in determining whether a person conforms or deviates. From birth, we're encouraged to achieve the "American Dream" of financial success. A person who attends business school, receives an MBA, and goes on to make a million-dollar income as CEO of a company is said to be a success. However, not everyone in our society stands on equal footing. That MBA-turned-CEO may have grown up in the best school district and had means to hire tutors. Another person may grow up in a neighborhood with lower-quality schools, and may not be able to pay for extra help. A person may have the socially acceptable goal of financial success but lack a socially acceptable way to reach that goal. According to Merton's theory, an entrepreneur who can't afford to launch their own company may be tempted to embezzle from their employer for start-up funds.

Merton defined five ways people respond to this gap between having a socially accepted goal and having no socially accepted way to pursue it.

1. *Conformity*: Those who conform choose not to deviate. They pursue their goals to the extent that they can through socially accepted means.
2. *Innovation*: Those who innovate pursue goals they cannot reach through legitimate means by instead using criminal or deviant means.
3. *Ritualism*: People who ritualize lower their goals until they can reach them through socially acceptable ways. These members of society focus on conformity rather than attaining a distant dream.
4. *Retreatism*: Others retreat and reject society's goals and means. Some people who beg and people who are homeless have withdrawn from society's goal of financial success.
5. *Rebellion*: A handful of people rebel and replace a society's goals and means with their own. Terrorists or freedom fighters look to overthrow a society's goals through socially unacceptable means.

Social Disorganization Theory

Developed by researchers at the University of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s, social disorganization theory asserts that crime is most likely to occur in communities with weak social ties and the absence of social control. An individual who grows up in a poor neighborhood with high rates of drug use, violence, teenage delinquency, and deprived parenting is more likely to become engaged in crime than an individual from a wealthy neighborhood with a good school system and families who are involved positively in the community.



Figure 7.5: Proponents of social disorganization theory believe that individuals who grow up in impoverished areas are more likely to participate in deviant or criminal behaviors. (Credit: Apollo 1758/Wikimedia Commons)

Social disorganization theory points to broad social factors as the cause of deviance. A person isn't born as someone who will commit crimes but becomes one over time, often based on factors in their social environment. Robert Sampson and Byron Groves (1989) found that poverty and family disruption in given localities had a strong positive correlation with social disorganization. They also determined that social disorganization was, in turn, associated with high rates of crime and delinquency—or deviance. Recent studies Sampson conducted with Lydia Bean (2006) revealed similar findings. High rates of poverty and single-parent homes correlated with high rates of juvenile violence. Research into social disorganization theory can greatly influence public policy. For instance, studies have found that children from disadvantaged communities who attend preschool programs that teach basic social skills are significantly less likely to engage in criminal activity. (Lally 1987)

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory looks to social and economic factors as the causes of crime and deviance. Unlike functionalists, conflict theorists don't see these factors as positive functions of society. They see them as evidence of inequality in the system. They also challenge social disorganization theory and control theory and argue that both ignore racial and socioeconomic issues and oversimplify social trends (Akers 1991). Conflict theorists also look for answers to the correlation of gender and race with wealth and crime.

Karl Marx: An Unequal System

Conflict theory was greatly influenced by the work of German philosopher, economist, and social scientist Karl Marx. Marx believed that the general population was divided into two groups. He labeled the wealthy, who controlled the means of production and business, the bourgeois. He labeled the workers who depended on the bourgeois for employment and survival the proletariat. Marx believed that the bourgeois centralized their power and influence through government, laws, and other authority agencies in order to maintain and expand their positions of power in society. Though Marx spoke little of deviance, his ideas created the foundation for conflict theorists who study the intersection of deviance and crime with wealth and power.

C. Wright Mills: The Power Elite

In his book *The Power Elite* (1956), sociologist C. Wright Mills described the existence of what he dubbed the power elite, a small group of wealthy and influential people at the top of society who hold the power and resources. Wealthy executives, politicians, celebrities, and military leaders often have access to national and international power, and in some cases, their decisions affect everyone in society. Because of this, the rules of society are stacked in favor of a privileged few who manipulate them to stay on top. It is these people who decide what is criminal and what is not, and the effects are often felt most by those who have little

power. Mills' theories explain why celebrities can commit crimes and suffer little or no legal retribution. For example, *USA Today* maintains a database of NFL players accused and convicted of crimes. 51 NFL players had been convicted of committing domestic violence between the years 2000 and 2019. They have been sentenced to a collective 49 days in jail, and most of those sentences were deferred or otherwise reduced. In most cases, suspensions and fines levied by the NFL or individual teams were more severe than the justice system's (Schrotenboer 2020 and clickitticket.com 2019).

Crime and Social Class

While crime is often associated with the underprivileged, crimes committed by the wealthy and powerful remain an under-punished and costly problem within society. The FBI reported that victims of burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft lost a total of $15.3 billion dollars in 2009 (FB1 2010). In comparison, when former advisor and financier Bernie Madoff was arrested in 2008, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission reported that the estimated losses of his financial Ponzi scheme fraud were close to $50 billion (SEC 2009).

This imbalance based on class power is also found within U.S. criminal law. In the 1980s, the use of crack cocaine (a less expensive but powerful drug) quickly became an epidemic that swept the country's poorest urban communities. Its pricier counterpart, cocaine, was associated with upscale users and was a drug of choice for the wealthy. The legal implications of being caught by authorities with crack versus cocaine were starkly different. In 1986, federal law mandated that being caught in possession of 50 grams of crack was punishable by a ten-year prison sentence. An equivalent prison sentence for cocaine possession, however, required possession of 5,000 grams. In other words, the sentencing disparity was 1 to 100 (New York Times Editorial Staff 2011). This inequality in the severity of punishment for crack versus cocaine paralleled the unequal social class of respective users. A conflict theorist would note that those in society who hold the power are also the ones who make the laws concerning crime. In doing so, they make laws that will benefit them, while the powerless classes who lack the resources to make such decisions suffer the consequences. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, states passed numerous laws increasing penalties, especially for repeat offenders. The U.S. government passed an even more significant law, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (known as the 1994 Crime Bill), which further increased penalties, funded prisons, and incentivized law enforcement agencies to further pursue drug offenders. One outcome of these policies was the mass incarceration of Black and Hispanic people, which led to a cycle of poverty and reduced social mobility. The crack-cocaine punishment disparity remained until 2010, when President Obama signed the Fair Sentencing Act, which decreased the disparity to 1 to 18 (The Sentencing Project 2010).



Figure 7.6: From 1986 until 2010, the punishment for possessing crack, a "poor person's drug," was 100 times stricter than the punishment for cocaine use, a drug favored by the wealthy. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical approach that can be used to explain how societies and/or social groups come to view behaviors as deviant or conventional.

Labeling Theory

Although all of us violate norms from time to time, few people would consider themselves deviant. Those who do, however, have often been labeled “deviant” by society and have gradually come to believe it themselves. Labeling theory examines the ascribing of a deviant behavior to another person by members of society. Thus, what is considered deviant is determined not so much by the behaviors themselves or the people who commit them, but by the reactions of others to these behaviors. As a result, what is considered deviant changes over time and can vary significantly across cultures.

Sociologist Edwin Lemert expanded on the concepts of labeling theory and identified two types of deviance that affect identity formation. Primary deviance is a violation of norms that does not result in any long-term effects on the individual’s self-image or interactions with others. Speeding is a deviant act, but receiving a speeding ticket generally does not make others view you as a bad person, nor does it alter your own self-concept. Individuals who engage in primary deviance still maintain a feeling of belonging in society and are likely to continue to conform to norms in the future.

Sometimes, in more extreme cases, primary deviance can morph into secondary deviance. Secondary deviance occurs when a person’s self-concept and behavior begin to change after his or her actions are labeled as deviant by members of society. The person may begin to take on and fulfill the role of a “deviant” as an act of rebellion against the society that has labeled that individual as such. For example, consider a high school student who often cuts class and gets into fights. The student is reprimanded frequently by teachers and school staff, and soon enough, develops a reputation as a “troublemaker.” As a result, the student starts acting out even more and breaking more rules; the student has adopted the “troublemaker” label and embraced this deviant identity. Secondary deviance can be so strong that it bestows a master status on an individual. A master status is a label that describes the chief characteristic of an individual. Some people see themselves primarily as doctors, artists, or grandfathers. Others see themselves as beggars, convicts, or addicts.

Techniques of Neutralization

How do people deal with the labels they are given? This was the subject of a study done by Sykes and Matza (1957). They studied teenage boys who had been labeled as juvenile delinquents to see how they either embraced or denied these labels. Have you ever used any of these techniques?

Let’s take a scenario and apply all five techniques to explain how they are used. A young person is working for a retail store as a cashier. Their cash drawer has been coming up short for a few days. When the boss confronts the employee, they are labeled as a thief for the suspicion of stealing. How does the employee deal with this label?

The Denial of Responsibility: When someone doesn’t take responsibility for their actions or blames others. They may use this technique and say that it was their boss’s fault because they don’t get paid enough to make rent or because they’re getting a divorce. They are rejecting the label by denying responsibility for the action.

The Denial of Injury: Sometimes people will look at a situation in terms of what effect it has on others. If the employee uses this technique they may say, “What’s the big deal? Nobody got hurt. Your insurance will take care of it.” The person doesn’t see their actions as a big deal because nobody “got hurt.”

The Denial of the Victim: If there is no victim there’s no crime. In this technique the person sees their actions as justified or that the victim deserved it. Our employee may look at their situation and say, “I’ve worked here for years without a raise. I was owed that money and if you won’t give it to me I’ll get it my own way.”

The Condemnation of the Condemners: The employee might “turn it around on” the boss by blaming them. They may say something like, “You don’t know my life, you have no reason to judge me.” This is taking the focus off of their actions and putting the onus on the accuser to, essentially, prove the person is living up to the label, which also shifts the narrative away from the deviant behavior.

Appeal to a Higher Authority: The final technique that may be used is to claim that the actions were for a higher purpose. The employee may tell the boss that they stole the money because their mom is sick and needs medicine or something like that. They are justifying their actions by making it seem as though the purpose for the behavior is a greater “good” than the action is “bad.” (Sykes & Matza, 1957)

Social Policy and Debate: The Right to Vote

Before she lost her job as an administrative assistant, Leola Strickland postdated and mailed a handful of checks for amounts ranging from $90 to $500. By the time she was able to find a new job, the checks had bounced, and she was convicted of fraud under Mississippi law. Strickland pleaded guilty to a felony charge and repaid her debts; in return, she was spared from serving prison time.

Strickland appeared in court in 2001. More than ten years later, she is still feeling the sting of her sentencing. Why? Because Mississippi is one of twelve states in the United States that bans convicted felons from voting (ProCon 2011).

To Strickland, who said she had always voted, the news came as a great shock. She isn't alone. Some 5.3 million people in the United States are currently barred from voting because of felony convictions (ProCon 2009). These individuals include inmates, parolees, probationers, and even people who have never been jailed, such as Leola Strickland.

Under the Fourteenth Amendment, states are allowed to deny voting privileges to individuals who have participated in "rebellion or other crime" (Krajick 2004). Although there are no federally mandated laws on the matter, most states practice at least one form of *felony disenfranchisement*.

Is it fair to prevent citizens from participating in such an important process? Proponents of disfranchisement laws argue that felons have a debt to pay to society. Being stripped of their right to vote is part of the punishment for criminal deeds. Such proponents point out that voting isn't the only instance in which ex-felons are denied rights; state laws also ban released criminals from holding public office, obtaining professional licenses, and sometimes even inheriting property (Lott and Jones 2008).

Opponents of felony disfranchisement in the United States argue that voting is a basic human right and should be available to all citizens regardless of past deeds. Many point out that felony disfranchisement has its roots in the 1800s, when it was used primarily to block Black citizens from voting. These laws disproportionately target poor minority members, denying them a chance to participate in a system that, as a social conflict theorist would point out, is already constructed to their disadvantage (Holding 2006). Those who cite labeling theory worry that denying deviants the right to vote will only further encourage deviant behavior. If ex-criminals are disenfranchised from voting, are they being disenfranchised from society?



Figure 7.7: Should a former felony conviction permanently strip a U.S. citizen of the right to vote? (Credit: Joshin Yamada/flickr)

Edwin Sutherland: Differential Association

In the early 1900s, sociologist Edwin Sutherland sought to understand how deviant behavior developed among people. Since criminology was a young field, he drew on other aspects of sociology including social interactions and group learning (Laub 2006). His conclusions established differential association theory, which suggested that individuals learn deviant behavior from those close to them who provide models of and opportunities for deviance. According to Sutherland, deviance is less a personal choice and more a result of differential socialization processes. For example, a young person whose friends are sexually active is more likely to view sexual activity as acceptable. Sutherland developed a series of propositions to explain how deviance is learned. In proposition five, for example, he discussed how people begin to accept and participate in a behavior after learning whether it is viewed as "favorable" by those around them. In proposition six, Sutherland expressed the ways that exposure to more "definitions" favoring the deviant behavior than those opposing it may eventually lead a person to partake in deviance (Sutherland 1960), applying almost a quantitative element to the learning of certain behaviors. In the example above, a young person may find sexual activity more acceptable once a certain number of their friends become sexually active, not after only one does so.

Sutherland's theory may explain why crime is multigenerational. A longitudinal study beginning in the 1960s found that the best predictor of antisocial and criminal behavior in children was whether their parents had been convicted of a crime (Todd and Jury 1996). Children who were younger than ten years old when their parents were convicted were more likely than other children to engage in spousal abuse and criminal behavior by their early thirties. Even when taking socioeconomic factors such as dangerous neighborhoods, poor school systems, and overcrowded housing into consideration, researchers found that parents were the main influence on the behavior of their offspring (Todd and Jury 1996).

Travis Hirschi: Control Theory

Continuing with an examination of large social factors, **control theory** states that social control is directly affected by the strength of social bonds and that deviance results from a feeling of disconnection from society. Individuals who believe they are a part of society are less likely to commit crimes against it.

Travis Hirschi (1969) identified four types of social bonds that connect people to society:

1. *Attachment* measures our connections to others. When we are closely attached to people, we worry about their opinions of us. People conform to society's norms in order to gain approval (and prevent disapproval) from family, friends, and romantic partners.
2. *Commitment* refers to the investments we make in the community. A well-respected local businessperson who volunteers at their synagogue and is a member of the neighborhood block organization has more to lose from committing a crime than a person who doesn't have a career or ties to the community.
3. Similarly, levels of *involvement*, or participation in socially legitimate activities, lessen a person's likelihood of deviance. A child who plays little league baseball and takes art classes has fewer opportunities to _____.
4. The final bond, *belief*, is an agreement on common values in society. If a person views social values as beliefs, they will conform to them. An environmentalist is more likely to pick up trash in a park, because a clean environment is a social value to them (Hirschi 1969).

Table 7.2

Functionalism	**Associated Theorist**	**Deviance arises from:**
Strain Theory	Robert Merton	A lack of ways to reach socially accepted goals by accepted methods
Social Disorganization Theory	University of Chicago researchers	Weak social ties and a lack of social control; society has lost the ability to enforce norms with some groups
Cultural Deviance Theory	Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay	Conformity to the cultural norms of lower-class society
Conflict Theory	**Associated Theorist**	**Deviance arises from:**
Unequal System	Karl Marx	Inequalities in wealth and power that arise from the economic system
Power Elite	C. Wright Mills	Ability of those in power to define deviance in ways that maintain the status quo
Symbolic Interactionism	**Associated Theorist**	**Deviance arises from:**
Labeling Theory	Edwin Lemert	The reactions of others, particularly those in power who are able to determine labels
Differential Association Theory	Edwin Sutherland	Learning and modeling deviant behavior seen in other people close to the individual
Control Theory	Travis Hirschi	Feelings of disconnection from society

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7.4: Crime and the Law

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Identify and differentiate between different types of crimes
- Evaluate U.S. crime statistics
- Understand the three branches of the U.S. criminal justice system



Figure 7.8: Both underage smoking and underage vaping are either illegal or highly regulated in every U.S. state. If vaping is a crime, who is the victim? What is the obligation of the government to protect children, and in some cases adults, from themselves? (Credit: Vaping360/flickr)

Although deviance is a violation of social norms, it's not always punishable, and it's not necessarily bad. Crime, on the other hand, is a behavior that violates official law and is punishable through formal sanctions. Walking to class backward is a deviant behavior. Driving with a blood alcohol percentage over the state's limit is a crime. Like other forms of deviance, however, ambiguity exists concerning what constitutes a crime and whether all crimes are, in fact, "bad" and deserve punishment. For example, during the 1960s, civil rights activists often violated laws intentionally as part of their effort to bring about racial equality. In hindsight, we recognize that the laws that deemed many of their actions crimes—for instance, Rosa Parks refusing to give up her seat to a White man—were inconsistent with social equality.

As you have learned, all societies have informal and formal ways of maintaining social control. Within these systems of norms, societies have legal codes that maintain formal social control through laws, which are rules adopted and enforced by a political authority. Those who violate these rules incur negative formal sanctions. Normally, punishments are relative to the degree of the crime and the importance to society of the value underlying the law. As we will see, however, there are other factors that influence criminal sentencing.

Types of Crimes

Not all crimes are given equal weight. Society generally socializes its members to view certain crimes as more severe than others. For example, most people would consider murdering someone to be far worse than stealing a wallet and would expect a murderer to be punished more severely than a thief. In modern U.S. society, crimes are classified as one of two types based on their severity. Violent crimes (also known as "crimes against a person") are based on the use of force or the threat of force. Rape, murder, and armed robbery fall under this category. Nonviolent crimes involve the destruction or theft of property but do not use force or the threat of force. Because of this, they are also sometimes called "property crimes." Larceny, car theft, and vandalism are all types of

nonviolent crimes. If you use a crowbar to break into a car, you are committing a nonviolent crime; if you mug someone with the crowbar, you are committing a violent crime.

When we think of crime, we often picture street crime, or offenses committed by ordinary people against other people or organizations, usually in public spaces. An often overlooked category is corporate crime, or crime committed by white-collar workers in a business environment. Embezzlement, insider trading, and identity theft are all types of corporate crime. Although these types of offenses rarely receive the same amount of media coverage as street crimes, they can be far more damaging. Financial frauds such as insurance scams, Ponzi schemes, and improper practices by banks can devastate families who lose their savings or home.

An often-debated third type of crime is victimless crime. Crimes are called victimless when the perpetrator is not explicitly harming another person. As opposed to battery or theft, which clearly have a victim, a crime like drinking a beer when someone is twenty years old or selling a sexual act do not result in injury to anyone other than the individual who engages in them, although they are illegal. While some claim acts like these are victimless, others argue that they actually do harm society. Prostitution may foster abuse toward women by clients or pimps. Drug use may increase the likelihood of employee absences. Such debates highlight how the deviant and criminal nature of actions develops through ongoing public discussion.

Big Picture: Hate Crimes

Attacks based on a person's race, religion, or other characteristics are known as hate crimes. Hate crimes in the United States evolved from the time of early European settlers and their violence toward Native Americans. Such crimes weren't investigated until the early 1900s, when the Ku Klux Klan began to draw national attention for its activities against Black people and other groups. The term "hate crime," however, didn't become official until the 1980s (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2011).

The severity and impact of hate crimes is significant, but the different crime reporting methods mentioned earlier can obscure the issue. According to the Department of Justice, an average of approximately 205,000 Americans fall victim to hate crimes each year (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2021). But the FBI reports a much lower number; for example, the 2019 report indicates 7,314 criminal incidents and 8,559 related offenses as being motivated by bias (FBI 2020). The discrepancy is due to many factors: very few people actually report hate crimes for fear of retribution or based on the difficulties of enduring a criminal proceeding; also, law enforcement agencies must find clear proof that a particular crime was motivated by bias rather than other factors. (For example, an assailant who robs someone and uses a slur while committing that crime may not be deemed to be bias-motivated.) But both reports show a growth in hate crimes, with quantities increasing each year.

The majority of hate crimes are racially motivated, but many are based on religious (especially anti-Semitic) prejudice (FBI 2020). The murders of Brandon Teena in 1993 and Matthew Shepard in 1998 significantly increased awareness of hate crimes based on gender expression and sexual orientation; LGBTQ people remain a major target of hate crimes.

The motivation behind hate crimes can arise quickly, singling out specific groups who endure a rash of abuses in a short period of time. For example, beginning in 2020, people increasingly began committing violent crimes against people of Asian descent, with evidence that the attackers associated the victims with the coronavirus pandemic (Asian American Bar Association 2021).

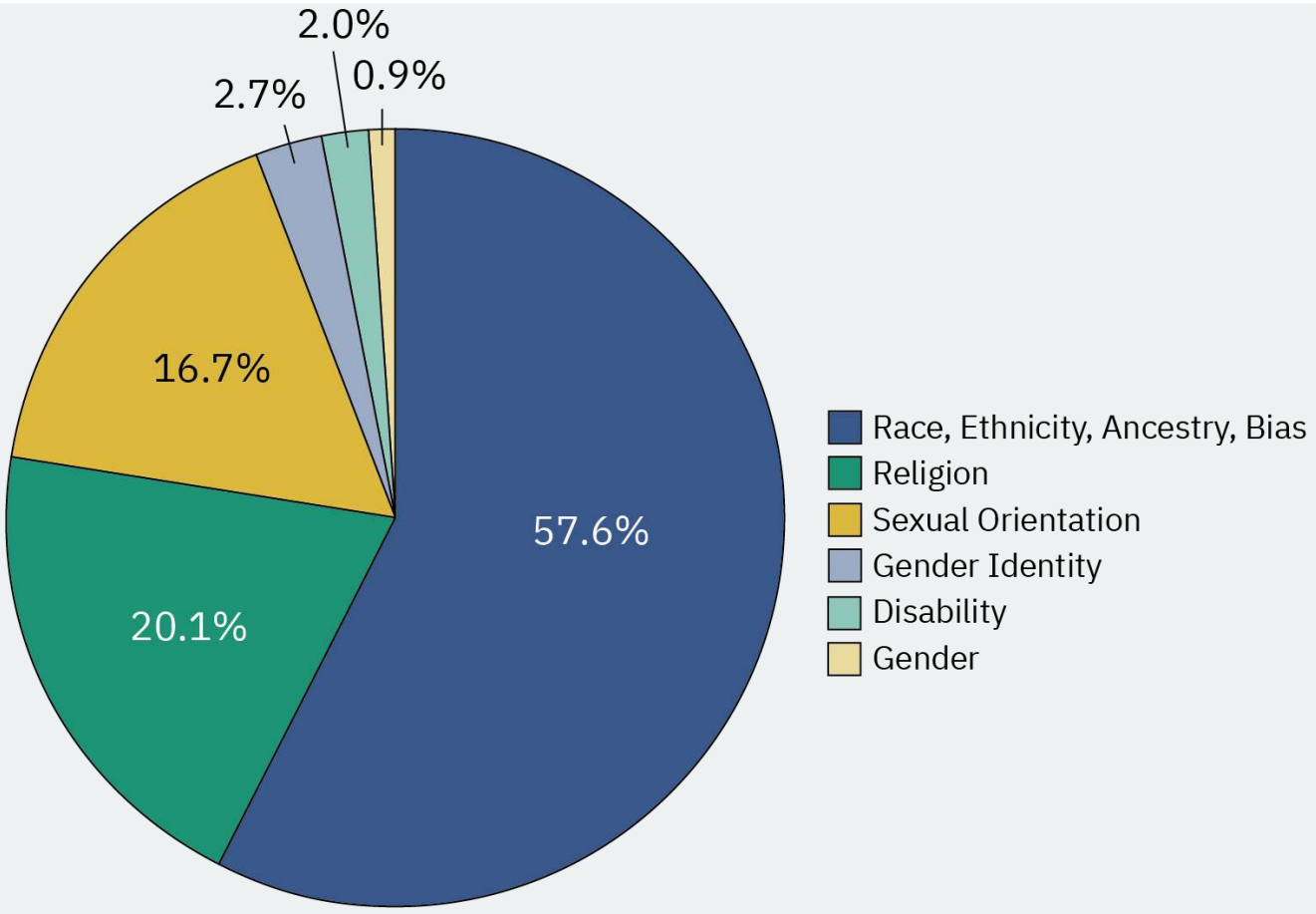


Figure 7.9: Bias Motivation Categories for Victims of Single-bias Incidents in 2019. The FBI Hate Crimes report identified 8,552 victims of hate crimes in 2019. This represents less than five percent of the number of people who claimed to be victims of hate crimes when surveyed. (Graph courtesy of FBI 2020)

Crime Statistics

The FBI gathers data from approximately 17,000 law enforcement agencies, and the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) is the annual publication of this data (FBI 2021). The UCR has comprehensive information from police reports but fails to account for the many crimes that go unreported, often due to victims' fear, shame, or distrust of the police. The quality of this data is also inconsistent because of differences in approaches to gathering victim data; important details are not always asked for or reported (Cantor and Lynch 2000). As of 2021, states will be required to provide data for the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), which captures more detailed information on each crime, including time of day, location, and other contexts. NIBRS is intended to provide more data-informed discussion to better improve crime prevention and policing (FBI 2021).

The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics publishes a separate self-report study known as the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). A self-report study is a collection of data gathered using voluntary response methods, such as questionnaires or telephone interviews. Self-report data are gathered each year, asking approximately 160,000 people in the United States about the frequency and types of crime they've experienced in their daily lives (BJS 2019). The NCVS reports a higher rate of crime than the UCR, likely picking up information on crimes that were experienced but never reported to the police. Age, race, gender, location, and income-level demographics are also analyzed.

The NCVS survey format allows people to more openly discuss their experiences and also provides a more-detailed examination of crimes, which may include information about consequences, relationship between victim and criminal, and substance abuse involved. One disadvantage is that the NCVS misses some groups of people, such as those who don't have telephones and those who move frequently. The quality of information may also be reduced by inaccurate victim recall of the crime (Cantor and Lynch 2000).

Public Perception of Crime

Neither the NCVR nor the UCR accounts for all crime in the United States, but general trends can be determined. Crime rates, particularly for violent and gun-related crimes, have been on the decline since peaking in the early 1990s (Cohn, Taylor, Lopez, Gallagher, Parker, and Maass 2013). However, the public believes crime rates are still high, or even worsening. Recent surveys (Saad 2011; Pew Research Center 2013, cited in Overburg and Hoyer 2013) have found U.S. adults believe crime is worse now than it was twenty years ago.

Inaccurate public perception of crime may be heightened by popular crime series such as Law & Order (Warr 2008) and by extensive and repeated media coverage of crime. Many researchers have found that people who closely follow media reports of crime are likely to estimate the crime rate as inaccurately high and more likely to feel fearful about the chances of experiencing crime (Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz 2000). Recent research has also found that people who reported watching news coverage of 9/11 or the Boston Marathon Bombing for more than an hour daily became more fearful of future terrorism (Holman, Garfin, and Silver 2014).

The U.S. Criminal Justice System

A criminal justice system is an organization that exists to enforce a legal code. There are three branches of the U.S. criminal justice system: the police, the courts, and the corrections system.

Police

Police are a civil force in charge of enforcing laws and public order at a federal, state, or community level. No unified national police force exists in the United States, although there are federal law enforcement officers. Federal officers operate under specific government agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI); the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Federal officers can only deal with matters that are explicitly within the power of the federal government, and their field of expertise is usually narrow. A county police officer may spend time responding to emergency calls, working at the local jail, or patrolling areas as needed, whereas a federal officer would be more likely to investigate suspects in firearms trafficking or provide security for government officials.

State police have the authority to enforce statewide laws, including regulating traffic on highways. Local or county police, on the other hand, have a limited jurisdiction with authority only in the town or county in which they serve.



Figure 7.10: Police use a range of tools and resources to protect the community and prevent crime. As a part of K9 units, dogs search for explosives or illegal substances on trains and at other public facilities. (Credit: MTA/flickr)

Courts

Once a crime has been committed and a violator has been identified by the police, the case goes to court. A court is a system that has the authority to make decisions based on law. The U.S. judicial system is divided into federal courts and state courts. As the name implies, federal courts (including the U.S. Supreme Court) deal with federal matters, including trade disputes, military justice, and government lawsuits. Judges who preside over federal courts are selected by the president with the consent of Congress.

State courts vary in their structure but generally include three levels: trial courts, appellate courts, and state supreme courts. In contrast to the large courtroom trials in TV shows, most noncriminal cases are decided by a judge without a jury present. Traffic court and small claims court are both types of trial courts that handle specific civil matters.

Criminal cases are heard by trial courts with general jurisdictions. Usually, a judge and jury are both present. It is the jury's responsibility to determine guilt and the judge's responsibility to determine the penalty, though in some states the jury may also decide the penalty. Unless a defendant is found "not guilty," any member of the prosecution or defense (whichever is the losing side) can appeal the case to a higher court. In some states, the case then goes to a special appellate court; in others it goes to the highest state court, often known as the state supreme court.



(a) (b)

Figure 7.11: This county courthouse in Kansas (left) is a typical setting for a state trial court. Compare this to the courtroom of the Michigan Supreme Court (right). (Credit: (a) Ammodramus/Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) Steve & Christine/Wikimedia Commons)

Corrections

The corrections system is charged with supervising individuals who have been arrested, convicted, and sentenced for a criminal offense, plus people detained while awaiting hearings, trials, or other procedures. At the end of 2018, approximately 2.3 million people were incarcerated in the United States (BJS 2020); these include people who are in state and federal prisons as well as those in local jails or related facilities, as explained below. Since many convicted people are placed on probation or parole, have their sentences deferred or otherwise altered, or are released under other circumstances, the total number of people within the corrections system is much higher. In 2018, the total number of people either incarcerated, detained, paroled, or on probation was 6,410,000 (BJS 2020).

The U.S. incarceration rate has grown considerably in the last hundred years, but has begun to decline in the past decade. The total correctional population (including parolees and those on probation), peaked in 2007 at 7.3 million, resulting in approximately 1 in 32 people being under some sort of correctional supervision. With the 2018 correction system number close to 6.4 million people, that ratio goes to 1 in every 40 people (BJS 2020). The declines are seen as a positive, but the United States holds the largest number of prisoners of any nation in the world.

Prison is different from jail. A jail provides temporary confinement, usually while an individual awaits trial or parole. Prisons are facilities built for individuals serving sentences of more than a year. Whereas jails are small and local, prisons are large and run by either the state or the federal government. While incarcerated, people have differing levels of freedom and opportunity for engagement. Some inmates have options to take classes, play organized sports, and otherwise enrich themselves, usually with the goal of improving their lives upon release. Other incarcerated people have very limited opportunities. Usually these distinctions are based on the severity of their crimes and their behavior once imprisoned, but available resources and funding can be a significant factor.

Parole refers to a temporary release from prison or jail that requires supervision and the consent of officials. Parole is different from probation, which is supervised time used as an alternative to prison. Probation and parole can both follow a period of incarceration in prison, especially if the prison sentence is shortened. Most people in these situations are supervised by correctional officers or other appropriate professionals, including mental health professionals; they may attend regular meetings or counseling sessions and may be required to report on their activities and travel. People on probation or parole often have strict guidelines; not only will they be returned to jail upon committing a crime, but they may also be prohibited from associating with known criminals or suspects. These strategies are designed to prevent people on parole or probation from returning to criminal engagements, and to increase the likelihood that they will remain positive members of the community through interactions with family, productive employment, and mental health treatment if needed.

Policing and Race

This chapter described just a few of the sociological theories regarding deviance and crime; there are many more, as well as many approaches for preventing crime and enforcing laws. Citizens, law enforcement, and elected officials weigh a wide array of contexts and personal experiences when considering the best way to address crime. In at least some cases, decision makers are motivated by a desire to protect the status quo or improve their political or financial position.

As discussed earlier, during the 1980s, crack cocaine was exploding in usage among lower income, Black, and Hispanic people. White middle class and upper economic class Americans became terrified of the potential for their family and children to be involved with drugs and drug-related crime. State governments passed increasingly harsh laws, resulting in stiffer penalties and the removal of judges' discretion in drug case sentencing. Among the most well known of these were "three strikes laws," which mandated long sentences for anyone convicted of multiple drug offenses, even if the offenses themselves were minor. Practices like civil forfeiture, in which law enforcement or municipalities could seize cash and property of suspected criminals even before they were convicted, provided a significant financial incentive to investigate drug crimes (Tiegen 2018).

The additional funding sources and high likelihood of successful prosecution drove police forces toward more aggressive and inequitable tactics. After training by the Drug Enforcement Agency, police forces around the country began racial profiling in a focused, consistent manner. Black and Hispanic people were many times more likely than White people to be pulled over for routine traffic stops. Local police forces focused on patrolling minority-inhabited neighborhoods, resulting in more arrests and prosecutions of Black and Hispanic people (Harris 2020).

No issue related to race and policing is of more concern than the shooting of unarmed Black people by police. The lack of punishment of police officers for committing these acts perpetuates the issue of unequal justice. Eric Garner was killed by an officer using a prohibited chokehold after Garner had allegedly committed a misdemeanor. Breonna Taylor was killed by police who violently infiltrated the wrong home. None of the officers involved in those deaths were prosecuted, though several were fired. The officer who killed George Floyd was immediately charged with the crime, and was eventually convicted, but some believe that to be the case due to the clear and horrific video of the event (Abdollah 2021).

Police advocates, elected officials, and ordinary citizens often express the importance of effective and just law enforcement. When "Defund The Police" became a widespread position during 2020, many Black people spoke out against it; polling revealed that a majority of Black people did not support the idea, and over 80 percent of Black people preferred having the police spend the same or more time in their communities (Saad 2020). While this frequently cited result is relatively consistent across different polls, it also reveals divisions within the Black community, often based on age or other factors. The same polls find that many Black people still distrust the police or feel less secure when they see them (Yahoo/Yougov 2020).

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7.5: Key Terms

conflict theory | a theory that examines social and economic factors as the causes of criminal deviance

control theory | a theory that states social control is directly affected by the strength of social bonds and that deviance results from a feeling of disconnection from society

corporate crime | crime committed by white-collar workers in a business environment

corrections system | the system tasked with supervising individuals who have been arrested for, convicted of, or sentenced for criminal offenses

court | a system that has the authority to make decisions based on law

crime | a behavior that violates official law and is punishable through formal sanctions

criminal justice system | an organization that exists to enforce a legal code

cultural deviance theory | a theory that suggests conformity to the prevailing cultural norms of lower-class society causes crime

deviance | a violation of contextual, cultural, or social norms

differential association theory | a theory that states individuals learn deviant behavior from those close to them who provide models of and opportunities for deviance

formal sanctions | sanctions that are officially recognized and enforced

hate crimes | attacks based on a person's race, religion, or other characteristics

informal sanctions | sanctions that occur in face-to-face interactions

labeling theory | the ascribing of a deviant behavior to another person by members of society

legal codes | codes that maintain formal social control through laws

master status | a label that describes the chief characteristic of an individual

negative sanctions | punishments for violating norms

nonviolent crimes | crimes that involve the destruction or theft of property, but do not use force or the threat of force

police | a civil force in charge of regulating laws and public order at a federal, state, or community level

positive sanctions | rewards given for conforming to norms

power elite | a small group of wealthy and influential people at the top of society who hold the power and resources

primary deviance | a violation of norms that does not result in any long-term effects on the individual's self-image or interactions with others

sanctions | the means of enforcing rules

secondary deviance | deviance that occurs when a person's self-concept and behavior begin to change after his or her actions are labeled as deviant by members of society

self-report study | a collection of data acquired using voluntary response methods, such as questionnaires or telephone interviews

social control | the regulation and enforcement of norms

social disorganization theory | a theory that asserts crime occurs in communities with weak social ties and the absence of social control

social order | an arrangement of practices and behaviors on which society's members base their daily lives

strain theory | a theory that addresses the relationship between having socially acceptable goals and having socially acceptable means to reach those goals

street crime | crime committed by average people against other people or organizations, usually in public spaces

victimless crime | activities against the law, but that do not result in injury to any individual other than the person who engages in them

violent crimes | crimes based on the use of force or the threat of force

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7.6: Section Summary

7.1 Deviance and Control

Deviance is a violation of norms. Whether or not something is deviant depends on contextual definitions, the situation, and people's response to the behavior. Society seeks to limit deviance through the use of sanctions that help maintain a system of social control. Deviance is often relative, and perceptions of it can change quickly and unexpectedly.

7.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime

The three major sociological paradigms offer different explanations for the motivation behind deviance and crime. Functionalists point out that deviance is a social necessity since it reinforces norms by reminding people of the consequences of violating them. Violating norms can open society's eyes to injustice in the system. Conflict theorists argue that crime stems from a system of inequality that keeps those with power at the top and those without power at the bottom. Symbolic interactionists focus attention on the socially constructed nature of the labels related to deviance. Crime and deviance are learned from the environment and enforced or discouraged by those around us.

7.3 Crime and the Law

Crime is established by legal codes and upheld by the criminal justice system. In the United States, there are three branches of the justice system: police, courts, and corrections. Although crime rates and incarceration increased throughout most of the twentieth century, they are now dropping. Despite these developments, inequitable law enformcenent is a destructive reality in American communities, and efforts are underway to improve outcomes.

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7.8: Crash Course Video (Deviance)

Deviance: Crash Course Sociology #18



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Groups and Organizations

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8.4: Formal Organizations
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8.1: Introduction

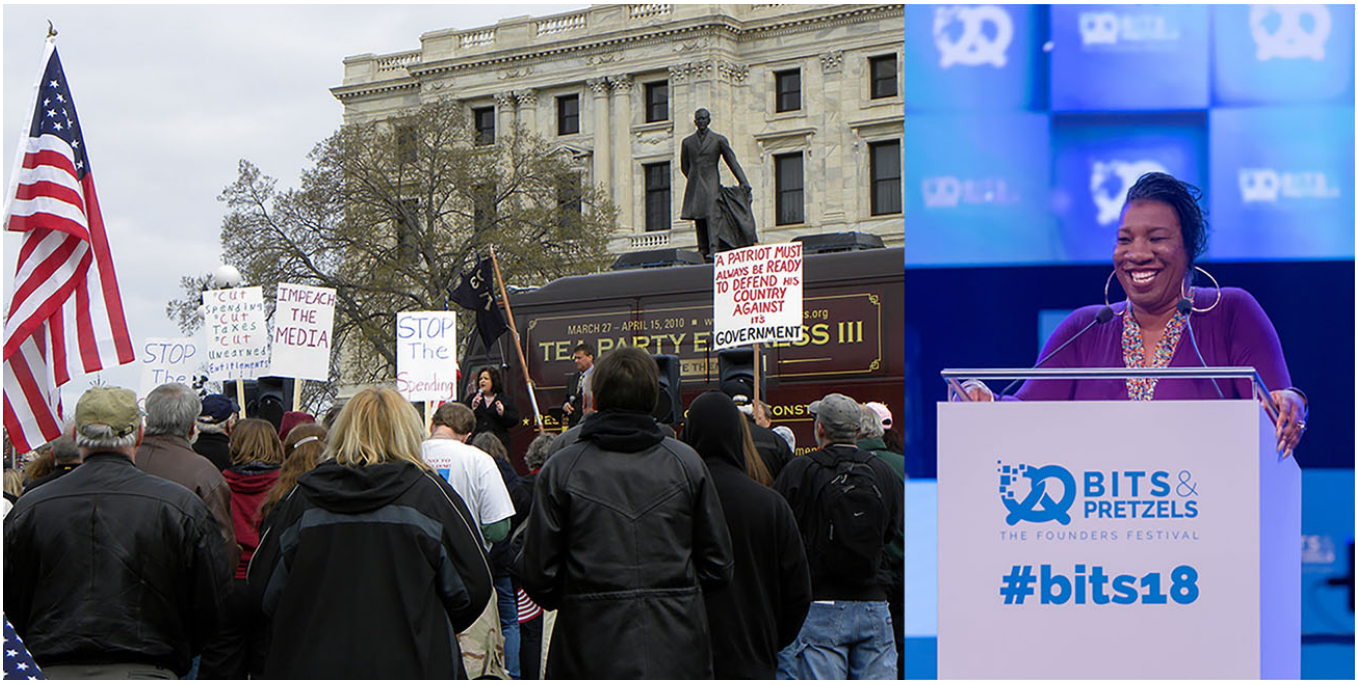


Figure 6.1: The national tour of the Tea Party Express visited Minnesota and held a rally outside the state capitol building. Tarana Burke, who originated the term “me too” in the context of supporting or acknowledging sexual harassment or assault victims, has spoken frequently on the evolution and issues regarding the MeToo movement. (Credit: a. Fibonacci Blue/flickr; b Marco Verch)

Chapter Outline

6.1 Types of Groups
6.2 Group Size and Structure
6.3 Formal Organizations

Throughout the history of the United States, individuals have formed groups in order to achieve goals and bring about change. Some groups are loosely defined, while others have highly organized structure and mission. And in some cases, groups can have significant influence on culture, society, the economy, and government.

In 2009, people protesting government spending held a series of “tea parties,” referencing the Boston Tea Party, an anti-taxation event that led up to the Revolutionary War. Tea Party activists also opposed big government, high taxes, and political corruption and supported gun rights and traditional family values. They called for “awareness to any issue which challenges the security, sovereignty, or domestic tranquility of our beloved nation, the United States of America” (Tea Party, Inc. 2021). The movement grew into a major political force, with chapters popping up in nearly every community across the country.

By 2010, Tea Party candidates had won seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, demonstrating the political power of the group and its message. As grassroots activism faded, the Tea Party gained influence within the Republican Party. Many of its ideas have been assimilated into the mainstream conservative movement and Republican Party platform.

In 2016, highly successful Fox News host Gretchen Carlson filed a lawsuit against Fox chairman, Roger Ailes, for sexual harassment. The suit led other women to come forward with similar allegations against Ailes and others in the entertainment industry. Soon after, actress Alyssa Milano posted this statement on Twitter: “If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too’ as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.” The phrase, “Me Too” had been first used in this context in 2006 by activist Tarana Burke, in an effort to empower women of color. Within a day of Milano’s post, the “Me Too” phrase or hashtag was used over 500,000 times on Twitter, and was used in over 12 million posts by 4.7 million people on Facebook. Thousands of people, including other celebrities, shared their own stories of sexual harassment, abuse, or assault. (MeTooMvmt.org, 2020) The “MeToo” movement became the lead story on many newscasts and talk shows. Over the months that followed, the movement sparked reforms within companies and governments to combat sexual harassment and better support women. The movement inspired abuse victims to come forward and led to the sanction or removal of prominent individuals accused of serial harassment or abuse in academia, media, government, and other industries.

The Tea Party evolved into an organization. From a loosely associated set of local chapters, it developed into several closely affiliated nonprofits (filed with the IRS), a political faction within the Republican Party, and a caucus within Congress. What about the MeToo movement? Burke started it in 2006 and was working to enact change long before the hashtag sparked more awareness and new policies. The MeToo has brought together people to work in groups, but it has yet to form into a permanent MeToo organization.

As enduring social units, groups help foster shared value systems and are key to the structure of society as we know it. There are three primary sociological perspectives for studying groups: Functionalist, Conflict, and Interactionist. We can look at the Tea Party and the MeToo movements through the lenses of these methods to better understand the roles and challenges that they offer.

The Functionalist perspective is a big-picture, macro-level view that looks at how different aspects of society are intertwined. This perspective is based on the idea that society is a well-balanced system with all parts necessary to the whole, and it studies the roles these parts play in relation to the whole. A Functionalist might look at the macro-level needs that each movement serves. For example, a Structural Functionalist might ask how the Tea Party arose to voice the concerns of a large sector of society that felt politically underrepresented, or how MeToo drove people to pay attention to sexual harassment and gender inequality. This approach might look at how each group enabled the voicing of discontent and so stabilized society.

The Conflict perspective is another macroanalytical view, one that focuses on the genesis and growth of inequality. A conflict theorist studying the Tea Party Movement might look at how it checked interests that have manipulated the political system over the last 30 years. Or this perspective might explore how MeToo challenged organizations that have allowed sexual harassment to persist in order to protect those in power.

A third perspective is the Symbolic Interaction or Interactionist perspective. This method of analyzing groups takes a micro-level view. Instead of studying the big picture, these researchers look at the day-to-day interactions of groups. Studying these details, the Interactionist looks at issues like leadership style and group dynamics. In the case of the Tea Party Movement, Interactionists might ask, “How does the Tea Party dynamic in New York differ from that in Atlanta?” Or, in the case of the MeToo, researchers may seek to learn about who defines the agenda and approach within the movement.

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8.2: Types of Groups

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between primary and secondary groups.
- Recognize in-groups and out-groups as subtypes of primary and secondary groups
- Define reference groups

Most of us feel comfortable using the word "group" without giving it much thought. Often, we mean different things when using that word. We might say that a group of kids all saw the dog, and it could mean 250 students in a lecture hall or four siblings playing on a front lawn. In everyday use, it can be a generic term, although it carries important clinical and scientific meanings. Moreover, the concept of a group is central to much of how we think about society and human interaction. So how can we hone the meaning more precisely for sociological purposes?

Defining a Group

The term group is an amorphous one and can refer to a wide variety of gatherings, from just two people (think about a "group project" in school when you partner with another student), a club, a regular gathering of friends, or people who work together or share a hobby. In short, the term refers to any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share a sense that their identity is somehow aligned with the group. Of course, every time people are gathered, it is not necessarily a group. A rally is usually a one-time event, for instance, and belonging to a political party doesn't imply interaction with others. People who happen to be in the same place at the same time but who do not interact or share a sense of identity—such as a bunch of people standing in line at Starbucks—are considered an aggregate, or a crowd.

Another example of a nongroup is people who share similar characteristics but are not tied to one another in any way. These people are considered a category, and as an example all children born from approximately 1980–2000 are referred to as "Millennials." Why are Millennials a category and not a group? Because while some of them may share a sense of identity, they do not, as a whole, interact frequently with each other.

Interestingly, people within an aggregate or category can become a group. During disasters, people in a neighborhood (an aggregate) who did not know each other might become friendly and depend on each other at the local shelter. After the disaster when people go back to simply living near each other, the feeling of cohesiveness may last since they have all shared an experience. They might remain a group, practicing emergency readiness, coordinating supplies for next time, or taking turns caring for neighbors who need extra help.

Similarly, there may be many groups within a single category. Consider teachers, for example. Within this category, groups may exist like teachers' unions, teachers who coach, or staff members who are involved with the PTA.

Types of Groups

Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) suggested that groups can broadly be divided into two categories: primary groups and secondary groups (Cooley 1909). According to Cooley, primary groups play the most critical role in our lives. The primary group is usually fairly small and is made up of individuals who generally engage face-to-face in long-term emotional ways. This group serves emotional needs: expressive functions rather than pragmatic ones. The primary group is usually made up of significant others, those individuals who have the most impact on our socialization. The best example of a primary group is the family.

Secondary groups are often larger and impersonal. They may also be task-focused and time-limited. These groups serve an instrumental function rather than an expressive one, meaning that their role is more goal- or task-oriented than emotional. A classroom or office can be an example of a secondary group.

Neither primary nor secondary groups are bound by strict definitions or set limits. In fact, people can move from one group to another. A group of coworkers, for example, can start as a secondary group, but as the employees work together over the years, they may find common interests and strong ties that transform them into a primary group. As we will discuss in the chapter on Media and Technology, even online networks of people with common interests can sometimes move from secondary to primary group status.

Sociology in the Real World: Best Friends She's Never Met

Writer Allison Levy worked alone. While she liked the freedom and flexibility of working from home, she sometimes missed having a community of coworkers, both for the practical purpose of brainstorming and socializing. Levy did what many do in the Internet age: she found a group of other writers online through a web forum. Over time, a group of approximately twenty writers, who all wrote for a similar audience, broke off from the larger group and started a private invitation-only forum. While writers in general represent all genders, ages, and interests, this group ended up being a collection of twenty- and thirty-something women who all wrote fiction for children and young adults.

At first, the writers' forum was clearly a secondary group united by the members' professions and work situations. As Levy explained, "On the Internet, you can be present or absent as often as you want. No one is expecting you to show up." It was a useful place to research information about publishers, recently-published books and authors, and industry trends. But as time passed, Levy found it served a different purpose. Since the group shared other characteristics beyond their writing (such as age and gender), their conversation naturally turned to matters such as child-rearing, aging parents, health, and exercise. Levy found it was a sympathetic place to talk about any number of subjects, not just writing. Further, when people didn't post for several days, others expressed concern, asking whether anyone had heard from the missing writers. It reached a point where most members would tell the group if they were traveling or needed to be offline for awhile.

The group continued to share. One member on the site who was going through a difficult family illness wrote, "I don't know where I'd be without you women. It is so great to have a place to vent that I know isn't hurting anyone." Others shared similar sentiments.

So is this a primary group? Most of these people have never met each other. They live in Hawaii, Australia, Minnesota, and across the world. They may never meet. Levy wrote recently to the group, saying, "Most of my 'real-life' friends and even my husband don't really get the writing thing. I don't know what I'd do without you." Despite the distance and the lack of physical contact, the group clearly fills an expressive need.



Figure 6.2: Engineering and construction students gather around a job site. How do your academic interests define your in- and out-groups? (Credit: USACEpublicaffairs/flickr)

In-Groups and Out-Groups

One of the ways that groups can be powerful is through inclusion, and its inverse, exclusion. The feeling that we belong in an elite or select group is a heady one, while the feeling of not being allowed in, or of being in competition with a group, can be motivating in a different way. Sociologist William Sumner (1840–1910) developed the concepts of in-group and out-group to explain this phenomenon (Sumner 1906). In short, an in-group is the group that an individual feels she belongs to, and she believes it to be an integral part of who she is. An out-group, conversely, is a group someone doesn't belong to; often we may feel disdain or competition in relationship to an out-group. Sports teams, unions, and sororities are examples of in-groups and out-groups. Primary groups consist of both in-groups and out-groups, as do secondary groups.

While group affiliations can be neutral or positive, the concept of in-groups and out-groups can also explain some negative human behavior, such as white supremacist movements. By defining others as "not like us" and inferior, in-groups can end up practicing ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, ageism, and heterosexism—manners of judging others negatively based on their culture, race, sex, age, or sexuality.

Often, in-groups can form within a secondary group. For instance, a workplace can have cliques of people, from senior executives who play golf together, to engineers who write code together, to young singles who socialize after hours. While these in-groups might show favoritism and affinity for other in-group members, the overall organization may be unable or unwilling to acknowledge it. Therefore, it pays to be wary of the politics of in-groups, since members may exclude others as a form of gaining status within the group.

Big Picture: Bullying and Cyberbullying: How Technology Has Changed the Game

Most of us know that the old rhyme "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" is inaccurate. Words can hurt, and never is that more apparent than in instances of bullying. Bullying often reaches extreme levels of cruelty in children and young adults. People at these stages of life are especially vulnerable to opinions of others and deeply invested in their peer groups. Today, cyberbullying is on the rise. Cyberbullying can involve sending threatening texts, harassing someone in a public forum (such as social media), hacking someone's account and pretending to be them, posting embarrassing images online, and so on. A study by the Cyberbullying Research Center found that 28 percent of teens have been a victim of cyberbullying (Hinduja and Patchin, 2019). Severe bullying can lead to suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts (John, 2018). Researchers noted that students who experienced in-person and online bullying were eleven times more likely to attempt suicide (Hinduja, 2018). Whereas bullying face-to-face requires willingness to interact with your victim, cyberbullying allows bullies to harass others from the privacy of their homes without witnessing the damage firsthand. This form of bullying is particularly dangerous because it's widely accessible and therefore easier to carry out. Cyberbullying can create a feeling of powerlessness and inescapability because victimization is not constrained to physical locations. Many victims report being harassed across multiple platforms or formats at the same time.

Cyberbullying first made international headlines in 2010 when a fifteen-year-old girl, Phoebe Prince, in South Hadley, Massachusetts, died by suicide after being relentlessly bullied by girls at her school. In the aftermath of her death, the bullies were prosecuted and the state passed anti-bullying legislation. This marked a significant change in how bullying, including cyberbullying, is viewed in the United States. Now there are numerous resources for schools, families, and communities to provide education and prevention on this issue. Social media platforms and their parent companies are also taking steps (often under pressure from communities) to improve cyberbullying detection and reporting capabilities.

According to a report released in 2013 by the National Center for Educational Statistics, close to 1 in every 3 (27.8 percent) students report being bullied by their school peers. Seventeen percent of students reported being the victims of cyberbullying. Overall, LGBTQ youth are targeted at a higher rate than other youth, and members of minority populations overall are more likely to be cyberbullying victims (Hinjuda & Patchin, 2020). Finally, adults (particularly college students) are also frequent cyberbullying victims and perpetrators.

Reference Groups



Figure 6.3: Athletes are often viewed as a reference group for young people. (Credit: nonorganical/ flickr)

A reference group is a group that people compare themselves to—it provides a standard of measurement. In U.S. society, peer groups are common reference groups. Kids and adults pay attention to what their peers wear, what music they like, what they do with their free time—and they compare themselves to what they see. Most people have more than one reference group, so a middle school boy might look not just at his classmates but also at his older brother's friends and see a different set of norms. And he might observe the behaviors of his favorite athletes for yet another point of reference.

Some other examples of reference groups can be one's cultural center, workplace, family gathering, and even parents. Often, reference groups convey competing messages. For instance, on television and in movies, young adults often have wonderful apartments and cars and lively social lives despite not holding a job. In music videos, young women might dance and sing in a sexually aggressive way that suggests experience beyond their years. At all ages, we use reference groups to help guide our behavior and establish our social norms. So how important is it to surround yourself with positive reference groups? You may not recognize a reference group, but it still influences the way you act. Identifying your reference groups can help you understand the source of the social identities you aspire to or want to distance yourself from.

Sociology in the Real World: College: A World of In-Groups, Out-Groups, and Reference Groups



Figure 6.4: Which fraternity or sorority would you fit into, if any? Sorority recruitment day offers students an opportunity to learn about these different groups. (Credit: Texas A&M/flickr)

For a student entering college, the sociological study of groups takes on an immediate and practical meaning. After all, when we arrive someplace new, most of us glance around to see how well we fit in or stand out in the ways we want. This is a natural response to a reference group, and on a large campus, there can be many competing groups. Say you are a strong athlete who wants to play intramural sports, and your favorite musicians are a local punk band. You may find yourself engaged with two very different reference groups.

These reference groups can also become your in-groups or out-groups. For instance, different groups on campus might solicit you to join. Are there fraternities and sororities at your school? If so, chances are they will try to convince students—that is, students they deem worthy—to join them. And if you love playing soccer and want to play on a campus team, but you're wearing shredded jeans, combat boots, and a local band T-shirt, you might have a hard time convincing the soccer team to give you a chance. While most campus groups refrain from insulting competing groups, there is a definite sense of an in-group versus an out-group. "Them?" a member might say. "They're all right, but their parties are nowhere near as cool as ours." Or, "Only serious engineering geeks join that group." This immediate categorization into in-groups and out-groups means that students must choose carefully, since whatever group they associate with might define their friends for several years to come.

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8.3: Group Size and Structure

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the ways that size influences group dynamics
- Differentiate among styles of leadership
- Interpret the impact of groups on individual behavior



Figure 6.5: Cadets illustrate how strongly conformity can define groups. (Credit: West Point — The U.S. Military Academy/flickr)

Dyads, Triads, and Large Groups

A small group is typically one where the collection of people is small enough that all members of the group know each other and share simultaneous interaction, such as a nuclear family, a dyad, or a triad. Georg Simmel (1858–1915) wrote extensively about the difference between a dyad, or two-member group, and a triad, which is a three-member group (Simmel 1902). In the former, if one person withdraws, the group can no longer exist. We can think of a divorce, which effectively ends the "group" of the married couple or of two best friends never speaking again. In a triad, however, the dynamic is quite different. If one person withdraws, the group lives on. A triad has a different set of relationships. If there are three in the group, two-against-one dynamics can develop, and a majority opinion may form on any issue.

Small groups generally have strong internal cohesiveness and a sense of connection. Small groups may face challenges when trying to achieve large goals. They can struggle to be heard or to be a force for change if they are pushing against larger groups.

It is difficult to define exactly when a small group becomes a large group. Perhaps it occurs when one group grows so large that there are too many people to join in a simultaneous discussion. Sometimes it occurs when a group joins with other groups as part of a movement. These larger groups may share a geographic space, such as a fraternity or sorority on the same campus, or they might be spread out around the globe. The larger the group, the more attention it can garner, and the more pressure members can put toward whatever goal they wish to achieve. At the same time, the larger the group becomes, the more the risk grows for division and lack of cohesion.

Group Leadership

Often, larger groups require some kind of leadership. In small, primary groups, leadership tends to be informal. After all, most families don't take a vote on who will rule the group, nor do most groups of friends. This is not to say that *de facto* leaders don't emerge, but formal leadership is rare. In secondary groups, leadership is usually more overt. They often outline roles and responsibilities, with a chain of command to follow. Some secondary groups, like the military, have highly structured and clearly understood chains of command, and sometimes lives depend on those. After all, how well could soldiers function in a battle if different people were calling out orders and if they had no idea whom to listen to? Other secondary groups, like a workplace or a classroom, also have formal leaders, but the styles and functions of leadership can vary significantly.

Leadership function refers to the main goal of the leader, which may be instrumental or expressive. An instrumental leader is one who is goal-oriented and largely concerned with accomplishing set tasks. We can imagine that an army general or a Fortune 500 CEO would be an instrumental leader. In contrast, expressive leaders are more concerned with promoting emotional strength and health, and ensuring that people feel supported. Social and religious leaders—rabbis, priests, imams, directors of youth homes and social service programs—are often perceived as expressive leaders. Sometimes people expect men to take on instrumental roles and women to assume expressive roles. Women and men who exhibit the other-gender manner can be seen as deviants and can encounter resistance. Yet, both men and women prefer leaders who use a combination of expressive and instrumental leadership (Boatwright and Forrest, 2000).

Sociologists recognize three leadership styles. Democratic leaders encourage group participation in all decision making. They work hard to build consensus before choosing a course of action and moving forward. This type of leader is particularly common, for example, in a club where the members vote on which activities or projects to pursue. Democratic leaders can be well liked, but there is often a danger that decisions will proceed slowly since consensus building is time-consuming. A further risk is that group members might pick sides and entrench themselves into opposing factions rather than reaching a solution.

In contrast, a laissez-faire (French for "leave it alone") leader is hands-off, allowing group members to self-manage and make their own decisions. An example of this kind of leader might be an art teacher who opens the art cupboard, leaves materials on the shelves, and tells students to help themselves and make some art. While this style can work well with highly motivated and mature participants who have clear goals and guidelines, it risks group dissolution and a lack of progress.

Finally, authoritarian leaders issue orders and assign tasks with little to no feedback from group members. These leaders are often instrumental leaders with a strong focus on meeting goals. Often, entrepreneurs fall into this mold, like Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. Not surprisingly, authoritarian leaders risk alienating the workers. When decisions need to made quickly or informed by a high level of expertise, however, this style of leadership can be required.

In different circumstances, each of these leadership styles can be effective and successful. Consider what leadership style you prefer. Why? Do you like the same style in different areas of your life, such as a classroom, a workplace, and a sports team?

Big Picture: Women Political Candidates



Figure 6.6: Kamala Harris, like many other women leaders, faces unique and sometimes conflicting expectations. She may want to lead, but some care more about whether she is liked. (Credit: California National Guard/flickr)

Kamala Harris broke a significant barrier when she became the first woman and first person of Black and South Asian descent to be elected vice president of the United States. A prominent presidential candidate in her own right during the 2020 primary election, Harris was asked by then-candidate Joe Biden to be his running mate in order to secure his electoral victory.

You may be surprised, however, to learn that more than ten other women were on the ballot for president or vice president on November 3, 2020. Many were not on the ballot in every state, and at least one (Ricki Sue King) actually encouraged people not to vote for her. Shirley Chisholm, Lenora Fulani, Jill Stein, Hillary Clinton and many other women have been candidates, but the United States has yet to elect a woman to the presidency.

Researchers and political analysts have long established that gender plays a significant role in how political leaders (both candidates and elected officials) are perceived. As a starting point, research indicates that, even among women, the public prefer masculine qualities in presidents. For example, a study in which subjects completed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory and Implicit Leadership Inventory found that the hypothetical "Ideal" president possessed more masculine qualities than feminine qualities (Powell and Butterfield 2011).

Beyond the implicit preference toward masculine qualities, women candidates face what is sometimes referred to the "likability trap." Essentially, the public expects and prefers certain qualities from its leaders, and also expects and prefers certain qualities based on the candidates' gender. For women presidential candidates, these expectations often conflict. For example, when a male candidate ranks low on feminine qualities, their likeability is not significantly affected. But when a female candidate, like Hillary Clinton, ranks low on feminine qualities, their likability is significantly impacted. Interestingly, the same survey found that Kamala Harris had a much more balanced gender quality rating than Clinton did. The researchers qualified that since Kamala Harris ran for vice president, rather than president, the ratings cannot be directly compared to Clinton's. This difference, though, may indicate why many women are elected to legislative and gubernatorial roles, but not to the presidency (Conroy, Martin, and Nadler, 2020).

These same perceptions present themselves in the workplace. Prescriptive stereotypes—that is, ideas about how men or women should behave—limit women's advancement to leadership positions. Men are often appreciated for being ambitious, while women who exhibit assertive behavior are generally perceived as selfish or overly competitive (Baldoni, 2020). Furthermore, when men help out in the workplace, their contribution is appreciated while the same task carried out by women goes

unacknowledged. Scholars observe that women are underrepresented in the top levels of U.S. businesses and Fortune 500 companies (Heilman 2012).



Figure 6.7: This gag gift demonstrates how female leaders may be viewed if they violate social norms. (Credit: istolethetv/flickr)

Conformity

We all like to fit in to some degree. Likewise, if we want to stand out, then we want to choose how we stand out and for what reasons. For example, a person who loves cutting-edge fashion might dress in thought-provoking new styles to set a new trend.

Conformity is the extent to which an individual complies with group norms or expectations. As you might recall, we use reference groups to assess and understand how to act, to dress, and to behave. Not surprisingly, young people are particularly aware of who conforms and who does not. A high school boy whose mother makes him wear ironed button-down shirts might protest that everyone else wears T-shirts and he will look stupid. Another high school boy might like wearing those shirts as a way of standing out. How much do you enjoy being noticed? Do you consciously prefer to conform to group norms so as not to be singled out? Are there people in your class who immediately come to mind when you think about those who don't want to conform?

Psychologist Solomon Asch (1907–1996) conducted experiments that illustrated how great the pressure to conform is, specifically within a small group (1956). Read about his work in the Sociological Research feature and consider what you would do in Asch's

experiment. Would you speak up? What would help you speak up and what would discourage it?

Sociological Research: Conforming to Expectations

In 1951, psychologist Solomon Asch sat a small group of about eight people around a table. Only one of the people sitting there was the true subject; the rest were associates of the experimenter. However, the subject was led to believe that the others were all, like him, people brought in for an experiment in visual judgments. The group was shown two cards, the first card with a single vertical line, and the second card with three vertical lines differing in length. The experimenter polled the group and asked each participant one at a time which line on the second card matched up with the line on the first card.

However, this was not really a test of visual judgment. Rather, it was Asch's study on the pressures of conformity. He was curious to see what the effect of multiple wrong answers would be on the subject, who presumably was able to tell which lines matched. In order to test this, Asch had each planted respondent answer in a specific way. The subject was seated in such a way that he had to hear almost everyone else's answers before it was his turn. Sometimes the nonsubject members would unanimously choose an answer that was clearly wrong.

So what was the conclusion? Asch found that thirty-seven out of fifty test subjects responded with an "obviously erroneous" answer at least once. When faced by a unanimous wrong answer from the rest of the group, the subject conformed to a mean of four of the staged answers. Asch revised the study and repeated it, wherein the subject still heard the staged wrong answers, but was allowed to write down his answer rather than speak it aloud. In this version, the number of examples of conformity—giving an incorrect answer so as not to contradict the group—fell by two thirds. He also found that group size had an impact on how much pressure the subject felt to conform.

The results showed that speaking up when only one other person gave an erroneous answer was far more common than when five or six people defended the incorrect position. Finally, Asch discovered that people were far more likely to give the correct answer in the face of near-unanimous consent if they had a single ally. If even one person in the group also dissented, the subject conformed only a quarter as often. Clearly, it was easier to be a minority of two than a minority of one.

Asch concluded that there are two main causes for conformity: people want to be liked by the group or they believe the group is better informed than they are. He found his study results disturbing. To him, they revealed that intelligent, well-educated people would, with very little coaxing, go along with an untruth. He believed this result highlighted real problems with the education system and values in our society (Asch 1956).

Stanley Milgram, a Yale psychologist, had similar results in his experiment that is now known simply as the Milgram Experiment. In 1962, Milgram found that research subjects were overwhelmingly willing to perform acts that directly conflicted with their consciences when directed by a person of authority. In the experiment, subjects were willing to administer painful, even supposedly deadly, shocks to others who answered questions incorrectly.

To learn more about similar research, visit http://www.prisonexp.org/

The Bystander Effect and Diffusion of Responsibility

Social psychologists have recognized that other people's presence influences our behavior, whether we are aware of it or not. One example is the bystander effect, a situation in which people are less likely to interfere during an emergency or when a social norm is being violated if there are others around. They feel less responsible because of the presence of other bystanders (Beyer et al., 2017). This is known as diffusion of responsibility.

Most of the time people report that they don't want to get involved and that's why they don't respond when they see something wrong. They assume someone else will step up and help. Researchers have found that people are less likely to help if they don't know the victim (Cherry 2020).

Think about it this way, you're walking to class and there are several students around. Someone falls on the ground having a seizure. What would you do? The bystander effect suggests that unless you know the person who has fallen, you are more likely to walk away than help. However, social psychologists believe that you are much more likely to help, or at least stop and check, if you are the only one around.

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8.4: Formal Organizations

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Distinguish the types of formal organizations
- Recognize the characteristics of bureaucracies
- Identify the impact of the McDonaldization of society

A complaint of modern life is that society is dominated by large and impersonal secondary organizations. From schools to businesses to healthcare to government, these organizations, referred to as formal organizations, are highly bureaucratized. Indeed, all formal organizations are, or likely will become, bureaucracies. We will discuss the purpose of formal organizations and the structure of their bureaucracies.

Types of Formal Organizations



(a) (b)

Figure 6.8: Girl Scout troops and correctional facilities are both formal organizations. (Credit: (a) moonlightbulb/flickr; (b) CxOxS/flickr)

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1975) posited that formal organizations fall into three categories. Normative organizations, also called voluntary organizations, are based on shared interests. As the name suggests, joining them is voluntary. People find membership rewarding in an intangible way. They receive non-material benefits. The Audubon Society and a ski club are examples of normative organizations.

Coercive organizations are groups that we must be coerced, or pushed, to join. These may include prison or a rehabilitation center. Symbolic interactionist Erving Goffman states that most coercive organizations are total institutions (1961). A total institution is one in which inmates or military soldiers live a controlled lifestyle and in which total resocialization takes place.

The third type is utilitarian organizations, which, as the name suggests, are joined because of the need for a specific material reward. High school and the workplace fall into this category—one joined in pursuit of a diploma, the other in order to make money.

Table 6.1 Table of Formal Organizations: This table shows Etzioni's three types of formal organizations. (Credit: Etzioni 1975)

	Normative or Voluntary	Coercive	Utilitarian
Benefit of Membership	Intangible benefit	Corrective benefit	Tangible benefit
Type of Membership	Volunteer basis	Required	Contractual basis
Feeling of Connectedness	Shared affinity	No affinity	Some affinity

The Structure of Bureaucracies

Bureaucracies are an ideal type of formal organization. By ideal, sociologists don't mean "best." Rather, bureaucracies have a collection of characteristics that most of them exhibit. Pioneer sociologist Max Weber characterized a bureaucracy as having a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonality (1922). People often complain about bureaucracies—declaring them slow, rule-bound, difficult to navigate, and unfriendly. Let's take a look at terms that define a bureaucracy to understand what they mean.

Hierarchy of authority refers to the chain of command that places one individual or office in charge of another, who in turn must answer to her own superiors. For example, as an employee at Walmart, your shift manager assigns you tasks. Your shift manager answers to his store manager, who must answer to her regional manager, and so on, up to the CEO who must answer to the board members, who in turn answer to the stockholders. Everyone in this bureaucracy follows the chain of command.

Bureaucracies have a clear division of labor: each individual has a specialized task to perform. For example, at a university, psychology professors teach psychology, but they do not attempt to provide students with financial aid forms. The Office of Admissions often takes on this task. In this case, it is a clear and commonsense division. But what about in a restaurant where food is backed up in the kitchen and a hostess is standing nearby texting on her phone? Her job is to seat customers, not to deliver food. Is this a smart division of labor?

Bureaucracies have explicit rules, rules that are outlined, written down, and standardized. For example, at your college or university, the student guidelines are contained within the Student Handbook. As technology changes and campuses encounter new concerns like cyberbullying, identity theft, and other problems that arise, organizations scramble to ensure their explicit rules cover these emerging issues.

Finally, bureaucracies are also characterized by impersonality, which takes personal feelings out of professional situations. This characteristic grew, to some extent, out of a desire to avoid nepotism, backroom deals, and other types of favoritism, while simultaneously protecting customers and others served by the organization. Impersonality Bureaucracies can effectively and efficiently serve volumes of customers quickly. However, explicit rules, clear division of labor, and a strict hierarchy of authority does not allow them to easily adjust to unique or new situations. As a result, customers frequently complain that stores with bureaucratic structures, like Walmart, care little about individuals, other businesses, and the community at large.

Bureaucracies are often meritocracies, meaning that hiring and promotion is based on proven and documented skills, rather than on nepotism or random choice. In order to get into a prestigious college, you need to perform well on the SAT and have an impressive transcript. In order to become a lawyer and represent clients, you must graduate law school and pass the state bar exam. Of course, there are many well-documented examples of success by those who did not proceed through traditional meritocracies. Think about technology companies with founders who dropped out of college, or performers who became famous after a YouTube video went viral.

In addition, organizations that aspire to become meritocracies encounter challenges. How well do you think established meritocracies identify talent? Wealthy families hire tutors, interview coaches, test-prep services, and consultants to help their kids get into the best schools. This starts as early as kindergarten in New York City, where competition for the most highly-regarded schools is especially fierce. Are these schools, many of which have copious scholarship funds that are intended to make the school more democratic, really offering all applicants a fair shake?

There are several positive aspects of bureaucracies. They are intended to improve efficiency, ensure equal opportunities, and serve a large population. And there are times when rigid hierarchies are needed. But remember that many of our bureaucracies grew large at the same time that our school model was developed—during the Industrial Revolution. Young workers were trained, and organizations were built for mass production, assembly line work, and factory jobs. In these scenarios, a clear chain of command was critical. Now, in the information age, this kind of rigid training and adherence to protocol can actually decrease both productivity and efficiency.

Today's workplace requires a faster pace, more problem solving, and a flexible approach to work. Too much adherence to explicit rules and a division of labor can leave an organization behind. And unfortunately, once established, bureaucracies can take on a life of their own. Maybe you have heard the expression "trying to turn a tanker around mid-ocean," which refers to the difficulties of changing direction with something large and set in its ways. State governments and current budget crises are examples of this challenge. It is almost impossible to make quick changes, leading states to fail, year after year, to address increasingly unbalanced budgets. Finally, bureaucracies, grew as institutions at a time when privileged white males held all the power. While ostensibly

based on meritocracy, bureaucracies can perpetuate the existing balance of power by only recognizing the merit in traditionally male and privileged paths.

Michels (1911) suggested that all large organizations are characterized by the Iron Rule of Oligarchy**,** wherein an entire organization is ruled by a few elites. Do you think this is true? Can a large organization be collaborative?



Figure 6.9: This McDonald's storefront in Egypt shows the McDonaldization of society. (Credit: s_w_ellis/flickr)

The McDonaldization of Society

The McDonaldization of Society (Ritzer 1993) refers to the increasing presence of the fast food business model in common social institutions, including government, education, and even relationships. The term itself isn't widely used in publications, research, or common conversation, but its effects are very familiar, even commonplace. The McDonald's model includes efficiency (the division of labor), predictability, calculability, and control (monitoring). For example, in your average chain grocery store, people at the register check out customers while stockers keep the shelves full of goods and deli workers slice meats and cheese to order (efficiency). Whenever you enter a store within that grocery chain, you receive the same type of goods, see the same store organization, and find the same brands at the same prices (predictability). You will find that goods are sold by the pound, so that you can weigh your fruit and vegetable purchase rather than simply guessing at the price for that bag of onions. The employees use a timecard to calculate their hours and receive overtime pay (calculability). Finally, you will notice that all store employees are wearing a uniform, and usually a name tag, so that they can be easily identified. There are security cameras to monitor the store, and some parts of the store, such as the stockroom, are generally considered off-limits to customers (control). This approach is so common in chain stores that you might not even notice it; in fact, if you went to a large-chain resturant or a store like Walmart, seeing a worker or a process that didn't have these uniform characteristics would seem odd.

While McDonaldization has resulted in improved profits and an increased availability of various goods and services to more people worldwide, it has also reduced the variety of goods available in the marketplace while rendering available products uniform, generic, and bland. Think of the difference between a mass-produced shoe and one made by a local cobbler, between a chicken from a family-owned farm and a corporate grower, or between a cup of coffee from the local diner and one from Starbucks. Some more contemporary efforts can be referred to as "de-McDonaldization": farmers markets, microbreweries, and various do-it-yourself trends. And with recent advertising and products emphasizing individuality, even McDonald's seems to be de-McDonaldizing itself.

The corporate impact of this phenomenon is interesting on its own, but sociologists and ordinary citizens are often more concerned about its echoes in other areas of society. A primary example, discussed extensively later on in this text, is education. Curricula and teaching practices were long the domain of local districts under state guidance. Some experts felt that this led to both inefficiency and underperformance. Starting in the 1990s and especially in the early 2000s with the No Child Left Behind law, national standards began to override local approaches. But the desired outcome (improved education) is difficult to measure and far more

difficult to achieve. Due to funding gaps, difficult standards, and intense public and local government opposition, the law was largely seen as having limited impact and was eventually phased out.

Healthcare has also gone to a mass production and efficiency model. As you will explore later in the text, U.S. healthcare providers and insurers faced overwhelming increases in demand, partly the result of America's aging and less healthy population. In the 1990s, providers consolidated in what was called hospital "merger mania." Local hospitals and even small doctors' offices were merged or acquired by larger systems (Fuchs 1997). The trend continued with new growth in providers like urgent care offices. Other efficiency and standardization methods include telemedicine, new types of healthcare professionals, insurance mandates, and artificial intelligence.

Sociology in the Real World: Secrets of the McJob

We often talk about bureaucracies disparagingly, and no organization takes more heat than fast food restaurants. Several books and movies, such as *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* by Eric Schossler, paint an ugly picture of what goes in, what goes on, and what comes out of fast food chains. From their environmental impact to their role in the U.S. obesity epidemic, fast food chains are connected to numerous societal ills. Furthermore, working at a fast food restaurant is often disparaged, and even referred to dismissively, as having a McJob rather than a real job.

But business school professor Jerry Newman went undercover and worked behind the counter at seven fast food restaurants to discover what really goes on there. His book, *My Secret Life on the McJob*, documents his experience. Unlike Schossler, Newman found that these restaurants offer much good alongside the bad. Specifically, he asserted that the employees were honest and hardworking, that management was often impressive, and that the jobs required a lot more skill and effort than most people imagined. In the book, Newman cites a pharmaceutical executive who says a fast-food service job on an applicant's résumé is a plus because it indicates the employee is reliable and can handle pressure.

Businesses like Chipotle, Panera, and Costco attempt to combat many of the effects of McDonaldization. In fact, Costco is known for paying its employees an average of $20 per hour, or slightly more than $40,000 per year. Nearly 90% of their employees receive health insurance from Costco, a number that is unheard of in the retail sector.

While Chipotle is not known for the high wages of its employees, it is known for attempting to sell high-quality foods from responsibly sourced providers. This is a different approach from what Schossler describes among burger chains like McDonalds.

So, what do you think? Are these McJobs and the organizations that offer them still serving an important role in the economy and people's careers? Or are they dead-end jobs that typify all that is negative about large bureaucracies? Have you ever worked in one? Would you?

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8.5: Key Terms

aggregate | a collection of people who exist in the same place at the same time, but who don't interact or share a sense of identity
authoritarian leader | a leader who issues orders and assigns tasks
bureaucracies | formal organizations characterized by a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonality.
category | people who share similar characteristics but who are not connected in any way
clear division of labor | the fact that each individual in a bureaucracy has a specialized task to perform
coercive organizations | organizations that people do not voluntarily join, such as prison or a mental hospital
conformity | the extent to which an individual complies with group or societal norms
democratic leader | a leader who encourages group participation and consensus-building before moving into action
dyad | a two-member group
explicit rules | the types of rules in a bureaucracy; rules that are outlined, recorded, and standardized
expressive function | a group function that serves an emotional need
expressive leader | a leader who is concerned with process and with ensuring everyone's emotional wellbeing
formal organizations | large, impersonal organizations
group | any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share some sense of aligned identity
hierarchy of authority | a clear chain of command found in a bureaucracy
impersonality | the removal of personal feelings from a professional situation
in-group | a group a person belongs to and feels is an integral part of his identity
instrumental function | being oriented toward a task or goal
instrumental leader | a leader who is goal oriented with a primary focus on accomplishing tasks
Iron Rule of Oligarchy | the theory that an organization is ruled by a few elites rather than through collaboration
laissez-faire leader | a hands-off leader who allows members of the group to make their own decisions
leadership function | the main focus or goal of a leader
leadership style | the style a leader uses to achieve goals or elicit action from group members
McDonaldization of Society | the increasing presence of the fast food business model in common social institutions
meritocracy | a bureaucracy where membership and advancement is based on merit—proven and documented skills
normative or voluntary organizations | organizations that people join to pursue shared interests or because they provide some intangible rewards
out-group | a group that an individual is not a member of, and may even compete with
primary groups | small, informal groups of people who are closest to us
reference groups | groups to which an individual compares herself
secondary groups | larger and more impersonal groups that are task-focused and time limited
total institution | an organization in which participants live a controlled lifestyle and in which total resocialization occurs
triad | a three-member group
utilitarian organizations | organizations that are joined to fill a specific material need

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8.6: Section Summary

6.1 Types of Groups

Groups largely define how we think of ourselves. There are two main types of groups: primary and secondary. As the names suggest, the primary group is the long-term, complex one. People use groups as standards of comparison to define themselves—both who they are and who they are not. Sometimes groups can be used to exclude people or as a tool that strengthens prejudice.

6.2 Group Size and Structure

The size and dynamic of a group greatly affects how members act. Primary groups rarely have formal leaders, although there can be informal leadership. Groups generally are considered large when there are too many members for a simultaneous discussion. In secondary groups there are two types of leadership functions, with expressive leaders focused on emotional health and wellness, and instrumental leaders more focused on results. Further, there are different leadership styles: democratic leaders, authoritarian leaders, and laissez-faire leaders.

Within a group, conformity is the extent to which people want to go along with the norm. A number of experiments have illustrated how strong the drive to conform can be. It is worth considering real-life examples of how conformity and obedience can lead people to ethically and morally suspect acts.

6.3 Formal Organizations

Large organizations fall into three main categories: normative/voluntary, coercive, and utilitarian. We live in a time of contradiction: while the pace of change and technology are requiring people to be more nimble and less bureaucratic in their thinking, large bureaucracies like hospitals, schools, and governments are more hampered than ever by their organizational format. At the same time, the past few decades have seen the development of a trend to bureaucratize and conventionalize local institutions. Increasingly, Main Streets across the country resemble each other; instead of a Bob's Coffee Shop and Jane's Hair Salon there is a Dunkin Donuts and a Supercuts. This trend has been referred to as the McDonaldization of society.

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8.9: Crash Course Video- Formal Organizations

Formal Organizations: Crash Course Sociology #17



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Social Stratification in the United States

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Thumbnail: This house, formerly owned by the famous television producer, Aaron Spelling, was for a time listed for $150 million dollars. It is considered one of the most extravagant homes in the United States, and is a testament to the wealth generated in some industries. (Photo courtesy of Atwater Village Newbie/flickr).

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9.1: Introduction

Jarrett grew up on a farm in rural Ohio, left home to serve in the Army, and returned a few years later to take over the family farm. He moved into his family house, and eighteen months later married Eric, with whom he had maintained a long-distance relationship for several years. Eric had two children from a previous marriage. They quickly realized the income from the farm was no longer sufficient to meet their needs. Jarrett, with little experience beyond the farm, took on a job at a grocery store to supplement his income. This part-time job shifted the direction of their family's life.



Figure 9.1: This house, formerly owned by the famous television producer, Aaron Spelling, sold in 2019 for $119 million, which set the record for the highest individual home sale in California history. It is the largest private home in Los Angeles, and is considered one of the most extravagant homes in the United States. (Credit: Atwater Village Newbie/flickr)

One of the managers at the store liked Jarrett, his attitude, and his work ethic. He began to groom Jarrett for advancement at the store, and encouraged him to take a few classes at a local college. Despite knowing he'd receive financial support from the military, this was the first time Jarrett had seriously thought about college. Could he be successful, Jarrett wondered? Could he actually become the first in his family to earn a degree? Fortunately, Eric also believed in him. Jarrett kept his college enrollment a secret from his mother, his brothers, and his friends. He did not want others to know about it, in case he failed.

Jarrett was nervous on his first day of class. He was older than the other students, and he had never considered himself college material. When he earned only a C- on his first test, he thought his fears were being realized, and that it was perhaps not a fit for him. But his instructor strongly recommended that Jarrett pay a visit to the academic success center. After a few sessions, he utilized a better study schedule and got a B- on the next exam. He was successful in that class, and enrolled in two more the next semester.

Unfortunately, life took a difficult turn when Jarrett's and Eric's daughter became ill; he couldn't focus on his studies and he dropped all of his classes. With his momentum slowed, Jarrett wasn't sure he was ready to resume after his daughter recovered. His daughter, though, set him straight. One day after telling her to start her homework, she was reluctant and said, "You're not doing your homework anymore; I shouldn't have to do mine." A bit annoyed, Jarrett and Eric explained the difference between being an adult with work and family obligations and being a child in middle school. But Jarrett realized he was most upset at himself for using her illness as an excuse. He thought he wasn't living up to the example he wanted to set for her. The next day, he called his academic advisor and re-enrolled.

Just under two years later, Jarrett was walking across the stage to receive a Bachelor's degree with a special certificate for peer support. The ceremony seemed surreal to Jarrett. He'd earned medals and other recognition in the military, but he always felt those accomplishments were shared among his team. While he'd had a lot of help with college, he felt that graduating was a milestone that was more closely tied to himself.

Stories like this permeate American society and may sound familiar, yet this quest to achieve the American Dream is often hard for many Americans to achieve, even with hard work. After all, nearly one in three first-year college students is a first-generation college student and many are not as successful as Jarrett. According to the Center for Student Opportunity, a national nonprofit, 89% of first-generation students will not earn an undergraduate degree within six years of starting their studies. In fact, these students “drop out of college at four times the rate of peers whose parents have postsecondary degrees” (Center for Student Opportunity quoted in Huot 2014).

Why do students with parents who have completed college tend to graduate more often than those students whose parents do not hold degrees? That question and many others will be answered as we explore social stratification.

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9.2: What Is Social Stratification?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between open and closed stratification systems
- Distinguish between caste and class systems
- Explain why meritocracy is considered an ideal system of stratification



Figure 9.2: In the upper echelons of the working world, people with the most power reach the top. These people make the decisions and earn the most money. The majority of Americans will never see the view from the top. (Credit: Alex Proimos/flickr)

Sociologists use the term social stratification to describe the system of social standing. Social stratification refers to a society's categorization of its people into rankings based on factors like wealth, income, education, family background, and power.

Geologists also use the word "stratification" to describe the distinct vertical layers found in rock. Typically, society's layers, made of people, represent the uneven distribution of society's resources. Society views the people with more resources as the top layer of the social structure of stratification. Other groups of people, with fewer and fewer resources, represent the lower layers. An individual's place within this stratification is called socioeconomic status (SES).



Figure 9.3: Strata in rock illustrate social stratification. People are sorted, or layered, into social categories. Many factors determine a person's social standing, such as wealth, income, education, family background, and power. (Credit: Just a Prairie Boy/flickr)

Most people and institutions in the United States indicate that they value equality, a belief that everyone has an equal chance at success. In other words, hard work and talent—not inherited wealth, prejudicial treatment, institutional racism, or societal values—determine social mobility. This emphasis on choice, motivation, and self-effort perpetuates the American belief that people control their own social standing.

However, sociologists recognize social stratification as a society-wide system that makes inequalities apparent. While inequalities exist between individuals, sociologists are interested in larger social patterns. Sociologists look to see if individuals with similar backgrounds, group memberships, identities, and location in the country share the same social stratification. No individual, rich or poor, can be blamed for social inequalities, but instead all participate in a system where some rise and others fall. Most Americans believe the rising and falling is based on individual choices. But sociologists see how the structure of society affects a person's social standing and therefore is created and supported by society.



Figure 9.4: The people who live in these houses most likely share similar levels of income and education. Neighborhoods often house people of the same social standing. Wealthy families do not typically live next door to poorer families, though this varies depending on the particular city and country. (Credit: Orin Zebest/flickr)

Factors that define stratification vary in different societies. In most societies, stratification is an economic system, based on wealth, the net value of money and assets a person has, and income, a person's wages or investment dividends. While people are regularly categorized based on how rich or poor they are, other important factors influence social standing. For example, in some cultures, prestige is valued, and people who have them are revered more than those who don't. In some cultures, the elderly are esteemed, while in others, the elderly are disparaged or overlooked. Societies' cultural beliefs often reinforce stratification.

One key determinant of social standing is our parents. Parents tend to pass their social position on to their children. People inherit not only social standing but also the cultural norms, values, and beliefs that accompany a certain lifestyle. They share these with a network of friends and family members that provide resources and support. This is one of the reasons first-generation college students do not fare as well as other students. They lack access to the resources and support commonly provided to those whose parents have gone to college.

Other determinants are found in a society's occupational structure. Teachers, for example, often have high levels of education but receive relatively low pay. Many believe that teaching is a noble profession, so teachers should do their jobs for love of their profession and the good of their students—not for money. Yet, the same attitude is not applied to professional athletes, executives, or those working in corporate world. Cultural attitudes and beliefs like these support and perpetuate social and economic inequalities.

Systems of Stratification

Sociologists distinguish between two types of systems of stratification. Closed systems accommodate little change in social position. They do not allow people to shift levels and do not permit social relationships between levels. Closed systems include estate, slavery, and caste systems. Open systems are based on achievement and allow for movement and interaction between layers and classes. How different systems operate reflect, emphasize, and foster specific cultural values, shaping individual beliefs. In this section, we'll review class and caste stratification systems, plus discuss the ideal system of meritocracy.

The Caste System



Figure 9.5: India used to have a rigid caste system. The people in the lowest caste suffered from extreme poverty and were shunned by society. Some aspects of India's defunct caste system remain socially relevant. (Credit: Elessar/flickr)

Caste systems are closed stratification systems where people can do little or nothing to change the social standing of their birth. The caste system determines all aspects of an individual's life: occupations, marriage partners, and housing. Individual talents, interests, or potential do not provide opportunities to improve a person's social position.

In the Hindu caste tradition, people expect to work in an occupation and to enter into a marriage based on their caste. Accepting this social standing is considered a moral duty and people are socialized to accept their social standing. Cultural values reinforced the system. Caste systems promote beliefs in fate, destiny, and the will of a higher power, rather than promoting individual freedom as a value. This belief system is an ideology. Every culture has an ideology that supports its system of stratification.

The caste system in India has been officially dismantled, but is still deeply embedded in Indian society, particularly in rural areas. In India's larger cities, people now have more opportunities to choose their own career paths and marriage partners. As a global center of employment, corporations have introduced merit-based hiring and employment to the nation shifting the cultural expectations of the caste system.

The Class System

A class system is based on both social factors and individual achievement. A class consists of a set of people who share similar status based on factors like wealth, income, education, family background, and occupation. Unlike caste systems, class systems are open. People may move to a different level (vertical movement) of education or employment status than their parents. Though family and other societal models help guide a person toward a career, personal choice and opportunity play a role.

They can also socialize with and marry members of other classes. People have the option to form an exogamous marriage, a union of spouses from different social categories. Exogamous marriages often focus on values such as love and compatibility. Though social conformities still exist that encourage people to choose partners within their own class, called an endogamous marriage, people are not as pressured to choose marriage partners based solely on their social location.

Meritocracy

Meritocracy is a hypothetical system in which social stratification is determined by personal effort and merit. The concept of meritocracy is an ideal because no society has ever existed where social standing was based entirely on merit. Rather, multiple factors influence social standing, including processes like socialization and the realities of inequality within economic systems. While a meritocracy has never existed, sociologists see aspects of meritocracies in modern societies when they study the role of academic and job performance and the systems in place for evaluating and rewarding achievement in these areas.

The differences between an open and closed system are explored further in the example below.

Status Consistency

Sociologists use the term status consistency to describe the consistency, or lack thereof, of an individual's rank across the factors that determine social stratification within a lifetime. Caste systems correlate with high status consistency, due to the inability to move out of a class, whereas the more flexible class system demonstrates lower status consistency.

To illustrate, let's consider Serena. Serena earned her high school diploma but did not go to college. Completing high school but not college is a trait more common to the lower-middle class. After high school, she began landscaping, which, as manual labor, tracks with lower-middle class or even lower class. However, over time, Serena started her own company. She hired employees. She won larger contracts. Serena became a business owner and earned more money. Those traits represent the upper-middle class. Inconsistencies between Serena's educational level, her occupation, and income show Serena's flexibility in her social status, giving her low status consistency. In a class system, hard work, new opportunities, coupled with a lower education status still allow a person movement into middle or upper class, whereas in a caste system, that would not be possible. In a class system, low status consistency correlates with having more choices and opportunities.

Social Policy and Debate: LEAVING ROYALTY BEHIND



Figure 9.6: Prince Harry and Meghan Markle with other members of the Royal family, in 2017. One year later, the couple would wed and the American-born actress and fashion-designer would immediately become Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Sussex, a position and title that bestows significant benefits of social class (Credit: Mark Jones/Wikimedia Commons)

Meghan Markle, who married a member of the British royal family, for years endured unceasing negative media attention, invasion of privacy, and racially abusive comments. She and her husband–Prince Harry, grandson to Queen Elizabeth–undertook a series of legal actions to push back against overly aggressive media outlets. But because of the continued harassment and disagreements with others in the royal family, Meghan and Harry decided to step down from their royal obligations and begin a disassociation from the British monarchy. In doing so, they gave up honorary positions, titles, and financial support. For Meghan, who had been born in the U.S. and had earned her wealth through a successful career, these changes may not be so jarring. Prince Harry, however, had been "His Royal Highness" since he was born; by nature of his

ancestry he was entitled to vast sums of money, property, and cultural-political positions such as Honorary Air Commandant, Commodore-in-Chief, and President of the Queen's Commonwealth Trust. Harry would also lose the military rank he had earned through almost ten years of military service, including two combat deployments to Afghanistan. Would Megxit work for him? What gave him those honors in the first place?

Britain’s monarchy arose during the Middle Ages. Its social hierarchy placed royalty at the top and commoners on the bottom. This was generally a closed system, with people born into positions of nobility. Wealth was passed from generation to generation through primogeniture, a law stating that all property would be inherited by the firstborn son. If the family had no son, the land went to the next closest male relation. Women could not inherit property, and their social standing was primarily determined through marriage.

The arrival of the Industrial Revolution changed Britain’s social structure. Commoners moved to cities, got jobs, and made better livings. Gradually, people found new opportunities to increase their wealth and power. Today, the government is a constitutional monarchy with the prime minister and other ministers elected to their positions, and with the royal family’s role being largely ceremonial. The long-ago differences between nobility and commoners have blurred, and the modern class system in Britain is similar to that of the United States (McKee 1996).

Today, the royal family still commands wealth, power, and a great deal of attention. When Queen Elizabeth II retires or passes away, Prince Charles will be first in line to ascend the throne. If he abdicates (chooses not to become king) or dies, the position will go to Prince William, Prince Harry's older brother.

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, meanwhile, moved to Los Angeles and signed a voiceover deal with Disney while also joining Netflix in a series production. They founded an organization focusing on non-profit activities and media ventures. Living in LA and working to some extent in entertainment, they will likely be considered a different type of royalty.

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9.3: Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the U.S. class structure
- Describe several types of social mobility
- Recognize characteristics that define and identify class

How does social stratification affect your ability to move up or down the social classes? What is a standard of living? What factors matter in rising up or becoming more successful in the eyes of those around you? Does being in a social class dictate your style, behavior, or opportunities?

Social Classes in the United States

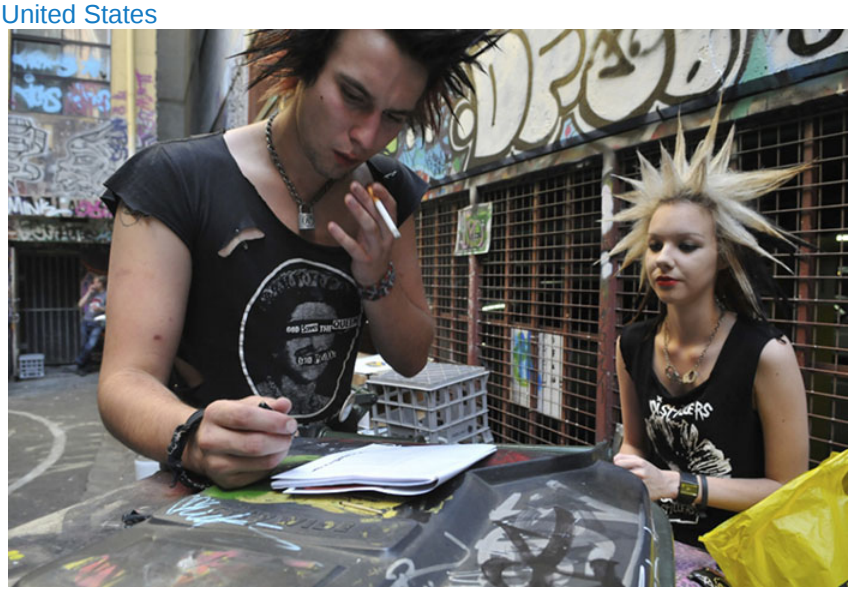


Figure 9.7: Does taste or fashion sense indicate class? Is there any way to tell if these people come from an upper-, middle-, or lower-class background? (Credit: Kelly Bailey/flickr)

For sociologists, categorizing social class is a fluid science. Sociologists generally identify three levels of class in the United States: upper, middle, and lower class. Within each class, there are many subcategories. Wealth is the most significant way of distinguishing classes, because wealth can be transferred to one's children and perpetuate the class structure. One economist, J.D. Foster, defines the 20 percent of U.S. citizens' highest earners as "upper income," and the lower 20 percent as "lower income." The remaining 60 percent of the population make up the middle class (Mason 2010). With that distinction, economists can describe the range in annual household incomes for the middle-class, but they cannot show how the range of all incomes vary and how they change over time. For this reason, the Pew Center defines classes based on the median household income. The lower class includes those whose income is two-thirds of the national median, the middle class includes those whose income falls between two-thirds and twice the median, and the upper class includes those whose income is above twice the national median (Kochhar 2015). Though median income levels vary from state to state, at the national level you would be considered in the middle-class if you earned between $48,500 to $145,500 in 2018 U.S. dollars (Bennett 2000).

One sociological perspective distinguishes the classes, in part, according to their relative power and control over their lives. Members of the upper class not only have power and control over their own lives, but their social status gives them power and control over others' lives. The middle class doesn't generally control other strata of society, but its members do exert control over their own lives. In contrast, the lower class has little control over their work or lives. Below, we will explore the major divisions of U.S. social class and their key subcategories.

Upper Class



Figure 9.8: Members of the upper class can afford to live, work, and play in exclusive places, such as country clubs and gated communities, designed for luxury, safety, and comfort. (Credit: PrimeImageMedia.com/flickr)

The upper class is considered the top, and only the powerful elite get to see the view from there. In the United States, people with extreme wealth make up one percent of the population, and they own roughly one-third of the country's wealth (Beeghley 2008).

Money provides not just access to material goods, but also access to a lot of power. As corporate leaders, members of the upper class make decisions that affect the job status of millions of people. As media owners, they influence the collective identity of the nation. They run the major network television stations, radio broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, and sports franchises. As board members of the most influential colleges and universities, they influence cultural attitudes and values. As philanthropists, they establish foundations to support social causes they believe in. As campaign contributors and legislation drivers, they fund political campaigns to sway policymakers, sometimes to protect their own economic interests and at other times to support or promote a cause. (The methods, effectiveness, and impact of these political efforts are discussed in the Politics and Government chapter.)

U.S. society has historically distinguished between "old money" (inherited wealth passed from one generation to the next) and "new money" (wealth you have earned and built yourself). While both types may have equal net worth, they have traditionally held different social standings. People of old money, firmly situated in the upper class for generations, have held high prestige. Their families have socialized them to know the customs, norms, and expectations that come with wealth. Often, the very wealthy don't work for wages. Some study business or become lawyers in order to manage the family fortune. Others, such as Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian, capitalize on being a rich socialite and transform that into celebrity status, flaunting a wealthy lifestyle.

However, new-money members of the upper class are not oriented to the customs and mores of the elite. They haven't gone to the most exclusive schools. They have not established old-money social ties. People with new money might flaunt their wealth, buying sports cars and mansions, but they might still exhibit behaviors attributed to the middle and lower classes.

The Middle Class



Figure 9.9: These members of a club likely consider themselves middle class, as do many Americans. (Credit: United Way Canada-Centraide Canada/flickr)

Many people consider themselves middle class, but there are differing ideas about what that means. People with annual incomes of $150,000 call themselves middle class, as do people who annually earn $30,000. That helps explain why, in the United States, the middle class is broken into upper and lower subcategories.

Lower-middle class members tend to complete a two-year associate's degrees from community or technical colleges or a four-year bachelor's degree. Upper-middle class people tend to continue on to postgraduate degrees. They've studied subjects such as business, management, law, or medicine.

Middle-class people work hard and live fairly comfortable lives. Upper-middle-class people tend to pursue careers, own their homes, and travel on vacation. Their children receive high-quality education and healthcare (Gilbert 2010). Parents can support more specialized needs and interests of their children, such as more extensive tutoring, arts lessons, and athletic efforts, which can lead to more social mobility for the next generation. Families within the middle class may have access to some wealth, but also must work for an income to maintain this lifestyle.

In the lower middle class, people hold jobs supervised by members of the upper middle class. They fill technical, lower- level management or administrative support positions. Compared to lower-class work, lower-middle-class jobs carry more prestige and come with slightly higher paychecks. With these incomes, people can afford a decent, mainstream lifestyle, but they struggle to maintain it. They generally don't have enough income to build significant savings. In addition, their grip on class status is more precarious than those in the upper tiers of the class system. When companies need to save money, lower-middle class people are often the ones to lose their jobs.

The Lower Class



Figure 9.10: Bike messengers and bike delivery people are often considered members of the working class. They endure difficult and dangerous conditions to do their work, and they are not always well represented by government agencies and in regulations designed for safety or fairness. (Credit: edwardhblake/flickr)

The lower class is also referred to as the working class. Just like the middle and upper classes, the lower class can be divided into subsets: the working class, the working poor, and the underclass. Compared to the lower middle class, people from the lower economic class have less formal education and earn smaller incomes. They work jobs that require less training or experience than middle-class occupations and often do routine tasks under close supervision.

Working-class people, the highest subcategory of the lower class, often land steady jobs. The work is hands-on and often physically demanding, such as landscaping, cooking, cleaning, or building.

Beneath the working class is the working poor. They have unskilled, low-paying employment. However, their jobs rarely offer benefits such as healthcare or retirement planning, and their positions are often seasonal or temporary. They work as migrant farm workers, housecleaners, and day laborers. Education is limited. Some lack a high school diploma.

How can people work full-time and still be poor? Even working full-time, millions of the working poor earn incomes too meager to support a family. The government requires employers pay a minimum wage that varies from state to state, and often leave individuals and families below the poverty line. In addition to low wages, the value of the wage has not kept pace with inflation. “The real value of the federal minimum wage has dropped 17% since 2009 and 31% since 1968 (Cooper, Gould, & Zipperer, 2019). Furthermore, the living wage, the amount necessary to meet minimum standards, differs across the country because the cost of living differs. Therefore, the amount of income necessary to survive in an area such as New York City differs dramatically from small town in Oklahoma (Glasmeier, 2020).

The underclass is the United States’ lowest tier. The term itself and its classification of people have been questioned, and some prominent sociologists (including a former president of the American Sociological Association), believe its use is either overgeneralizing or incorrect (Gans 1991). But many economists, sociologists government agencies, and advocacy groups recognize the growth of the underclass. Members of the underclass live mainly in inner cities. Many are unemployed or underemployed. Those who do hold jobs typically perform menial tasks for little pay. Some of the underclass are homeless. Many rely on welfare systems to provide food, medical care, and housing assistance, which often does not cover all their basic needs. The underclass have more stress, poorer health, and suffer crises fairly regularly.

Class Traits

Does a person’s appearance indicate class? Can you tell a person’s education level based on their clothing? Do you know a person’s income by the car they drive? Class traits, also called class markers, are the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class. Class traits indicate the level of exposure a person has to a wide range of cultures. Class traits also indicate the amount of resources a person has to spend on items like hobbies, vacations, and leisure activities.

People may associate the upper class with enjoyment of costly, refined, or highly cultivated tastes—expensive clothing, luxury cars, high-end fund-raisers, and frequent or expensive vacations. People may also believe that the middle and lower classes are more likely to enjoy camping, fishing, or hunting, shopping at large retailers, and participating in community activities. While these descriptions may identify class traits, they are stereotypes. Moreover, just as class distinctions have blurred in recent decades, so too have class traits. A factory worker could be a skilled French cook. A billionaire might dress in ripped jeans, and a low-income student might own designer shoes.

For famous wealthy people, making choices that do not seem to align with their economic status can often lead to public commentary. Jennifer Lopez being spotted in a dress that cost less than $30 and Zac Efron shopping at thrift stores have made the news. Others, like Halle Berry and Keanu Reeves, are known for frequent use of public transportation and relatively modest living (at least when considering to their net worth). When questioned, most point to nothing more than practicality. Lady Gaga tweeted " why do people look at me like I'm crazy when i use coupons at grocery or try bargaining at retail..." (2012). And in dense, crowded cities such as Washington, Chicago, and New York, riding the trains is often faster and easier than taking a car.

Social Mobility

People are often inspired and amazed at people's ability to overcome extremely difficult upbringings. Mariano Rivera, acknowledged to be the best relief pitcher in history, made a baseball glove out of cardboard and tape because his family could not afford a real one. Alice Coachman grew up with few resources and was denied access to training facilities because of her race; she ran barefoot and built her own high jump equipment before becoming the first Black athlete (and one of the first American track and field athletes) to win an Olympic Gold. Pelé, perhaps the most transformative figure in soccer, learned the game while using a rag-stuffed sock for a ball. These are some of the stories told in documentaries or biographies meant to inspire and share the challenges of unequal upbringings. Relative to the overall population, the number of people who rise from poverty to become very successful is small, and the number that become wealthy is even smaller. Systemic barriers like unequal education, discrimination, and lack of opportunity can slow or diminish one's ability to move up. Still, people who earn a college degree, get a job promotion, or marry someone with a good income may move up socially.

Social mobility refers to the ability of individuals to change positions within a social stratification system. When people improve or diminish their economic status in a way that affects social class, they experience social mobility. Individuals can experience upward or downward social mobility for a variety of reasons. Upward mobility refers to an increase—or upward shift—when they move from a lower to a higher socioeconomical class. In contrast, individuals experience downward mobility when they move from higher socioeconomic class to a lower one. Some people move downward because of business setbacks, unemployment, or illness. Dropping out of school, losing a job, or getting a divorce may result in a loss of income or status and, therefore, downward social mobility.

It is not uncommon for different generations of a family to belong to varying social classes. This is known as intergenerational mobility. For example, an upper-class executive may have parents who belonged to the middle class. In turn, those parents may have been raised in the lower class. Patterns of intergenerational mobility can reflect long-term societal changes.

On the other hand, intragenerational mobility refers to changes in a person's social mobility over the course of their lifetime. For example, the wealth and prestige experienced by one person may be quite different from that of their siblings.

Structural mobility happens when societal changes enable a whole group of people to move up or down the social class ladder. Structural mobility is attributable to changes in society as a whole. In the first half of the twentieth century, industrialization expanded the U.S. economy, raising the standard of living and leading to upward structural mobility for almost everyone. In the decade and a half of the twenty-first century, recessions and the outsourcing of jobs overseas have contributed to the withdrawal of Americans from the workforce (BLS 2021). Many people experienced economic setbacks, creating a wave of downward structural mobility.

When analyzing the trends and movements in social mobility, sociologists consider all modes of mobility. Scholars recognize that mobility is not as common or easy to achieve as many people think.

Stratification of Socioeconomic Classes

In the last century, the United States has seen a steady rise in its standard of living, the level of wealth available to acquire the material necessities and comforts to maintain a specific lifestyle. The country’s standard of living is based on factors such as income, employment, class, literacy rates, mortality rates, poverty rates, and housing affordability. A country with a high standard of living will often reflect a high quality of life, which in the United States means residents can afford a home, own a car, and take

vacations. Ultimately, standard of living is shaped by the wealth and distribution of wealth in a country and the expectations its citizens have for their lifestyle.

Wealth is not evenly distributed in most countries. In the United States, a small portion of the population has the means to the highest standard of living. The wealthiest one percent of the population holds one-third of our nation's wealth while the bottom 50 percent of Americans hold only 2 percent. Those in-between, the top 50 to 90 percent hold almost two-thirds of the nation's wealth (The Federal Reserve, 2021).

Many people think of the United States as a "middle-class society." They think a few people are rich, a few are poor, and most are fairly well off, existing in the middle of the social strata. Rising from lower classes into the middle-class is to achieve the American Dream. For this reason, scholars are particularly worried by the shrinking of the middle class. Although the middle class is still significantly larger than the lower and upper classes, it shrank from 69 percent in 1971 to 51 percent in 2020. Arguably the most significant threat to the U.S.'s relatively high standard of living is the decline of the middle class. The wealth of the middle class has also been declining in recent decades. Its share of the wealth fell from 32 percent in 1983 to 16 percent in 2016 (Horowitz, Igielnik, & Kochhar 2020).

People with wealth often receive the most and best schooling, access better health care, and consume the most goods and services. In addition, wealthy people also wield decision-making power over their daily life because money gives them access to better resources. By contrasts, many lower-income individuals receive less education and inadequate health care and have less influence over the circumstances of their everyday lives.

Additionally, tens of millions of women and men struggle to pay rent, buy food, find work, and afford basic medical care. Women who are single heads of household tend to have a lower income and lower standard of living than their married or single male counterparts. This is a worldwide phenomenon known as the "feminization of poverty"—which acknowledges that women disproportionately make up the majority of individuals in poverty across the globe and have a lower standard of living. In the United States, women make up approximately 56 percent of Americans living in poverty. One reason for this difference is the struggle of single mothers to provide for their children. One in four unmarried mothers lives in poverty (Bleiweis, 2020). The wage gap, discussed extensively in the Work and the Economy chapter, also contributes to the gender-disparity in poverty.

In the United States, poverty is most often referred to as a relative rather than absolute measurement. Absolute poverty is an economic condition in which a family or individual cannot afford basic necessities, such as food and shelter, so that day-to-day survival is in jeopardy. Relative poverty is an economic condition in which a family or individuals have 50% income less than the average median income. This income is sometimes called the poverty level or the poverty line. In 2021, for example, the poverty for a single individual was set at $12,880 for one individual, $17,420 for a couple, and $26,500 for a family of four (ASPE 2021).

As a wealthy developed country, the United States invests in resources to provide the basic necessities to those in need through a series of federal and state social welfare programs. These programs provide food, medical, and cash assistance. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provides cash assistance. The goal of TANF is to help families with children achieve economic self-sufficiency. Adults who receive assistance must fall under a specific income level, usually half the poverty level, set by the state. TANF funding goes to childcare, support for parents who are working or training a required number of hours a week, and other services. TANF is time-limited. Most states only provide assistance for a maximum of 5 years (CBPP).

One of the best-known programs is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), administered by the United States Department of Agriculture and formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. This program began in the Great Depression, when unmarketable or surplus food was distributed to the hungry. It was not formalized until 1961, when President John F. Kennedy initiated a food stamp pilot program. His successor Lyndon B. Johnson was instrumental in the passage of the Food Stamp Act in 1964. In 1965, more than 500,000 individuals received food assistance. During the height of the pandemic in 2020, participation reached 43 million people.

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9.4: Global Stratification and Inequality

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Define global stratification
- Describe different sociological models for understanding global stratification
- Explain the ways that studies of global stratification enable social scientists to identify worldwide inequalities



(a) (b)

Figure 9.11: A family lives in this grass hut in Ethiopia. Another family lives in a single-wide trailer in the United States. Both families are considered poor, or lower class. With such differences in global stratification, what constitutes poverty? (Credit: (a) Canned Muffins/flickr; Photo (b) Herb Neufeld/flickr)

Global stratification compares the wealth, status, power, and economic stability of countries across the world. Global stratification highlights worldwide patterns of social inequality.

In the early years of civilization, hunter-gatherer and agrarian societies lived off the earth and rarely interacted with other societies. When explorers began traveling, societies began trading goods, as well as ideas and customs.

In the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution created unprecedented wealth in Western Europe and North America. Due to mechanical inventions and new means of production, people began working in factories—not only men, but women and children as well. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, industrial technology had gradually raised the standard of living for many people in the United States and Europe.

The Industrial Revolution also saw the rise of vast inequalities between countries that were industrialized and those that were not. As some nations embraced technology and saw increased wealth and goods, the non-industrialized nations fell behind economically, and the gap widened.

Sociologists studying global stratification analyze economic comparisons between nations. Income, purchasing power, and wealth are used to calculate global stratification. Global stratification also compares the quality of life that a country's population can have. Poverty levels have been shown to vary greatly across countries. Yet all countries struggle to support the lower classes.

Models of Global Stratification



(a) (b)

Figure 9.12: Luxury vacation resorts can contribute to a poorer country's economy. This one, in Jamaica, attracts middle and upper-middle class people from wealthier nations. The resort is a source of income and provides jobs for local people. Just outside its borders, however, are poverty-stricken neighborhoods. (Credit, both photos: Gail Frederick/flickr)

In order to determine the stratification or ranking of a country, economists created various models of global stratification. All of these models have one thing in common: they rank countries according to their economic status, often ranked by gross national product (GNP). The GNP is the value of goods and services produced by a nation's citizens both within its boarders and abroad.

Another system of global classification defines countries based on the gross domestic product (GDP), a country's national wealth. The GDP calculated annually either totals the income of all people living within its borders or the value of all goods and services produced in the country during the year. It also includes government spending. Because the GDP indicates a country's productivity and performance, comparing GDP rates helps establish a country's economic health in relation to other countries, with some countries rising to the top and others falling to the bottom. The chapter on Work and the Economy (specifically the section on Globalization and the Economy) shows the differences in GDP among various countries.

Traditional models, now considered outdated, used labels, such as "first world", "second world," and "third world" to describe the stratification of the different areas of the world. First and second world described industrialized nations, while third world referred to "undeveloped" countries (Henslin 2004). When researching existing historical sources, you may still encounter these terms, and even today people still refer to some nations as the "third world." This model, however, is outdated because it lumps countries together that are quite different in terms of wealth, power, prestige, and economic stability.

Another model separates countries into two groups: more developed and less developed. More-developed nations have higher wealth, such as Canada, Japan, and Australia. Less-developed nations have less wealth to distribute among populations, including many countries in central Africa, South America, and some island nations.

GNP and GDP are used to gain insight into global stratification based on a country's standard of living. According to this analysis, a GDP standard of a middle-income nation represents a global average. In low-income countries, most people are poor relative to people in other countries. Citizens have little access to amenities such as electricity, plumbing, and clean water. People in low-income countries are not guaranteed education, and many are illiterate. The life expectancy of citizens is lower than in high-income countries. Therefore, the different expectations in lifestyle and access to resources varies.

Big Picture: The Big Picture: Calculating Global Stratification

A few organizations take on the job of comparing the wealth of nations. The Population Reference Bureau (PRB) is one of them. Besides a focus on population data, the PRB publishes an annual report that measures the relative economic well-being of all the world's countries using the Gross National Income (GNI) and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).

The GNI measures the current value of goods and services produced by a country. The PPP measures the relative power a country has to purchase those same goods and services. So, GNI refers to productive output and PPP refers to buying power.

Because costs of goods and services vary from one country to the next, the PPP is used to convert the GNI into a relative international unit. This value is then divided by the number of residents living in a country to establish the average relative income of a resident of that country. This measure is called the GNI PPI. Calculating GNI PPP figures helps researchers

accurately compare countries' standard of living. They allow the United Nations and Population Reference Bureau to compare and rank the wealth of all countries and consider international stratification issues (nationsonline.org).

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9.5: Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Apply functionalist, conflict theory, and interactionist perspectives on social stratification

Basketball is one of the highest-paying professional sports and stratification exists even among teams in the NBA. For example, the Toronto Raptors hands out the lowest annual payroll, while the New York Knicks reportedly pays the highest. Stephen Curry, a Golden State Warriors guard, is one of the highest paid athletes in the NBA, earning around $43 million a year (Sports Illustrated 2020), whereas the lowest paid player earns just over $200,000 (ESPN 2021). Even within specific fields, layers are stratified, members are ranked, and inequality exists.

In sociology, even an issue such as NBA salaries can be seen from various points of view. Functionalists will examine the purpose of such high salaries, conflict theorists will study the exorbitant salaries as an unfair distribution of money, and symbolic interactionists will describe how players display that wealth. Social stratification takes on new meanings when it is examined from different sociological perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Functionalism

In sociology, the functionalist perspective examines how society's parts operate. According to functionalism, different aspects of society exist because they serve a vital purpose. What is the function of social stratification?

In 1945, sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore published the Davis-Moore thesis, which argued that the greater the functional importance of a social role, the greater must be the reward. The theory posits that social stratification represents the inherently unequal value of different work. Certain tasks in society are more valuable than others (for example, doctors or lawyers). Qualified people who fill those positions are rewarded more than others.

According to Davis and Moore, a firefighter's job is more important than, for instance, a grocery store cashier's job. The cashier position does not require similar skill and training level as firefighting. Without the incentive of higher pay, better benefits, and increased respect, why would someone be willing to rush into burning buildings? If pay levels were the same, the firefighter might as well work as a grocery store cashier and avoid the risk of firefighting. Davis and Moore believed that rewarding more important work with higher levels of income, prestige, and power encourages people to work harder and longer.

Davis and Moore stated that, in most cases, the degree of skill required for a job determines that job's importance. They noted that the more skill required for a job, the fewer qualified people there would be to do that job. Certain jobs, such as cleaning hallways or answering phones, do not require much skill. Therefore, most people would be qualified for these positions. Other work, like designing a highway system or delivering a baby, requires immense skill limiting the number of people qualified to take on this type of work.

Many scholars have criticized the Davis-Moore thesis. In 1953, Melvin Tumin argued that it does not explain inequalities in the education system or inequalities due to race or gender. Tumin believed social stratification prevented qualified people from attempting to fill roles (Tumin 1953).

Conflict Theory



Figure 9.13: These people are protesting a decision made by Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee, to lay off custodians and outsource the jobs to a private firm to avoid paying employee benefits. Private job agencies often pay lower hourly wages. Is the decision fair? (Credit: Brian Stansberry/Wikimedia Commons)

Conflict theorists are deeply critical of social stratification, asserting that it benefits only some people, not all of society. For instance, to a conflict theorist, it seems wrong that a basketball player is paid millions for an annual contract while a public school teacher may earn $35,000 a year. Stratification, conflict theorists believe, perpetuates inequality. Conflict theorists try to bring awareness to inequalities, such as how a rich society can have so many poor members.

Many conflict theorists draw on the work of Karl Marx. During the nineteenth-century era of industrialization, Marx believed social stratification resulted from people's relationship to production. People were divided into two main groups: they either owned factories or worked in them. In Marx's time, bourgeois capitalists owned high-producing businesses, factories, and land, as they still do today. Proletariats were the workers who performed the manual labor to produce goods. Upper-class capitalists raked in profits and got rich, while working-class proletariats earned skimpy wages and struggled to survive. With such opposing interests, the two groups were divided by differences of wealth and power. Marx believed workers experience deep alienation, isolation and misery resulting from powerless status levels (Marx 1848). Marx argued that proletariats were oppressed by the bourgeoisie.

Today, while working conditions have improved, conflict theorists believe that the strained working relationship between employers and employees still exists. Capitalists own the means of production, and a system is in place to make business owners rich and keep workers poor. According to conflict theorists, the resulting stratification creates class conflict.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism uses everyday interactions of individuals to explain society as a whole. Symbolic interactionism examines stratification from a micro-level perspective. This analysis strives to explain how people's social standing affects their everyday interactions.

In most communities, people interact primarily with others who share the same social standing. It is precisely because of social stratification that people tend to live, work, and associate with others like themselves, people who share their same income level, educational background, class traits and even tastes in food, music, and clothing. The built-in system of social stratification groups people together. This is one of the reasons why it was rare for a royal prince like England's Prince William to marry a commoner.

Symbolic interactionists also note that people's appearance reflects their perceived social standing. As discussed above, class traits seen through housing, clothing, and transportation indicate social status, as do hairstyles, taste in accessories, and personal style.

Symbolic interactionists also analyze how individuals think of themselves or others interpretation of themselves based on these class traits.



(a) (b)

Figure 9.14: (a) A group of construction workers on the job site, and (b) businesspeople in a meeting. What categories of stratification do these construction workers share? How do construction workers differ from executives or custodians? Who is more skilled? Who has greater prestige in society? (Credit: (a) Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) Chun Kit/flickr)

To symbolically communicate social standing, people often engage in conspicuous consumption, which is the purchase and use of certain products to make a social statement about status. Carrying pricey but eco-friendly water bottles could indicate a person's social standing, or what they would like others to believe their social standing is. Some people buy expensive trendy sneakers even though they will never wear them to jog or play sports. A $17,000 car provides transportation as easily as a $100,000 vehicle, but the luxury car makes a social statement that the less expensive car can't live up to. All these symbols of stratification are worthy of examination by an interactionist.

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9.6: Key Terms

absolute poverty | deprivation so severe that it puts day-to-day survival in jeopardy.

caste system | a system in which people are born into a social standing that they will retain their entire lives

class | a group who shares a common social status based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation

class system | social standing based on social factors and individual accomplishments

class traits | the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class (also called class markers)

closed system | a system of stratification that accommodates little change in social position.

conspicuous consumption | the act of buying and using products to make a statement about one's social standing

Davis-Moore thesis | a thesis that argues some social stratification is a social necessity and is functional

downward mobility | a lowering of one's social class

endogamous marriages | unions of people within the same social category

exogamous unions | unions of spouses from different social categories

global stratification | a comparison of the wealth, status, power, and economic stability of countries as a whole

ideology | the cultural belief system that justifies a society's system of stratification

income | the money a person earns from work or investments

intergenerational mobility | a difference in social class between different generations of a family

intragenerational mobility | changes in a person's social mobility over the course of their lifetime.

meritocracy | an ideal system in which personal effort—or merit—determines social standing

open system | a system of stratification, based on achievement, that allows some movement and interaction between layers and classes.

primogeniture | a law stating that all property passes to the firstborn son

relative poverty | is not having the means to live the lifestyle of the average person in your country

social mobility | the ability to change positions within a social stratification system

social stratification | a socioeconomic system that divides society's members into categories ranking from high to low, based on things like wealth, power, and prestige. Also called inequality.

socioeconomic status (SES) | an individual's level of wealth, power, and prestige

standard of living | the level of wealth available to acquire material goods and comforts to maintain a particular socioeconomic lifestyle

status consistency | the consistency, or lack thereof, of an individual's rank across social categories like wealth, power, and prestige

structural mobility | a societal change that enables a whole group of people to move up or down the class ladder

upward mobility | an increase—or upward shift—in social class

wealth | the value of money and assets a person has from, for example, inheritance or salary.

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9.7: Section Summary

9.1 What Is Social Stratification?

Stratification systems, where people are ranked based on their wealth, power, and status within society, are either closed, meaning they allow little change in social position, or open, meaning they allow movement and interaction between the layers. A caste system is one in which social standing is based on ascribed status or birth. Class systems are open, with achievement playing a role in social position. People fall into classes based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. A meritocracy is an ideal system of social stratification that confers standing based on solely on personal worth, rewarding effort. A pure meritocracy has never existed. Stratification is reinforced and shaped by cultural beliefs and values, called an ideology.

9.2 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

The United States has a high standard of living, where individuals expect to own property and have the ability to travel. Even so, the United States struggles with economic inequality, with a small number of citizens with a large amount of wealth and a larger number of people falling into relative poverty. There are three main classes in the United States: upper, middle, and lower class. Social mobility describes a shift from one social class to another. Class traits, also called class markers, are the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class, but have become less definitive in assigning class to a specific individual.

9.3 Global Stratification and Inequality

Global stratification compares the wealth, status, power, and economic stability, of countries and ranks the countries. By comparing income and productivity between nations, researchers can better identify global financial and econommic leaders as well as inequalities within and among nations.

9.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

Social stratification can be examined from different sociological perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. The functionalist perspective states that systems exist in society for good reasons, such as incentives and rewards for those who demonstrate high skill and complete a high-level of education or training. Conflict theorists observe that stratification promotes inequality, such as different opportunities and success of rich business owners and their lower paid workers. Symbolic interactionists examine stratification from a micro-level perspective. They observe how social standing affects people's everyday interactions and how the concept of "social class" is constructed and maintained through everyday interactions.

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9.8: References

Introduction

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9.1 What Is Social Stratification?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Race and Ethnicity

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Thumbnail: Robert De Niro and his wife Grace Hightower are a prominent interracial couple, shown here at the 2012 Tribeca Film Festival (CC BY 3.0; David Shankbone).

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10.1: Introduction

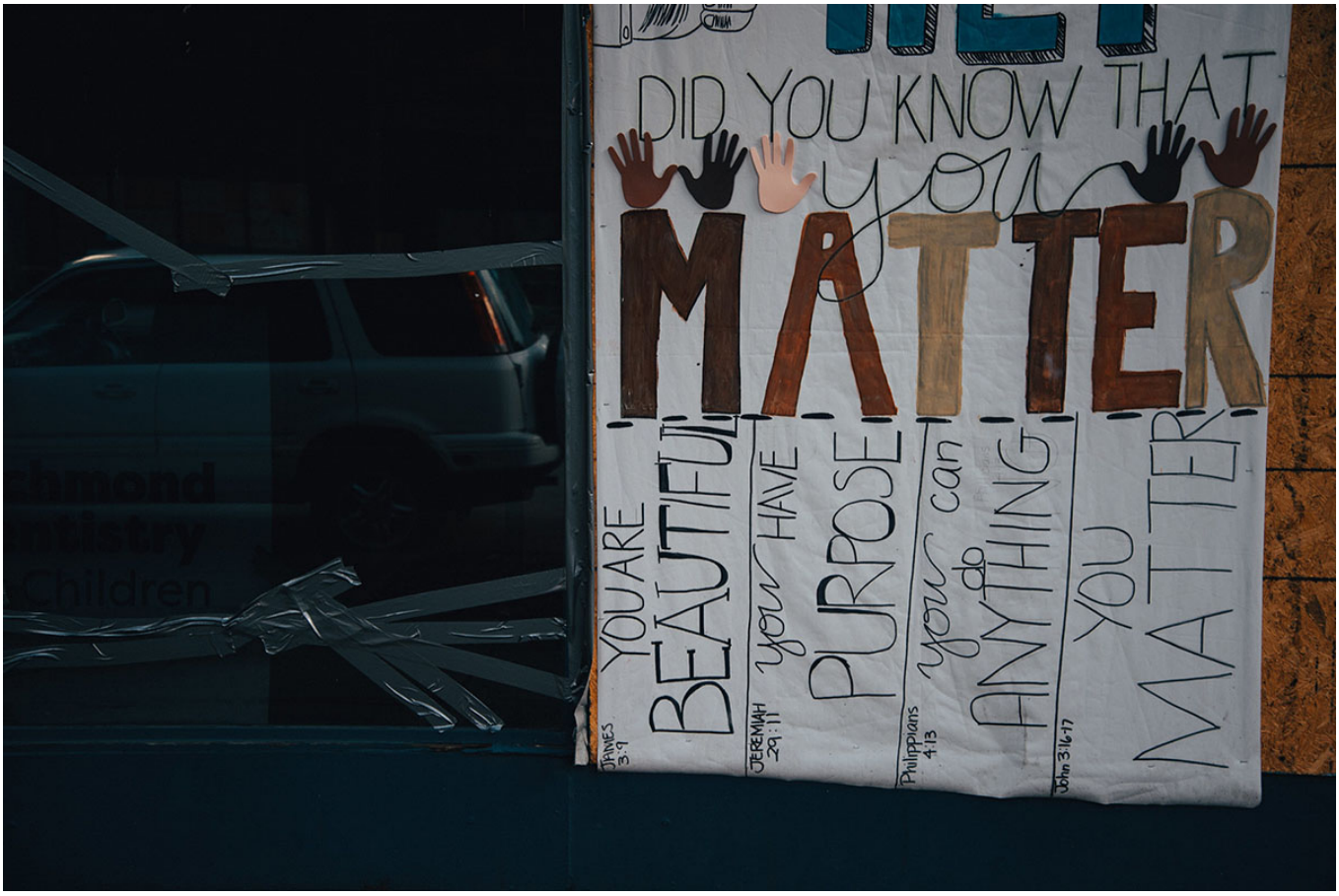


Figure 11.1: The juxtaposition of anger and hope. Over a window broken during protests in Richmond, Virginia, the business owner placed a sign that reads "Did You Know That You Matter. You are beautiful. You have purpose. You can do anything. You matter," and is accompanied with bible verses. (Credit: I threw a guitar a him/flickr)

Chapter Outline

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups
11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity
11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism
11.4 Intergroup Relationships
11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Trayvon Martin was a seventeen-year-old Black teenager. On the evening of February 26, 2012, he was visiting with his father and his father's fiancée in the Sanford, Florida multi-ethnic gated community where his father's fiancée lived. Trayvon went on foot to buy a snack from a nearby convenience store. As he was returning, George Zimmerman, a White Hispanic man and the community's neighborhood watch program coordinator, noticed him. In light of a recent rash of break-ins, Zimmerman called the police to report a person acting suspiciously, which he had done on many other occasions. During the call, Zimmerman said in reference to suspicious people, "[expletive] punks. Those [expletive], they always get away." The 911 operator told Zimmerman not to follow the teen, as was also stated in the police neighborhood watch guidelines that had been provided to Zimmerman. But Zimmerman did follow the teen, and, soon after, they had a physical confrontation. Several people in the community heard yelling, cries for help, and saw two people on the ground. According to Zimmerman, Martin attacked him, and in the ensuing scuffle, Zimmerman shot and killed Martin (CNN Library 2021).

A public outcry followed Martin's death. There were allegations of racial profiling—the use of race alone to determine whether to detain or investigate someone. As part of the initial investigation, Zimmerman was extensively interviewed by police, but was released under Florida's "Stand Your Ground" Law, which indicated police could not arrest him for his actions. About six weeks later, Zimmerman was arrested and charged with second-degree murder by a special prosecutor, Angela Corey, who had been appointed by Florida's governor. In the ensuing trial, he was found not guilty (CNN Library 2021).

The shooting, the public response, and the trial that followed offer a snapshot of the sociology of race. Do you think race played a role in Martin's death? Do you think race had an influence on the initial decision not to arrest Zimmerman, or on his later acquittal? Does society fear Black men, leading to racial profiling at an institutional level?

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10.2: Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Understand the difference between race and ethnicity
- Define a majority group (dominant group)
- Define a minority group (subordinate group)

While many students first entering a sociology classroom are accustomed to conflating the terms “race,” “ethnicity,” and “minority group,” these three terms have distinct meanings for sociologists. The idea of race refers to superficial physical differences that a particular society considers significant, while ethnicity describes shared culture. And the term "minority groups" describe groups that are subordinate, or that lack power in society regardless of skin color or country of origin. For example, in modern U.S. history, the elderly might be considered a minority group due to a diminished status that results from popular prejudice and discrimination against them. Ten percent of nursing home staff admitted to physically abusing an elderly person in the past year, and 40 percent admitted to committing psychological abuse (World Health Organization 2011). In this chapter we focus on racial and ethnic minorities.

What Is Race?

A human **race** is a grouping of humankind based on shared physical or social qualities that can vary from one society to another.

Historically, the concept of race has changed across cultures and eras, and has eventually become less connected with ancestral and familial ties, and more concerned with superficial physical characteristics. In the past, theorists developed categories of race based on various geographic regions, ethnicities, skin colors, and more. Their labels for racial groups have connoted regions or skin tones, for example.

German physician, zoologist, and anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) introduced one of the famous groupings by studying human skulls. Blumenbach divided humans into five races (MacCord 2014):

- Caucasian or White race: people of European, Middle Eastern, and North African origin
- Ethiopian or Black race: people of sub-Saharan Africans origin (sometimes spelled Aethiopian)
- Malayan or Brown race: people of Southeast Asian origin and Pacific Islanders
- Mongolian or Yellow race: people of all East Asian and some Central Asian origin
- American or Red race: people of North American origin or American Indians

Over time, descriptions of race like Blumenbach's have fallen into disuse, and the social construction of race is a more accepted way of understanding racial categories. Social science organizations including the American Association of Anthropologists, the American Sociological Association, and the American Psychological Association have all officially rejected explanations of race like those listed above. Research in this school of thought suggests that race is not biologically identifiable and that previous racial categories were based on pseudoscience; they were often used to justify racist practices (Omi and Winant 1994; Graves 2003). For example, some people used to think that genetics of race determined intelligence. While this idea was mostly put to rest in the later 20th Century, it resurged several times in the past 50 years, including the widely read and cited 1994 book, *The Bell Curve*. Researchers have since provided substantial evidence that refutes a biological-racial basis for intelligence, including the widespread closing of IQ gaps as Black people gained more access to education (Dickens 2006). This research and other confirming studies indicate that any generally lower IQ among a racial group was more about *nurture* than *nature*, to put it into the terms of the Socialization chapter.

While many of the historical considerations of race have been corrected in favor of more accurate and sensitive descriptions, some of the older terms remain. For example, it is generally unacceptable and insulting to refer to Asian people or Native American people with color-based terminology, but it is acceptable to refer to White and Black people in that way. In 2020, a number of publications announced that they would begin capitalizing the names of races, though not everyone used the same approach (Seipel 2020). This practice comes nearly a hundred years after sociologist and leader W.E.B. Du Bois drove newsrooms to capitalize "Negro," the widely used term at the time. And, finally, some members of racial groups (or ethnic groups, which are described below) "reclaim" terms previously used to insult them (Rao 2018). These examples are more evidence of the social construction of race, and our evolving relationships among people and groups.

What Is Ethnicity?

Ethnicity is sometimes used interchangeably with race, but they are very different concepts. Ethnicity is based on shared culture—the practices, norms, values, and beliefs of a group that might include shared language, religion, and traditions, among other commonalities. Like race, the term ethnicity is difficult to describe and its meaning has changed over time. And as with race, individuals may be identified or self-identify with ethnicities in complex, even contradictory, ways. For example, ethnic groups such as Irish, Italian American, Russian, Jewish, and Serbian might all be groups whose members are predominantly included in the "White" racial category. Ethnicity, like race, continues to be an identification method that individuals and institutions use today—whether through the census, diversity initiatives, nondiscrimination laws, or simply in personal day-to-day relations.

In some cases, ethnicity is incorrectly used as a synonym for national origin, but those constructions are technically different. National origin (itself sometimes confused with nationality) has to do with the geographic and political associations with a person's birthplace or residence. But people from a nation can be of a wide range of ethnicities, often unknown to people outside of the region, which leads to misconceptions. For example, someone in the United States may, with no ill-intent, refer to all Vietnamese people as an ethnic group. But Vietnam is home to 54 formally recognized ethnic groups.

Adding to the complexity: Sometimes, either to build bridges between ethnic groups, promote civil rights, gain recognition, or other reasons, diverse but closely associated ethnic groups may develop a "pan-ethnic" group. For example, the various ethnic groups and national origins of people from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and adjoining nations, who may share cultural, linguistic, or other values, may group themselves together in a collective identity. If they do so, they may not seek to erase their individual ethnicities, but finding the correct description and association can be challenging and depend on context. The large number of people who make up the Asian American community may embrace their collective identity in the context of the United States. However, that embrace may depend on people's ages, and may be expressed differently when speaking to different populations (Park 2008). For example, someone who identifies as Asian American while at home in Houston may not refer to themselves as such when they visit extended family in Japan. In a similar manner, a grouping of people from Mexico, Central America and South America—often referred to as Latinx, Latina, or Latino—may be embraced by some and rejected by others in the group (Martinez 2019).

What Are Minority Groups?

Sociologist Louis Wirth (1945) defined a minority group as "any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination." The term minority connotes discrimination, and in its sociological use, the term subordinate group can be used interchangeably with the term minority group, while the term dominant group is often substituted for the group that represents rulers or is in the majority who can access power and privilege in a given society. These definitions correlate to the concept that the dominant group is that which holds the most power in a given society, while subordinate groups are those who lack power compared to the dominant group.

Note that being a numerical minority is not a characteristic of being a minority group; sometimes larger groups can be considered minority groups due to their lack of power. It is the lack of power that is the predominant characteristic of a minority, or subordinate group. For example, consider apartheid in South Africa, in which a numerical majority (the Black inhabitants of the country) were exploited and oppressed by the White minority.

According to Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris (1958), a minority group is distinguished by five characteristics: (1) unequal treatment and less power over their lives, (2) distinguishing physical or cultural traits like skin color or language, (3) involuntary membership in the group, (4) awareness of subordination, and (5) high rate of in-group marriage. Additional examples of minority groups might include the LGBTQ community, religious practitioners whose faith is not widely practiced where they live, and people with disabilities.

Scapegoat theory, developed initially from Dollard's (1939) Frustration-Aggression theory, suggests that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group. History has shown us many examples of the scapegoating of a subordinate group. An example from the last century is the way Adolf Hitler blamed the Jewish population for Germany's social and economic problems. In the United States, recent immigrants have frequently been the scapegoat for the nation's—or an individual's—woes. Many states have enacted laws to disenfranchise immigrants; these laws are popular because they let the dominant group scapegoat a subordinate group.



Figure 11.2: Golfer Tiger Woods has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage. Individuals with multiple ethnic backgrounds are becoming more common. (Credit: familymwr/flickr)

Prior to the twentieth century, racial intermarriage (referred to as miscegenation) was extremely rare, and in many places, illegal. While the sexual subordination of enslaved people did result in children of mixed race, these children were usually considered Black, and therefore, property. There was no concept of multiple racial identities with the possible exception of the Creole. Creole society developed in the port city of New Orleans, where a mixed-race culture grew from French and African inhabitants. Unlike in other parts of the country, “Creoles of color” had greater social, economic, and educational opportunities than most African Americans.

Increasingly during the modern era, the removal of miscegenation laws and a trend toward equal rights and legal protection against racism have steadily reduced the social stigma attached to racial exogamy (exogamy refers to marriage outside a person’s core social unit). It is now common for the children of racially mixed parents to acknowledge and celebrate their various ethnic identities. Golfer Tiger Woods, for instance, has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage; he jokingly refers to his ethnicity as “Cablinasian,” a term he coined to combine several of his ethnic backgrounds. While this is the trend, it is not yet evident in all aspects of our society. For example, the U.S. Census only recently added additional categories for people to identify themselves, such as non-White Hispanic. A growing number of people chose multiple races to describe themselves on the 2020 Census, indicating that individuals have multiple identities.

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10.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe how major sociological perspectives view race and ethnicity
- Identify examples of culture of prejudice

Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

We can examine race and ethnicity through three major sociological perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. As you read through these theories, ask yourself which one makes the most sense and why.

Functionalism

Functionalism emphasizes that all the elements of society have functions that promote solidarity and maintain order and stability in society. Hence, we can observe people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds interacting harmoniously in a state of social balance. Problems arise when one or more racial or ethnic groups experience inequalities and discriminations. This creates tension and conflict resulting in temporary dysfunction of the social system. For example, the killing of a Black man George Floyd by a White police officer in 2020 stirred up protests demanding racial justice and changes in policing in the United States. To restore the society's pre-disturbed state or to seek a new equilibrium, the police department and various parts of the system require changes and compensatory adjustments.

Another way to apply the functionalist perspective to race and ethnicity is to discuss the way racism can contribute positively to the functioning of society by strengthening bonds between in-group members through the ostracism of out-group members. Consider how a community might increase solidarity by refusing to allow outsiders access. On the other hand, Rose (1951) suggested that dysfunctions associated with racism include the failure to take advantage of talent in the subjugated group, and that society must divert from other purposes the time and effort needed to maintain artificially constructed racial boundaries. Consider how much money, time, and effort went toward maintaining separate and unequal educational systems prior to the civil rights movement.

In the view of functionalism, racial and ethnic inequalities must have served an important function in order to exist as long as they have. This concept, sometimes, can be problematic. How can racism and discrimination contribute positively to society? Nash (1964) focused his argument on the way racism is functional for the dominant group, for example, suggesting that racism morally justifies a racially unequal society. Consider the way slave owners justified slavery in the antebellum South, by suggesting Black people were fundamentally inferior to White and preferred slavery to freedom.

Interactionism

For symbolic interactionists, race and ethnicity provide strong symbols as sources of identity. In fact, some interactionists propose that the symbols of race, not race itself, are what lead to racism. Famed Interactionist Herbert Blumer (1958) suggested that racial prejudice is formed through interactions between members of the dominant group: Without these interactions, individuals in the dominant group would not hold racist views. These interactions contribute to an abstract picture of the subordinate group that allows the dominant group to support its view of the subordinate group, and thus maintains the status quo. An example of this might be an individual whose beliefs about a particular group are based on images conveyed in popular media, and those are unquestionably believed because the individual has never personally met a member of that group.

Another way to apply the interactionist perspective is to look at how people define their races and the race of others. Some people who claim a White identity have a greater amount of skin pigmentation than some people who claim a Black identity; how did they come to define themselves as Black or White?

Conflict Theory

Conflict theories are often applied to inequalities of gender, social class, education, race, and ethnicity. A conflict theory perspective of U.S. history would examine the numerous past and current struggles between the White ruling class and racial and ethnic minorities, noting specific conflicts that have arisen when the dominant group perceived a threat from the minority group. In the late nineteenth century, the rising power of Black Americans after the Civil War resulted in draconian Jim Crow laws that severely limited Black political and social power. For example, Vivien Thomas (1910–1985), the Black surgical technician who helped develop the groundbreaking surgical technique that saves the lives of "blue babies" was classified as a janitor for many

years, and paid as such, despite the fact that he was conducting complicated surgical experiments. The years since the Civil War have showed a pattern of attempted disenfranchisement, with gerrymandering and voter suppression efforts aimed at predominantly minority neighborhoods.

Intersection Theory

Feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) further developed intersection theory, originally articulated in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes (Figure 11.4). When we examine race and how it can bring us both advantages and disadvantages, it is important to acknowledge that the way we experience race is shaped, for example, by our gender and class. Multiple layers of disadvantage intersect to create the way we experience race. For example, if we want to understand prejudice, we must understand that the prejudice focused on a White woman because of her gender is very different from the layered prejudice focused on an Asian woman in poverty, who is affected by stereotypes related to being poor, being a woman, and her ethnic status.

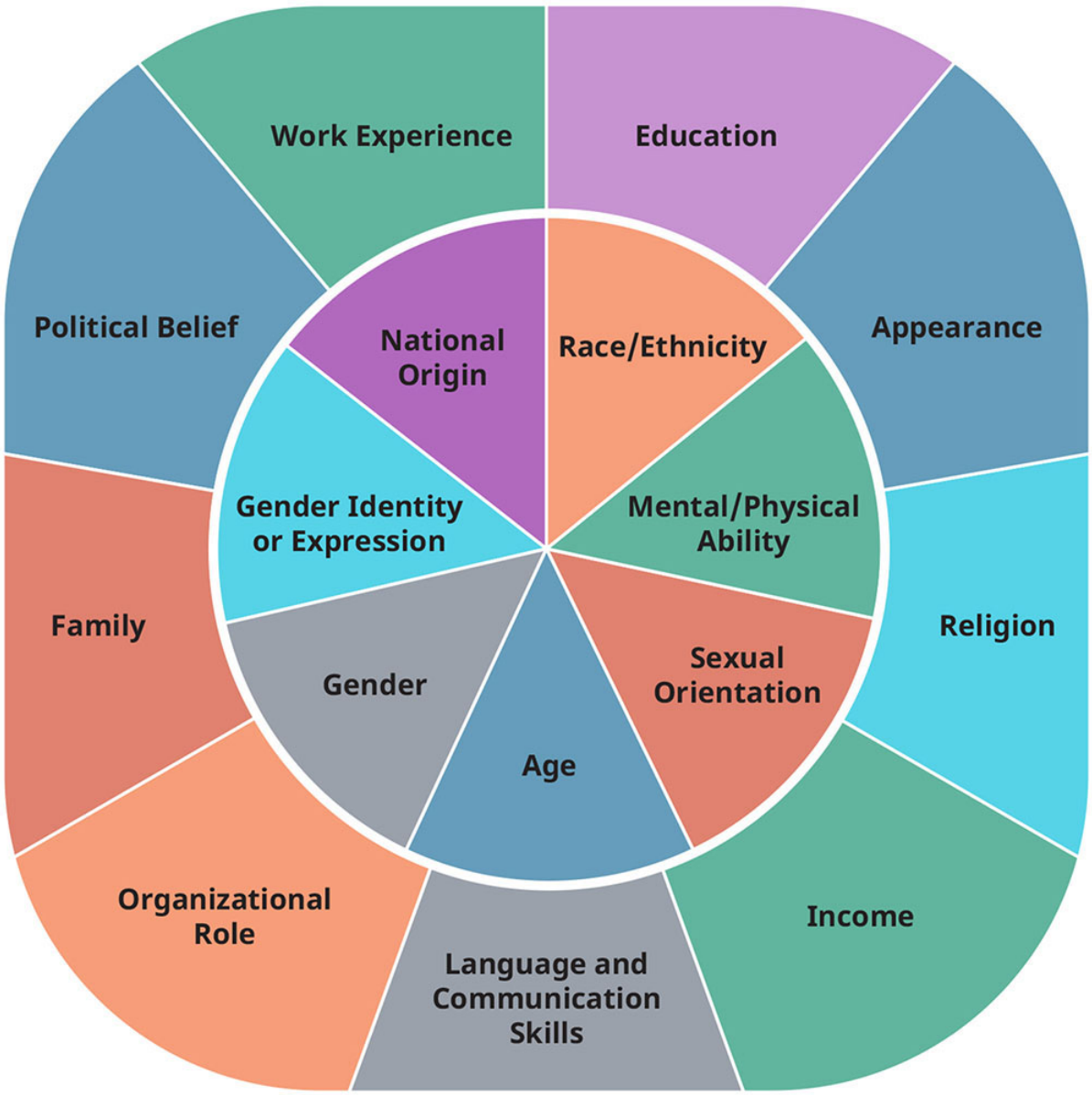


Figure 11.3: Our identities are formed by dozens of factors, sometimes represented in intersection wheels. Consider the subset of identity elements represented here. Generally, the outer ring contains elements that may change relatively often, while the elements in the inner circle are often considered more permanent. (There are certainly exceptions.) How does each contribute to who you are, and how would possible change alter your self-defined identity?

Culture of Prejudice

Culture of prejudice refers to the theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture. We grow up surrounded by images of stereotypes and casual expressions of racism and prejudice. Consider the casually racist imagery on grocery store shelves or the stereotypes that fill popular movies and advertisements. It is easy to see how someone living in the Northeastern United States, who may know no Mexican Americans personally, might gain a stereotyped impression from such sources as Speedy Gonzalez or Taco Bell's talking Chihuahua. Because we are all exposed to these images and thoughts, it is impossible to know to what extent they have influenced our thought processes.

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10.4: Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the difference between stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and racism
- Identify different types of discrimination
- View racial tension through a sociological lens

It is important to learn about stereotypes before discussing the terms prejudice, discrimination, and racism that are often used interchangeably in everyday conversation. Stereotypes are oversimplified generalizations about groups of people. Stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation—almost any characteristic. They may be positive (usually about one's own group) but are often negative (usually toward other groups, such as when members of a dominant racial group suggest that a subordinate racial group is stupid or lazy). In either case, the stereotype is a generalization that doesn't take individual differences into account.

Where do stereotypes come from? In fact, new stereotypes are rarely created; rather, they are recycled from subordinate groups that have assimilated into society and are reused to describe newly subordinate groups. For example, many stereotypes that are currently used to characterize new immigrants were used earlier in American history to characterize Irish and Eastern European immigrants.

Prejudice

Prejudice refers to the beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes someone holds about a group. A prejudice is not based on personal experience; instead, it is a prejudgment, originating outside actual experience. Recall from the chapter on Crime and Deviance that the criminalization of marijuana was based on anti-immigrant sentiment; proponents used fictional, fear-instilling stories of "reefer madness" and rampant immoral and illegal activities among Spanish-speaking people to justify new laws and harsh treatment of marijuana users. Many people who supported criminalizing marijuana had never met any of the new immigrants who were rumored to use it; the ideas were based in prejudice.

While prejudice is based in beliefs outside of experience, experience can lead people to feel that their prejudice is confirmed or justified. This is a type of confirmation bias. For example, if someone is taught to believe that a certain ethnic group has negative attributes, every negative act committed someone in that group can be seen as confirming the prejudice. Even a minor social offense committed by a member of the ethnic group, like crossing the street outside the crosswalk or talking too loudly on a bus, could confirm the prejudice.

While prejudice often originates outside experience, it isn't instinctive. Prejudice—as well as the stereotypes that lead to it and the discrimination that stems from it—is most often taught and learned. The teaching arrives in many forms, from direct instruction or indoctrination, to observation and socialization. Movies, books, charismatic speakers, and even a desire to impress others can all support the development of prejudices.



Figure 11.4: Stereotypes and prejudices are persistent and apply to almost every category of people. They are also subject to confirmation bias, in which any bit of supporting evidence gives a person more confidence in their belief. For example, if you think older people are bad drivers, every time you see an accident involving an older driver, it's likely to increase your confidence in your stereotype. Even if you hear the statistics that younger drivers cause more accidents than older drivers, the fulfillment of your stereotype is difficult to overcome. (Credit: Chris Freser/flickr)

Discrimination

While prejudice refers to biased thinking, discrimination consists of actions against a group of people. Discrimination can be based on race, ethnicity, age, religion, health, and other categories. For example, discrimination based on race or ethnicity can take many forms, from unfair housing practices such as redlining to biased hiring systems. Overt discrimination has long been part of U.S. history. In the late nineteenth century, it was not uncommon for business owners to hang signs that read, "Help Wanted: No Irish Need Apply." And southern Jim Crow laws, with their "Whites Only" signs, exemplified overt discrimination that is not tolerated today.

Discrimination also manifests in different ways. The scenarios above are examples of individual discrimination, but other types exist. Institutional discrimination occurs when a societal system has developed with embedded disenfranchisement of a group, such as the U.S. military's historical nonacceptance of minority sexualities (the "don't ask, don't tell" policy reflected this norm).

While the form and severity of discrimination vary significantly, they are considered forms of oppression. Institutional discrimination can also include the promotion of a group's status, such in the case of privilege, which is the benefits people receive simply by being part of the dominant group.

Most people have some level of privilege, whether it has to do with health, ability, race, or gender. When discussing race, the focus is often on White privilege, which is the societal privilege that benefits White people, or those perceived to be White, over non-White people in some societies, including the United States. Most White people are willing to admit that non-White people live with a set of disadvantages due to the color of their skin. But until they gain a good degree of self-awareness, few people are willing to acknowledge the benefits they themselves receive by being a part of the dominant group. Why not? Some may feel it lessens their accomplishments, others may feel a degree of guilt, and still others may feel that admitting to privilege makes them seem like a bad or mean person. But White (or other dominant) privilege is an institutional condition, not a personal one. It exists whether the person asks for it or not. In fact, a pioneering thinker on the topic, Peggy McIntosh, noted that she didn't recognize privilege because, in fact, it was not based in meanness. Instead, it was an "invisible weightless knapsack full of special provisions" that she didn't ask for, yet from which she still benefitted (McIntosh 1989). As the reference indicates, McIntosh's first major publication about White privilege was released in 1989; many people have only become familiar with the term in recent years.

Prejudice and discrimination can overlap and intersect in many ways. To illustrate, here are four examples of how prejudice and discrimination can occur. Unprejudiced nondiscriminators are open-minded, tolerant, and accepting individuals. Unprejudiced discriminators might be those who unthinkingly practice sexism in their workplace by not considering women or gender nonconforming people for certain positions that have traditionally been held by men. Prejudiced nondiscriminators are those who hold racist beliefs but don't act on them, such as a racist store owner who serves minority customers. Prejudiced discriminators include those who actively make disparaging remarks about others or who perpetuate hate crimes.

Racism

Racism is a stronger type of prejudice and discrimination used to justify inequalities against individuals by maintaining that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others; it is a set of practices used by a racial dominant group to maximize advantages for itself by disadvantaging racial minority groups. Such practices have affected wealth gap, employment, housing discrimination, government surveillance, incarceration, drug arrests, immigration arrests, infant mortality and much more (Race Forward 2021).

Broadly, individuals belonging to minority groups experience both individual racism and systemic racism during their lifetime. While reading the following some of the common forms of racism, ask yourself, “Am I a part of this racism?” “How can I contribute to stop racism?”

- Individual or Interpersonal Racism refers to prejudice and discrimination executed by individuals consciously and unconsciously that occurs between individuals. Examples include telling a racist joke and believing in the superiority of White people.
- Systemic Racism, also called structural racism or institutional racism, is systems and structures that have procedures or processes that disadvantages racial minority groups. Systemic racism occurs in organizations as discriminatory treatments and unfair policies based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for White people over people of color. For example, a school system where students of color are distributed into underfunded schools and out of the higher-resourced schools.
- Racial Profiling is a type of systemic racism that involves the singling out of racial minorities for differential treatment, usually harsher treatment. The disparate treatment of racial minorities by law enforcement officials is a common example of racial profiling in the United States. For example, a study on the Driver's License Privilege to All Minnesota Residents from 2008 to 2010 found that the percentage of Latinos arrested was disproportionally high (Feist 2013). Similarly, the disproportionate number of Black men arrested, charged, and convicted of crimes reflect racial profiling.
- Historical Racism is economic inequality or social disparity caused by past racism. For example, African-Americans have had their opportunities in wealth, education and employment adversely affected due to the mistreatment of their ancestors during the slavery and post-slavery period (Wilson 2012).
- Cultural Racism occurs when the assumption of inferiority of one or more races is built into the culture of a society. For example, the European culture is considered supposedly more mature, evolved and rational than other cultures (Blaut 1992). A study showed that White and Asian American students with high GPAs experience greater social acceptance while Black and Native American students with high GPAs are rejected by their peers (Fuller-Rowell and Doan 2010).
- Colorism is a form of racism, in which someone believes one type of skin tone is superior or inferior to another within a racial group. For example, if an employer believes a Black employee with a darker skin tone is less capable than a Black employee with lighter skin tone, that is colorism. Studies suggest that darker skinned African Americans experience more discrimination than lighter skinned African Americans (Herring, Keith, and Horton 2004; Klonoff and Landrine 2000).
- Color-Avoidance Racism (sometimes referred to as "colorblind racism") is an avoidance of racial language by European-Americans that the racism is no longer an issue. The U.S. cultural narrative that typically focuses on individual racism fails to recognize systemic racism. It has arisen since the post-Civil Rights era and supports racism while avoiding any reference to race (Bonilla-Silva (2015).

How to Be an Antiracist

Almost all mainstream voices in the United States oppose racism. Despite this, racism is prevalent in several forms. For example, when a newspaper uses people's race to identify individuals accused of a crime, it may enhance stereotypes of a certain minority. Another example of racist practices is racial steering, in which real estate agents direct prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race.

Racist attitudes and beliefs are often more insidious and harder to pin down than specific racist practices. They become more complex due to implicit bias (also referred to as unconscious bias) which is the process of associating stereotypes or attitudes

towards categories of people without conscious awareness – which can result in unfair actions and decisions that are at odds with one's conscious beliefs about fairness and equality (Osta and Vasquez 2021). For example, in schools we often see "honors" and "gifted" classes quickly filled with White students while the majority of Black and Latino students are placed in the lower track classes. As a result, our mind consciously and unconsciously starts to associate Black and Latino students with being less intelligent, less capable. Osta and Vasquez (2021) argue that placing the student of color into a lower and less rigorous track, we reproduce the inequity and the vicious cycle of structural racism and implicit bias continues.

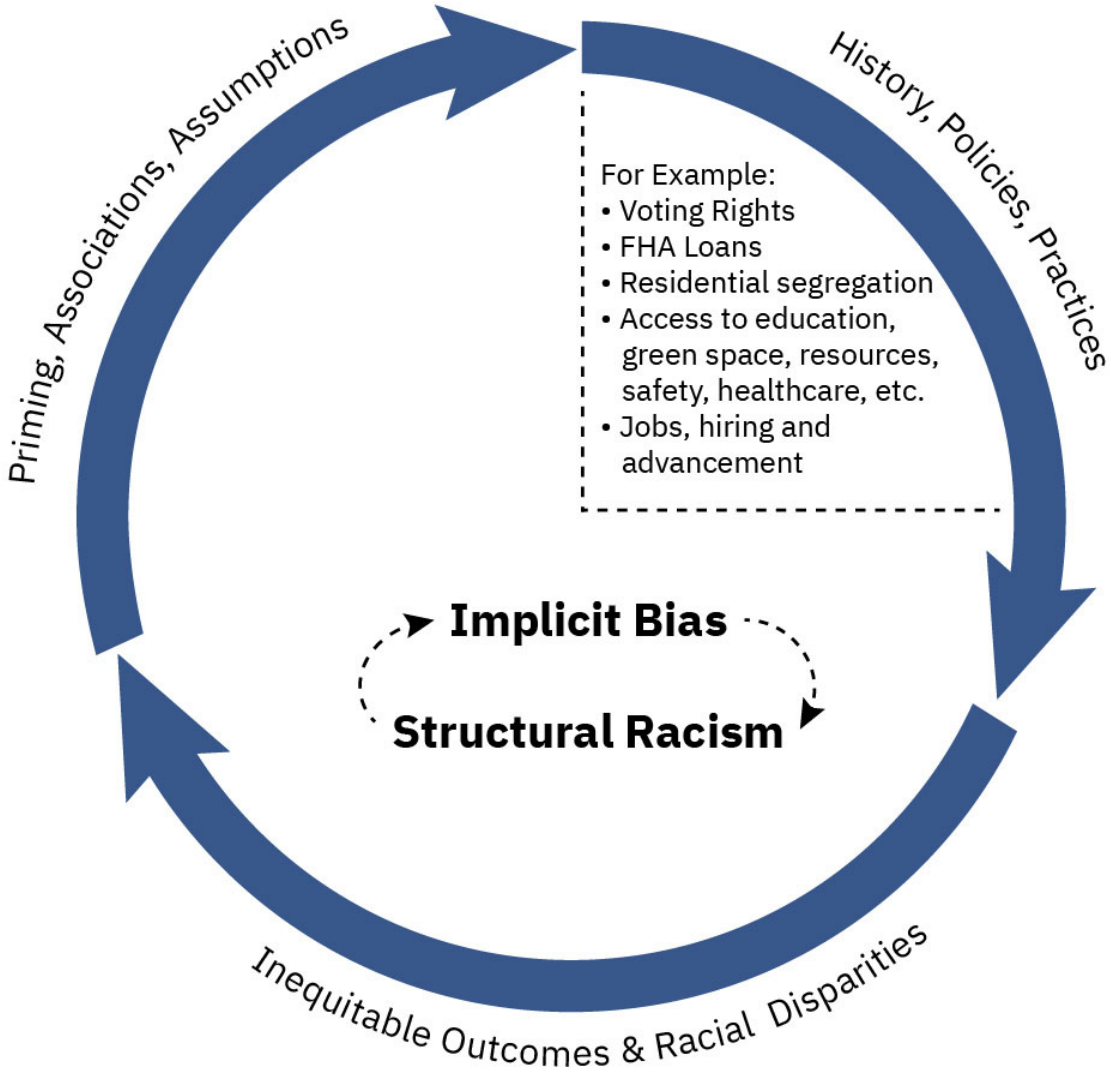


Figure 11.5: Implicit Bias and Structural Racialization (Osta and Vasquez 2021)

If everyone becomes antiracist, breaking the vicious cycle of structural racism and implicit bias may not be far away. To be antiracist is a radical choice in the face of history, requiring a radical reorientation of our consciousness (Kendi 2019). Proponents of anti-racism indicate that we must work collaboratively within ourselves, our institutions, and our networks to challenge racism at local, national and global levels. The practice of anti-racism is everyone's ongoing work that everyone should pursue at least the following (Carter and Snyder 2020):

- Understand and own the racist ideas in which we have been socialized and the racist biases that these ideas have created within each of us.
- Identify racist policies, practices, and procedures and replace them with antiracist policies, practices, and procedures.

Anti-racism need not be confrontational in the sense of engaging in direct arguments with people, feeling terrible about your privilege, or denying your own needs or success. In fact, many people who are a part of a minority acknowledge the need for allies from the dominant group (Melaku 2020). Understanding and owning the racist ideas, and recognizing your own privilege, is a good and brave thing.

We cannot erase racism simply by enacting laws to abolish it, because it is embedded in our complex reality that relates to educational, economic, criminal, political, and other social systems. Importantly, everyone can become antiracist by making conscious choices daily. Being racist or antiracist is not about who you are; it is about what you do (Carter and Snyder 2020).

What does it mean to you to be an "anti-racist"? How do see the recent events or protests in your community, country or somewhere else? Are they making any desired changes?

Big Picture: Racial Tensions in the United States

The death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014 illustrates racial tensions in the United States as well as the overlap between prejudice, discrimination, and institutional racism. On that day, Brown, a young unarmed Black man, was killed by a White police officer named Darren Wilson. During the incident, Wilson directed Brown and his friend to walk on the sidewalk instead of in the street. While eyewitness accounts vary, they agree that an altercation occurred between Wilson and Brown. Wilson's version has him shooting Brown in self-defense after Brown assaulted him, while Dorian Johnson, a friend of Brown also present at the time, claimed that Brown first ran away, then turned with his hands in the air to surrender, after which Wilson shot him repeatedly (Nobles and Bosman 2014). Three autopsies independently confirmed that Brown was shot six times (Lowery and Fears 2014).

The shooting focused attention on a number of race-related tensions in the United States. First, members of the predominantly Black community viewed Brown's death as the result of a White police officer racially profiling a Black man (Nobles and Bosman 2014). In the days after, it was revealed that only three members of the town's fifty-three-member police force were Black (Nobles and Bosman 2014). The national dialogue shifted during the next few weeks, with some commentators pointing to a nationwide sedimentation of racial inequality and identifying redlining in Ferguson as a cause of the unbalanced racial composition in the community, in local political establishments, and in the police force (Bouie 2014). Redlining is the practice of routinely refusing mortgages for households and businesses located in predominately minority communities, while sedimentation of racial inequality describes the intergenerational impact of both practical and legalized racism that limits the abilities of Black people to accumulate wealth.

Ferguson's racial imbalance may explain in part why, even though in 2010 only about 63 percent of its population was Black, in 2013 Black people were detained in 86 percent of stops, 92 percent of searches, and 93 percent of arrests (Missouri Attorney General's Office 2014). In addition, de facto segregation in Ferguson's schools, a race-based wealth gap, urban sprawl, and a Black unemployment rate three times that of the White unemployment rate worsened existing racial tensions in Ferguson while also reflecting nationwide racial inequalities (Bouie 2014).

This situation has not much changed in the United States. After Michael Brown, dozens of unarmed Black people have been shot and killed by police. Studies find no change to the racial disparity in the use of deadly force by police (Belli 2020). Do you think that racial tension can be reduced by stopping police action against racial minorities? What types of policies and practices are important to reduce racial tension? Who are responsible? Why?

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10.5: Intergroup Relationships

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain different intergroup relations in terms of their relative levels of tolerance
- Give historical and/or contemporary examples of each type of intergroup relation

Intergroup relations (relationships between different groups of people) range along a spectrum between tolerance and intolerance. The most tolerant form of intergroup relations is pluralism, in which no distinction is made between minority and majority groups, but instead there's equal standing. At the other end of the continuum are amalgamation, expulsion, and even genocide—stark examples of intolerant intergroup relations.

Pluralism

Pluralism is represented by the ideal of the United States as a "salad bowl": a great mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the flavor of the whole. True pluralism is characterized by mutual respect on the part of all cultures, both dominant and subordinate, creating a multicultural environment of acceptance. In reality, true pluralism is a difficult goal to reach. In the United States, the mutual respect required by pluralism is often missing, and the nation's past model of a melting pot posits a society where cultural differences aren't embraced as much as erased.

Assimilation

Assimilation describes the process by which a minority individual or group gives up its own identity by taking on the characteristics of the dominant culture. In the United States, which has a history of welcoming and absorbing immigrants from different lands, assimilation has been a function of immigration.



Figure 11.6: For many immigrants to the United States, the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of freedom and a new life. Unfortunately, they often encounter prejudice and discrimination. (Credit: Mark Heard/flickr)

Most people in the United States have immigrant ancestors. In relatively recent history, between 1890 and 1920, the United States became home to around 24 million immigrants. In the decades since then, further waves of immigrants have come to these shores and have eventually been absorbed into U.S. culture, sometimes after facing extended periods of prejudice and discrimination. Assimilation may lead to the loss of the minority group's cultural identity as they become absorbed into the dominant culture, but assimilation has minimal to no impact on the majority group's cultural identity.

Some groups may keep only symbolic gestures of their original ethnicity. For instance, many Irish Americans may celebrate Saint Patrick's Day, many Hindu Americans enjoy a Diwali festival, and many Mexican Americans may celebrate *Cinco de Mayo* (a May 5 acknowledgment of the Mexican victory over the French Empire at the Battle of Puebla). However, for the rest of the year, other aspects of their originating culture may be forgotten.

Assimilation is antithetical to the "salad bowl" created by pluralism; rather than maintaining their own cultural flavor, subordinate cultures give up their own traditions in order to conform to their new environment. Sociologists measure the degree to which immigrants have assimilated to a new culture with four benchmarks: socioeconomic status, spatial concentration, language assimilation, and intermarriage. When faced with racial and ethnic discrimination, it can be difficult for new immigrants to fully

assimilate. Language assimilation, in particular, can be a formidable barrier, limiting employment and educational options and therefore constraining growth in socioeconomic status.

Amalgamation

Amalgamation is the process by which a minority group and a majority group combine to form a new group. Amalgamation creates the classic “melting pot” analogy; unlike the “salad bowl,” in which each culture retains its individuality, the “melting pot” ideal sees the combination of cultures that results in a new culture entirely.

Amalgamationin the form of miscegenation is achieved through intermarriage between races. In the United States, antimiscegenation laws, which criminalized interracial marriage, flourished in the South during the Jim Crow era. It wasn’t until 1967’s *Loving v. Virginia* that the last antimiscegenation law was struck from the books, making these laws unconstitutional.

Genocide

Genocide, the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group, is the most toxic intergroup relationship. Historically, we can see that genocide has included both the intent to exterminate a group and the function of exterminating of a group, intentional or not.

Possibly the most well-known case of genocide is Hitler’s attempt to exterminate the Jewish people in the first part of the twentieth century. Also known as the Holocaust, the explicit goal of Hitler’s “Final Solution” was the eradication of European Jewish people, as well as the destruction of other minority groups such as Catholics, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ people. With forced emigration, concentration camps, and mass executions in gas chambers, Hitler’s Nazi regime was responsible for the deaths of 12 million people, 6 million of whom were Jewish. Hitler’s intent was clear, and the high Jewish death toll certainly indicates that Hitler and his regime committed genocide. But how do we understand genocide that is not so overt and deliberate?

The treatment of the Native Americans by the European colonizers is an example of genocide committed against indigenous people. Some historians estimate that Native American populations dwindled from approximately 12 million people in the year 1500 to barely 237,000 by the year 1900 (Lewy 2004). European settlers coerced American Indians off their own lands, often causing thousands of deaths in forced removals, such as occurred in the Cherokee or Potawatomi Trail of Tears. Settlers also enslaved Native Americans and forced them to give up their religious and cultural practices. But the major cause of Native American death was neither slavery nor war nor forced removal: it was the introduction of European diseases and Native American lack of immunity to them. Smallpox, diphtheria, and measles flourished among indigenous American tribes who had no exposure to the diseases and no ability to fight them. Quite simply, these diseases decimated the tribes. The use of diseases as weapon was most likely unintentional in some cases and intentional in others. For example, during the Seven Years War, the British gave smallpox-infected blankets to the Native tribes in order to "reduce them," and this and similar practices likely continued throughout the centuries-long assault on the Native American people.

Genocide is not a just a historical concept; it is practiced even in the twenty- first century. For example, ethnic and geographic conflicts in the Darfur region of Sudan have led to hundreds of thousands of deaths. As part of an ongoing land conflict, the Sudanese government and their state-sponsored Janjaweed militia have led a campaign of killing, forced displacement, and systematic rape of Darfuri people. Although a treaty was signed in 2011, the peace is fragile.

Expulsion

Expulsion refers to a subordinate group being forced, by a dominant group, to leave a certain area or country. As seen in the examples of the Trail of Tears and the Holocaust, expulsion can be a factor in genocide. However, it can also stand on its own as a destructive group interaction. Expulsion has often occurred historically with an ethnic or racial basis. In the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 in 1942, after the Japanese government’s attack on Pearl Harbor. The Order authorized the establishment of internment camps for anyone with as little as one-eighth Japanese ancestry (i.e., one great-grandparent who was Japanese). Over 120,000 legal Japanese residents and Japanese U.S. citizens, many of them children, were held in these camps for up to four years, despite the fact that there was never any evidence of collusion or espionage. (In fact, many Japanese Americans continued to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States by serving in the U.S. military during the War.) In the 1990s, the U.S. executive branch issued a formal apology for this expulsion; reparation efforts continue today.

Segregation

Segregation refers to the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions. It is important to distinguish between *de jure* segregation (segregation that is enforced by law) and *de facto* segregation (segregation

that occurs without laws but because of other factors). A stark example of *de jure* segregation is the apartheid movement of South Africa, which existed from 1948 to 1994. Under apartheid, Black South Africans were stripped of their civil rights and forcibly relocated to areas that segregated them physically from their White compatriots. Only after decades of degradation, violent uprisings, and international advocacy was apartheid finally abolished.

De jure segregation occurred in the United States for many years after the Civil War. During this time, many former Confederate states passed Jim Crow laws that required segregated facilities for Black and White people. These laws were codified in 1896's landmark Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which stated that "separate but equal" facilities were constitutional. For the next five decades, Black people were subjected to legalized discrimination, forced to live, work, and go to school in separate—but *unequal*—facilities. It wasn't until 1954 and the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that the Supreme Court declared that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," thus ending *de jure* segregation in the United States.



Figure 11.7: In the "Jim Crow" South, it was legal to have "separate but equal" facilities for Black people and White people. (Credit: Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons)

De facto segregation, however, cannot be abolished by any court mandate. Few institutions desegregated as a result of *Brown*; in fact, government and even military intervention was necessary to enforce the ruling, and it took the Civil Rights Act and other laws to formalize the equality. Segregation is still alive and well in the United States, with different racial or ethnic groups often segregated by neighborhood, borough, or parish. Sociologists use segregation indices to measure racial segregation of different races in different areas. The indices employ a scale from zero to 100, where zero is the most integrated and 100 is the least. In the New York metropolitan area, for instance, the Black-White segregation index was seventy-nine for the years 2005–2009. This means that 79 percent of either Black or White people would have to move in order for each neighborhood to have the same racial balance as the whole metro region (Population Studies Center 2010).

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10.6: Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Compare and contrast the different experiences of various ethnic groups in the United States
- Apply theories of intergroup relations, race, and ethnicity to different subordinate groups

When colonists came to the New World, they found a land that did not need "discovering" since it was already inhabited. While the first wave of immigrants came from Western Europe, eventually the bulk of people entering North America were from Northern Europe, then Eastern Europe, then Latin America and Asia. And let us not forget the forced immigration of enslaved Africans. Most of these groups underwent a period of disenfranchisement in which they were relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy before they managed (for those who could) to achieve social mobility. Because of this achievement, the U.S. is still a "dream destination" for millions of people living in other countries. Many thousands of people, including children, arrive here every year both documented and undocumented. Most Americans welcome and support new immigrants wholeheartedly. For example, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act introduced in 2001 provides a means for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children to gain a pathway to permanent legal status. Similarly, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) introduced in 2012 gives young undocumented immigrants a work permit and protection from deportation (Georgetown Law 2021). Today, the U.S. society is multicultural, multiracial and multiethnic that is composed of people from several national origins.

The U.S. Census Bureau collects racial data in accordance with guidelines provided by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB 2016). These data are based on self-identification; generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country that include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups. People may choose to report more than one race to indicate their racial mixture, such as "American Indian" and "White." People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race. OMB requires five minimum categories: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The U.S. Census Bureau's QuickFacts as of July 1, 2019 showed that over 328 million people representing various racial groups were living in the U.S. (Table 11.1).

Table 11.1: Percentage of Race and Hispanic Origin Population 2019 (Table courtesy of U.S. Census Bureau)

Population estimates, July 1, 2019, (V2019)	328,239,523
Race and Hispanic Origin	**Percentage (%)**
White alone	76.3
Black or African American alone	13.4
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1.3
Asian alone	5.9
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.2
Two or More Races	2.8
Hispanic or Latino	18.5
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	60.1

To clarify the terminology in the table, note that the U.S. Census Bureau defines racial groups as follows:

- White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- Black or African American – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
- American Indian or Alaska Native – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- Asian – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and

Vietnam.

- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

Information on race is required for many Federal programs and is critical in making policy decisions, particularly for civil rights including racial justice. States use these data to meet legislative redistricting principles. Race data also are used to promote equal employment opportunities and to assess racial disparities in health and environmental risks that demonstrates the extent to which this multiculturality is embraced. The many manifestations of multiculturalism carry significant political repercussions. The sections below will describe how several groups became part of U.S. society, discuss the history of intergroup relations for each faction, and assess each group's status today.

Native Americans

Native Americans are Indigenous peoples, the only nonimmigrant people in the United States. According to the National Congress of American Indians, Native Americans are "All Native people of the United States and its trust territories (i.e., American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, Chamorros, and American Samoans), as well as persons from Canadian First Nations and Indigenous communities in Mexico and Central and South America who are U.S. residents (NCAI 2020, p. 11)." Native Americans once numbered in the millions but by 2010 made up only 0.9 percent of U.S. populace; see above (U.S. Census 2010). Currently, about 2.9 million people identify themselves as Native American alone, while an additional 2.3 million identify themselves as Native American mixed with another ethnic group (Norris, Vines, and Hoeffel 2012).

Sociology in the Real World: Sports Teams with Native American Names



Figure 11.8: Many Native Americans (and others) believe sports teams with names like the Indians, Braves, and Warriors perpetuate unwelcome stereotypes. The Not Your Mascot protest was one of many directed at the then Washington Redskins, which eventually changed its name. (Credit: Fibonacci Blue/fickr)

The sports world abounds with team names like the Indians, the Warriors, the Braves, and even the Savages and Redskins. These names arise from historically prejudiced views of Native Americans as fierce, brave, and strong: attributes that would be beneficial to a sports team, but are not necessarily beneficial to people in the United States who should be seen as more than that.

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has been campaigning against the use of such mascots, asserting that the "warrior savage myth . . . reinforces the racist view that Indians are uncivilized and uneducated and it has been used to justify policies of forced assimilation and destruction of Indian culture" (NCAI Resolution #TUL-05-087 2005). The campaign has met with limited success. While some teams have changed their names, hundreds of professional, college, and K–12 school teams still have names derived from this stereotype. Another group, American Indian Cultural Support (AICS), is especially concerned with the use of such names at K–12 schools, influencing children when they should be gaining a fuller and more realistic understanding of Native Americans than such stereotypes supply.

After years of pressure and with a wider sense of social justice and cultural sensitivity, the Washington Football Team removed their offensive name before the 2020 season, and the Cleveland Major League Baseball team announced it would change its name after the 2021 season.

What do you think about such names? Should they be allowed or banned? What argument would a symbolic interactionist make on this topic?

History of Intergroup Relations

Native American culture prior to European settlement is referred to as Pre-Columbian: that is, prior to the coming of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Mistakenly believing that he had landed in the East Indies, Columbus named the indigenous people "Indians," a name that has persisted for centuries despite being a geographical misnomer and one used to blanket hundreds of sovereign tribal nations (NCAI 2020).

The history of intergroup relations between European colonists and Native Americans is a brutal one. As discussed in the section on genocide, the effect of European settlement of the Americans was to nearly destroy the indigenous population. And although Native Americans' lack of immunity to European diseases caused the most deaths, overt mistreatment and massacres of Native Americans by Europeans were devastating as well.

From the first Spanish colonists to the French, English, and Dutch who followed, European settlers took what land they wanted and expanded across the continent at will. If indigenous people tried to retain their stewardship of the land, Europeans fought them off with superior weapons. Europeans' domination of the Americas was indeed a conquest; one scholar points out that Native Americans are the only minority group in the United States whose subordination occurred purely through conquest by the dominant group (Marger 1993).

After the establishment of the United States government, discrimination against Native Americans was codified and formalized in a series of laws intended to subjugate them and keep them from gaining any power. Some of the most impactful laws are as follows:

- The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced the relocation of any Native tribes east of the Mississippi River to lands west of the river.
- The Indian Appropriation Acts funded further removals and declared that no Indian tribe could be recognized as an independent nation, tribe, or power with which the U.S. government would have to make treaties. This made it even easier for the U.S. government to take land it wanted.
- The Dawes Act of 1887 reversed the policy of isolating Native Americans on reservations, instead forcing them onto individual properties that were intermingled with White settlers, thereby reducing their capacity for power as a group.

Native American culture was further eroded by the establishment of boarding schools in the late nineteenth century. These schools, run by both Christian missionaries and the United States government, had the express purpose of "civilizing" Native American children and assimilating them into White society. The boarding schools were located off-reservation to ensure that children were separated from their families and culture. Schools forced children to cut their hair, speak English, and practice Christianity. Physical and sexual abuses were rampant for decades; only in 1987 did the Bureau of Indian Affairs issue a policy on sexual abuse in boarding schools. Some scholars argue that many of the problems that Native Americans face today result from almost a century of mistreatment at these boarding schools.

Current Status

The eradication of Native American culture continued until the 1960s, when Native Americans were able to participate in and benefit from the civil rights movement. The Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 guaranteed Indian tribes most of the rights of the United States Bill of Rights. New laws like the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975 and the Education Assistance Act of the same year recognized tribal governments and gave them more power. Indian boarding schools have dwindled to only a few, and

Native American cultural groups are striving to preserve and maintain old traditions to keep them from being lost forever. Today, Native Americans are citizens of three sovereigns: their tribal nations, the United States, and the state in which they reside (NCAI 2020).

However, Native Americans (some of whom wish to be called American Indians so as to avoid the "savage" connotations of the term "native") still suffer the effects of centuries of degradation. Long-term poverty, inadequate education, cultural dislocation, and high rates of unemployment contribute to Native American populations falling to the bottom of the economic spectrum. Native Americans also suffer disproportionately with lower life expectancies than most groups in the United States.

African Americans

As discussed in the section on race, the term African American can be a misnomer for many individuals. Many people with dark skin may have their more recent roots in Europe or the Caribbean, seeing themselves as Dominican American or Dutch American, for example. Further, actual immigrants from Africa may feel that they have more of a claim to the term African American than those who are many generations removed from ancestors who originally came to this country.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2019) estimates that at least 13.4 percent of the United States' population is Black.

How and Why They Came

African Americans are the exemplar minority group in the United States whose ancestors did not come here by choice. A Dutch sea captain brought the first Africans to the Virginia colony of Jamestown in 1619 and sold them as indentured servants. (Indentured servants are people who are committed to work for a certain period of time, typically without formal pay). This was not an uncommon practice for either Black or White people, and indentured servants were in high demand. For the next century, Black and White indentured servants worked side by side. But the growing agricultural economy demanded greater and cheaper labor, and by 1705, Virginia passed the slave codes declaring that any foreign-born non-Christian could be enslaved, and that enslaved people were considered property.

The next 150 years saw the rise of U.S. slavery, with Black Africans being kidnapped from their own lands and shipped to the New World on the trans-Atlantic journey known as the Middle Passage. Once in the Americas, the Black population grew until U.S.-born Black people outnumbered those born in Africa. But colonial (and later, U.S.) slave codes declared that the child of an enslaved person was also an enslaved person, so the slave class was created. By 1808, the slave trade was internal in the United States, with enslaved people being bought and sold across state lines like livestock.

History of Intergroup Relations

There is no starker illustration of the dominant-subordinate group relationship than that of slavery. In order to justify their severely discriminatory behavior, slaveholders and their supporters viewed Black people as innately inferior. Enslaved people were denied even the most basic rights of citizenship, a crucial factor for slaveholders and their supporters. Slavery poses an excellent example of conflict theory's perspective on race relations; the dominant group needed complete control over the subordinate group in order to maintain its power. Whippings, executions, rapes, and denial of schooling and health care were widely practiced.

Slavery eventually became an issue over which the nation divided into geographically and ideologically distinct factions, leading to the Civil War. And while the abolition of slavery on moral grounds was certainly a catalyst to war, it was not the only driving force. Students of U.S. history will know that the institution of slavery was crucial to the Southern economy, whose production of crops like rice, cotton, and tobacco relied on the virtually limitless and cheap labor that slavery provided. In contrast, the North didn't benefit economically from slavery, resulting in an economic disparity tied to racial/political issues.

A century later, the civil rights movement was characterized by boycotts, marches, sit-ins, and freedom rides: demonstrations by a subordinate group and their supporters that would no longer willingly submit to domination. The major blow to America's formally institutionalized racism was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This Act, which is still important today, banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Current Status

Although government-sponsored, formalized discrimination against African Americans has been outlawed, true equality does not yet exist. The National Urban League's *2020 Equality Index* reports that Black people's overall equality level with White people has been generally improving. Measuring standards of civic engagement, economics, education, and others, Black people had an equality level of 71 percent in 2010 and had an equality level of 74 percent in 2020. The *Index*, which has been published since 2005, notes a growing trend of increased inequality with White people, especially in the areas of unemployment, insurance

coverage, and incarceration. Black people also trail White people considerably in the areas of economics, health, and education (National Urban League 2020).

To what degree do racism and prejudice contribute to this continued inequality? The answer is complex. 2008 saw the election of this country's first African American president: Barack Obama. Despite being popularly identified as Black, we should note that President Obama is of a mixed background that is equally White, and although all presidents have been publicly mocked at times (Gerald Ford was depicted as a klutz, Bill Clinton as someone who could not control his libido), a startling percentage of the critiques of Obama were based on his race. In a number of other chapters, we discuss racial disparities in healthcare, education, incarceration, and other areas.

Although Black people have come a long way from slavery, the echoes of centuries of disempowerment are still evident.

Sociology in the Real World: Black People Are Still Seeking Racial Justice



Figure 11.9: This gathering at the site of George Floyd's death took place five days after he was killed. The location, at Chicago Avenue and 38th Street in Minneapolis, became a memorial. (Credit: Fibbonacci Blue/flickr)

In 2020, racial justice movements expanded their protests against incidents of police brutality and all racially motivated violence against Black people. Black Lives Matter (BLM), an organization founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, was a core part of the movement to protest the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black victims of police violence. Millions of people from all racial backgrounds participated in the movement directly or indirectly, demanding justice for the victims and their families, redistributing police department funding to drive more holistic and community-driven law enforcement, addressing systemic racism, and introducing new laws to punish police officers who kill innocent people.

The racial justice movement has been able to achieve some these demands. For example, Minneapolis City Council unanimously approved $27 million settlement to the family of George Floyd in March 2021, the largest pre-trial settlement in a wrongful death case ever for the life of a Black person (Shapiro and Lloyd, 2021). $500,000 from the settlement amount is intended to enhance the business district in the area where Floyd died. Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, was arrested and murdered in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020. Do you think such settlement is adequate to provide justice for the victims, their families and communities affected by the horrific racism? What else should be done more? How can you contribute to bring desired changes?

Asian Americans

Asian Americans represent a great diversity of cultures and backgrounds. The experience of a Japanese American whose family has been in the United States for three generations will be drastically different from a Laotian American who has only been in the United States for a few years. This section primarily discusses Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese immigrants and shows the differences between their experiences. The most recent estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) suggest about 5.9 percent of the population identify themselves as Asian.

How and Why They Came

The national and ethnic diversity of Asian American immigration history is reflected in the variety of their experiences in joining U.S. society. Asian immigrants have come to the United States in waves, at different times, and for different reasons.

The first Asian immigrants to come to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century were Chinese. These immigrants were primarily men whose intention was to work for several years in order to earn incomes to support their families in China. Their main destination was the American West, where the Gold Rush was drawing people with its lure of abundant money. The construction of the Transcontinental Railroad was underway at this time, and the Central Pacific section hired thousands of migrant Chinese men to complete the laying of rails across the rugged Sierra Nevada mountain range. Chinese men also engaged in other manual labor like mining and agricultural work. The work was grueling and underpaid, but like many immigrants, they persevered.

Japanese immigration began in the 1880s, on the heels of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Many Japanese immigrants came to Hawaii to participate in the sugar industry; others came to the mainland, especially to California. Unlike the Chinese, however, the Japanese had a strong government that negotiated with the U.S. government to ensure the well-being of their immigrants. Japanese men were able to bring their wives and families to the United States, and were thus able to produce second- and third-generation Japanese Americans more quickly than their Chinese counterparts.

The most recent large-scale Asian immigration came from Korea and Vietnam and largely took place during the second half of the twentieth century. While Korean immigration has been fairly gradual, Vietnamese immigration occurred primarily post-1975, after the fall of Saigon and the establishment of restrictive communist policies in Vietnam. Whereas many Asian immigrants came to the United States to seek better economic opportunities, Vietnamese immigrants came as political refugees, seeking asylum from harsh conditions in their homeland. The Refugee Act of 1980 helped them to find a place to settle in the United States.



Figure 11.10: Thirty-five Vietnamese refugees wait to be taken aboard the amphibious USS *Blue Ridge (LCC-19)*. They are being rescued from a thirty-five-foot fishing boat 350 miles northeast of Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, after spending eight days at sea. (Credit: U.S. Navy/Wikimedia Commons)

History of Intergroup Relations

Chinese immigration came to an abrupt end with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act was a result of anti-Chinese sentiment burgeoned by a depressed economy and loss of jobs. White workers blamed Chinese migrants for taking jobs, and the passage of the Act meant the number of Chinese workers decreased. Chinese men did not have the funds to return to China or to bring their families to the United States, so they remained physically and culturally segregated in the Chinatowns of large cities. Later legislation, the Immigration Act of 1924, further curtailed Chinese immigration. The Act included the race-based National Origins Act, which was aimed at keeping U.S. ethnic stock as undiluted as possible by reducing "undesirable" immigrants. It was not until after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that Chinese immigration again increased, and many Chinese families were reunited.

Although Japanese Americans have deep, long-reaching roots in the United States, their history here has not always been smooth. The California Alien Land Law of 1913 was aimed at them and other Asian immigrants, and it prohibited immigrants from owning land. An even uglier action was the Japanese internment camps of World War II, discussed earlier as an illustration of expulsion.

Current Status

Asian Americans certainly have been subject to their share of racial prejudice, despite the seemingly positive stereotype as the model minority. The model minority stereotype is applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching significant educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without challenging the existing establishment.

This stereotype is typically applied to Asian groups in the United States, and it can result in unrealistic expectations by putting a stigma on members of this group that do not meet the expectations. Stereotyping all Asians as smart and capable can also lead to a lack of much-needed government assistance and to educational and professional discrimination.

Sociology in the Real World: Hate Crimes Against Asian Americans



Figure 11.11: In response to widespread attacks against Asian people, partly linked to incorrect associations regarding Asian people and the COVID-19 pandemic, groups around the country and world held Stop Asian Hate rallies like this one in Canada. (Credit: GoToVan/flickr)

Asian Americans across the United States experienced a significant increase in hate crimes, harassment and discrimination tied to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community trackers recorded more than 3,000 anti-Asian attacks nationwide during 2020 in comparison to about 100 such incidents recorded annually in the prior years (Abdollah 2021). Asian American leaders have been urging community members to report any criminal incidents, demanding local law enforcement agencies for greater enforcement of existing hate-crime laws.

Many Asian Americans feel their communities have long been ignored by mainstream politics, media and entertainment although they are considered as a “model minority.” Recently, Asian American journalists are sharing their own stories of discrimination on social media and a growing chorus of federal lawmakers are demanding actions. Do you think you can do something to stop violence against Asian Americans? Can any of your actions not only help Asian Americans but also wider people in the United States?

White Americans

White Americans are the dominant racial group in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), 76.3 percent of U.S. adults currently identify themselves as White alone. In this section, we will focus on German, Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants.

Why They Came

White ethnic Europeans formed the second and third great waves of immigration, from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. They joined a newly minted United States that was primarily made up of White Protestants from England. While most immigrants came searching for a better life, their experiences were not all the same.

The first major influx of European immigrants came from Germany and Ireland, starting in the 1820s. Germans came both for economic opportunity and to escape political unrest and military conscription, especially after the Revolutions of 1848. Many German immigrants of this period were political refugees: liberals who wanted to escape from an oppressive government. They were well-off enough to make their way inland, and they formed heavily German enclaves in the Midwest that exist to this day.

The Irish immigrants of the same time period were not always as well off financially, especially after the Irish Potato Famine of 1845. Irish immigrants settled mainly in the cities of the East Coast, where they were employed as laborers and where they faced significant discrimination.

German and Irish immigration continued into the late 19th century and earlier 20th century, at which point the numbers for Southern and Eastern European immigrants started growing as well. Italians, mainly from the Southern part of the country, began arriving in large numbers in the 1890s. Eastern European immigrants—people from Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Austria-Hungary—started arriving around the same time. Many of these Eastern Europeans were peasants forced into a hardscrabble existence in their native lands; political unrest, land shortages, and crop failures drove them to seek better opportunities in the United States. The Eastern European immigration wave also included Jewish people escaping pogroms (anti-Jewish massacres) of Eastern Europe and the Pale of Settlement in what was then Poland and Russia.

History of Intergroup Relations

In a broad sense, German immigrants were not victimized to the same degree as many of the other subordinate groups this section discusses. While they may not have been welcomed with open arms, they were able to settle in enclaves and establish roots. A notable exception to this was during the lead up to World War I and through World War II, when anti-German sentiment was virulent.

Irish immigrants, many of whom were very poor, were more of an underclass than the Germans. In Ireland, the English had oppressed the Irish for centuries, eradicating their language and culture and discriminating against their religion (Catholicism). Although the Irish had a larger population than the English, they were a subordinate group. This dynamic reached into the New World, where Anglo-Americans saw Irish immigrants as a race apart: dirty, lacking ambition, and suitable for only the most menial jobs. In fact, Irish immigrants were subject to criticism identical to that with which the dominant group characterized African Americans. By necessity, Irish immigrants formed tight communities segregated from their Anglo neighbors.

The later wave of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe was also subject to intense discrimination and prejudice. In particular, the dominant group—which now included second- and third-generation Germans and Irish—saw Italian immigrants as the dregs of Europe and worried about the purity of the American race (Myers 2007). Italian immigrants lived in segregated slums in Northeastern cities, and in some cases were even victims of violence and lynching similar to what African Americans endured. They undertook physical labor at lower pay than other workers, often doing the dangerous work that other laborers were reluctant to take on, such as earth moving and construction.

Current Status

German Americans are the largest group among White ethnic Americans in the country. For many years, German Americans endeavored to maintain a strong cultural identity, but they are now culturally assimilated into the dominant culture.

There are now more Irish Americans in the United States than there are Irish in Ireland. One of the country's largest cultural groups, Irish Americans have slowly achieved acceptance and assimilation into the dominant group.

Myers (2007) states that Italian Americans' cultural assimilation is "almost complete, but with remnants of ethnicity." The presence of "Little Italy" neighborhoods—originally segregated slums where Italians congregated in the nineteenth century—exist today. While tourists flock to the saints' festivals in Little Italies, most Italian Americans have moved to the suburbs at the same rate as

other White groups. Italian Americans also became more accepted after World War II, partly because of other, newer migrating groups and partly because of their significant contribution to the war effort, which saw over 500,000 Italian Americans join the military and fight against the Axis powers, which included Italy itself.

As you will see in the Religion chapter, Jewish people were also a core immigrant group to the United States. They often resided in tight-knit neighborhoods in a similar way to Italian people. Jewish identity is interesting and varied, in that many Jewish people consider themselves as members of a collective ethnic group as well as a religion, and many Jewish people feel connected by their ancestry as well as their religion. In fact, much of the data around the number of Jewish Americans is presented with caveats about different definitions and identifications of what it means to be Jewish (Lipka 2013).

As we have seen, there is no minority group that fits easily in a category or that can be described simply. While sociologists believe that individual experiences can often be understood in light of their social characteristics (such as race, class, or gender), we must balance this perspective with awareness that no two individuals' experiences are alike. Making generalizations can lead to stereotypes and prejudice. The same is true for White ethnic Americans, who come from diverse backgrounds and have had a great variety of experiences.

Social Policy and Debate: Thinking about White Ethnic Americans: Arab Americans



Figure 11.12: The Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, Michigan is the largest mosque, or Islamic religious place of worship, in the United States. Muslim women and girls often wear head coverings, which sometimes makes them a target of harassment. (Credit A: Ryan Ready/flickr; B: U.S. Department of Agriculture/flickr)

The first Arab immigrants came to this country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were predominantly Syrian, Lebanese, and Jordanian Christians, and they came to escape persecution and to make a better life. These early immigrants and their descendants, who were more likely to think of themselves as Syrian or Lebanese than Arab, represent almost half of the Arab American population today (Myers 2007). Restrictive immigration policies from the 1920s until 1965 curtailed immigration, but Arab immigration since 1965 has been steady. Immigrants from this time period have been more likely to be Muslim and more highly educated, escaping political unrest and looking for better opportunities.

The United States was deeply affected by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and racial profiling has proceeded against Arab Americans since then. Particularly when engaged in air travel, being young and Arab-looking is enough to warrant a special search or detainment. This Islamophobia (irrational fear of or hatred against Muslims) does not show signs of abating. Arab Americans represent all religious practices, despite the stereotype that all Arabic people practice Islam. Geographically, the Arab region comprises the Middle East and parts of North Africa (MENA). People whose ancestry lies in that area or who speak primarily Arabic may consider themselves Arabs.

The U.S. Census has struggled with the issue of Arab identity. The 2020 Census, as in previous years, did not offer a (MENA) category under the question of race. The US government rejected a push by Arab American advocates and organizations to add the new category, meaning that people stemming from the Arab region will be counted as "white" (Harb 2018). Do you think

> an addition of MENA category is appropriate to reduce prejudice and discrimination against Arab Americans? What other categories should be added to promote racial justice in the United States?

Hispanic Americans

The U.S. Census Bureau uses two ethnicities in collecting and reporting data: “Hispanic or Latino” and “Not Hispanic or Latino." Hispanic or Latino is a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Hispanic Americans have a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities.

The segment of the U.S. population that self-identifies as Hispanic in 2019 was recently estimated at 18.5 percent of the total (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about 75 percent of the respondents who identify as Hispanic report being of Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban origin. Remember that the U.S. Census allows people to report as being more than one ethnicity.

Not only are there wide differences among the different origins that make up the Hispanic American population, but there are also different names for the group itself. Hence, there have been some disagreements over whether Hispanic or Latino is the correct term for a group this diverse, and whether it would be better for people to refer to themselves as being of their origin specifically, for example, Mexican American or Dominican American. This section will compare the experiences of Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans.

How and Why They Came

Mexican Americans form the largest Hispanic subgroup and also the oldest. Mexican migration to the United States started in the early 1900s in response to the need for inexepensive agricultural labor. Mexican migration was often circular; workers would stay for a few years and then go back to Mexico with more money than they could have made in their country of origin. The length of Mexico’s shared border with the United States has made immigration easier than for many other immigrant groups.

Cuban Americans are the second-largest Hispanic subgroup, and their history is quite different from that of Mexican Americans. The main wave of Cuban immigration to the United States started after Fidel Castro came to power in 1959 and reached its crest with the Mariel boatlift in 1980. Castro’s Cuban Revolution ushered in an era of communism that continues to this day. To avoid having their assets seized by the government, many wealthy and educated Cubans migrated north, generally to the Miami area.

History of Intergroup Relations

For several decades, Mexican workers crossed the long border into the United States, both "documented" and "undocumented" to work in the fields that provided produce for the developing United States. Western growers needed a steady supply of labor, and the 1940s and 1950s saw the official federal Bracero Program (*bracero* is Spanish for *strong-arm*) that offered protection to Mexican guest workers. Interestingly, 1954 also saw the enactment of “Operation Wetback,” which deported thousands of illegal Mexican workers. From these examples, we can see the U.S. treatment of immigration from Mexico has been ambivalent at best.

Sociologist Douglas Massey (2006) suggests that although the average standard of living than in Mexico may be lower in the United States, it is not so low as to make permanent migration the goal of most Mexicans. However, the strengthening of the border that began with 1986’s Immigration Reform and Control Act has made one-way migration the rule for most Mexicans. Massey argues that the rise of illegal one-way immigration of Mexicans is a direct outcome of the law that was intended to reduce it.

Cuban Americans, perhaps because of their relative wealth and education level at the time of immigration, have fared better than many immigrants. Further, because they were fleeing a Communist country, they were given refugee status and offered protection and social services. The Cuban Migration Agreement of 1995 has curtailed legal immigration from Cuba, leading many Cubans to try to immigrate illegally by boat. According to a 2009 report from the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. government applies a “wet foot/dry foot” policy toward Cuban immigrants; Cubans who are intercepted while still at sea will be returned to Cuba, while those who reach the shore will be permitted to stay in the United States.

Current Status

Mexican Americans, especially those who are here undocumented, are at the center of a national debate about immigration. Myers (2007) observes that no other minority group (except the Chinese) has immigrated to the United States in such an environment of legal dispute. He notes that in some years, three times as many Mexican immigrants may have entered the United States undocumented as those who arrived documented. It should be noted that this is due to enormous disparity of economic opportunity on two sides of an open border, not because of any inherent inclination to break laws. In his report, “Measuring Immigrant Assimilation in the United States,” Jacob Vigdor (2008) states that Mexican immigrants experience relatively low rates of

economic and civic assimilation. He further suggests that “the slow rates of economic and civic assimilation set Mexicans apart from other immigrants, and may reflect the fact that the large numbers of Mexican immigrants residing in the United States undocumented have few opportunities to advance themselves along these dimensions.”

By contrast, Cuban Americans are often seen as a model minority group within the larger Hispanic group. Many Cubans had higher socioeconomic status when they arrived in this country, and their anti-Communist agenda has made them welcome refugees to this country. In south Florida, especially, Cuban Americans are active in local politics and professional life. As with Asian Americans, however, being a model minority can mask the issue of powerlessness that these minority groups face in U.S. society.

Social Policy and Debate: Arizona’s Senate Bill 1070



Figure 11.13: Protesters in Arizona dispute the harsh new anti-immigration law. (Credit: rprathap/flickr)

As both legal and illegal immigrants, and with high population numbers, Mexican Americans are often the target of stereotyping, racism, and discrimination. A harsh example of this is in Arizona, where a stringent immigration law—known as SB 1070 (for Senate Bill 1070)—caused a nationwide controversy. Formally titled "Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, the law requires that during a lawful stop, detention, or arrest, Arizona police officers must establish the immigration status of anyone they suspect may be here illegally. The law makes it a crime for individuals to fail to have documents confirming their legal status, and it gives police officers the right to detain people they suspect may be in the country illegally.

To many, the most troublesome aspect of this law is the latitude it affords police officers in terms of whose citizenship they may question. Having “reasonable suspicion that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States” is reason enough to demand immigration papers (Senate Bill 1070 2010). Critics say this law will encourage racial profiling (the illegal practice of law enforcement using race as a basis for suspecting someone of a crime), making it hazardous to be caught “Driving While Brown,” a takeoff on the legal term Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or the slang reference of “Driving While Black.” Driving While Brown refers to the likelihood of getting pulled over just for being nonWhite.

SB 1070 has been the subject of many lawsuits, from parties as diverse as Arizona police officers, the American Civil Liberties Union, and even the federal government, which is suing on the basis of Arizona contradicting federal immigration laws (ACLU 2011). The future of SB 1070 is uncertain, but many other states have tried or are trying to pass similar measures. Do you think such measures are appropriate?

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10.7: Key Terms

amalgamation | the process by which a minority group and a majority group combine to form a new group

antiracist | a person who opposes racism and acts for racial justice

assimilation | the process by which a minority individual or group takes on the characteristics of the dominant culture

colorism | the belief that one type of skin tone is superior or inferior to another within a racial group

culture of prejudice | the theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture

discrimination | prejudiced action against a group of people

dominant group | a group of people who have more power in a society than any of the subordinate groups

ethnicity | shared culture, which may include heritage, language, religion, and more

expulsion | the act of a dominant group forcing a subordinate group to leave a certain area or even the country

genocide | the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group

intersection theory | theory that suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes

minority group | any group of people who are singled out from the others for differential and unequal treatment

model minority | the stereotype applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching higher educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without protest against the majority establishment

pluralism | the ideal of the United States as a "salad bowl:" a mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the "flavor" of the whole

prejudice | biased thought based on flawed assumptions about a group of people

racial profiling | the use by law enforcement of race alone to determine whether to stop and detain someone

racial steering | the act of real estate agents directing prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race

racism | a set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others

redlining | the practice of routinely refusing mortgages for households and business located in predominately minority communities

scapegoat theory | a theory that suggests that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group

sedimentation of racial inequality | the intergenerational impact of de facto and de jure racism that limits the abilities of Black people to accumulate wealth

segregation | the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions

social construction of race | the school of thought that race is not biologically identifiable

stereotypes | oversimplified ideas about groups of people

subordinate group | a group of people who have less power than the dominant group

systemic racism | racism embedded in social institutions; also referred to as institutional racism and structural racism

White privilege | the societal privilege that benefits White people, or those perceived to be White, over non-White people in some societies, including the United States

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10.8: Section Summary

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

Race is fundamentally a social construct. Ethnicity is a term that describes shared culture and national origin. Minority groups are defined by their lack of power.

11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

Functionalist views of race study the role dominant and subordinate groups play to create a stable social structure. Conflict theorists examine power disparities and struggles between various racial and ethnic groups. Interactionists see race and ethnicity as important sources of individual identity and social symbolism. The concept of culture of prejudice recognizes that all people are subject to stereotypes that are ingrained in their culture.

11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people. Prejudice refers to thoughts and feelings, while discrimination refers to actions. Racism is both prejudice and discrimination due to the belief that one race is inherently superior or inferior to other races. Antiracists fight against the systems of racism by employing antiracist policies and practices in institutions and communities.

11.4 Intergroup Relationships

Intergroup relations range from a tolerant approach of pluralism to intolerance as severe as genocide. In pluralism, groups retain their own identity. In assimilation, groups conform to the identity of the dominant group. In amalgamation, groups combine to form a new group identity.

11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

The history of the U.S. people contains an infinite variety of experiences that sociologist understand follow patterns. From the indigenous people who first inhabited these lands to the waves of immigrants over the past 500 years, migration is an experience with many shared characteristics. Most groups have experienced various degrees of prejudice and discrimination as they have gone through the process of assimilation.

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10.10: Audio Stories about Race

Season 2, Episode 2: How Race Was Made

For much of human history, people viewed themselves as members of tribes or nations but had no notion of “race.” Today, science deems race biologically meaningless. Who invented race as we know it, and why? By John Biewen, with guest Chenjerai Kumanyika.



View S2, E2 Transcript

Season 2, Episode 3: Made in America

Chattel slavery in the United States, with its distinctive – and strikingly cruel – laws and structures, took shape over many decades in colonial America. The innovations that built American slavery are inseparable from the construction of Whiteness as we know it today. By John Biewen, with guest Chenjerai Kumanyika.



View S2, E3 Transcript

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

In this chapter, we will discuss the differences between sex and gender, along with issues like gender identity and sexuality. We will also explore various theoretical perspectives on the subjects of gender and sexuality, including the social construction of sexuality and queer theory.

11.1: Introduction
11.2: Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression
11.3: Gender and Gender Inequality
11.4: Sexuality
11.5: Key Terms
11.6: Section Summary
11.7: References
11.8: Crash Course Video- Gender Stratification
11.9: Intersectionality

Thumbnail: Major Alan G. Rogers holding hands with his partner on the left at a same-sex wedding ceremony on June 28, 2006 (Public Domain; Stagedoorjohnny).

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11.1: Introduction



Figure 12.1: New opportunities, laws, and attitudes have opened the door for people to take on roles that are not traditionally associated with their gender. But despite this progress, many people are misunderstood or mistreated based on gender.

Chapter Outline

12.1 Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression
12.2 Gender and Gender Inequality
12.3 Sexuality

Imagine that there's a fire in a building nearby. As you watch the flames and smoke pour out of windows, you also watch firefighters run inside. Minutes go by and more people arrive--crowds, news trucks, ambulances. Firefighters working the hoses start pointing to a top-floor window, where a lone member of their crew emerges half-pulling, half-carrying a victim of the fire. Behind them, through the window, you can see the fire in the background, flames that the firefighter must have pushed through to get to the victim. Eventually, others reach them with large ladders, and they bring the nearly unconscious victim down to the street.

Close up, you can see the heroic firefighter is covered in dirt and soot. A large gash is visible in their suit, and they're immediately given medical attention. As the EMTs pull off the firefighters' helmet, you're surprised to see features you identify as a woman's. You had just assumed the person was a man, but you were incorrect.

You wouldn't be alone. For centuries, nearly all firefighters had been men. As a child, saying fireman and firemen may have been perfectly appropriate, because all the people you met in the profession were, in fact, men. But as with many professions that were formerly almost exclusively gender-specific, firefighting has become more integrated.

What does that mean for the people in those professions? They must endure physical challenges, overcome stereotypes about any physical limitations, and likely deal with a culture built over a long time to appeal to and serve the needs of men. As they train, firefighters may be yelled at and undergo levels of punishment for not achieving the necessary standards. Does the dynamic of those interactions change when a man in a superior position is for the first time giving orders and issuing reprimands to people of another gender? Should they be able to treat women the same way they treated men? What would be equal in that situation?

Consider another profession. What would you think about if you witnessed a young woman being pepper sprayed by a man? Is she fulfilling the role society may assume for her? Does it matter that the person spraying her is a man, and that he has a degree of

control over her?

Military police and security personnel are required to be pepper sprayed at least once during their training. The logic goes: They may have to utilize this deterrent against other people, and so they should have experienced it. While there are no guarantees that the future enforcement officer will use the substances judiciously, having experienced the painful effects of pepper spray is deemed more likely to produce a level of empathy and restraint.

But is this what she signed up for? Assuming that these military personnel have undergone some level of training prior to this event—they've invested their lives and others have invested in them—could she turn back? How would her peers react? How would her family and others react?

Saving someone from a burning building takes a degree of courage and ability that is very rare, regardless of gender. Voluntary pepper spraying is an extreme situation, again regardless of gender. But gender plays a role in how we see the people involved in both situations. Gender and sexuality are among the most powerful and impactful elements of people's identities, and drive the way they see the world and the way the world sees them. People of different genders go through difficult circumstances and events based partly on their role in society—a role that they do not often define for themselves. And when people express, identify, or outwardly display signs that they do not fit in a societies, established categories, they may face exclusion and discrimination.

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11.2: Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Define and differentiate between sex and gender
- Define and discuss what is meant by gender identity
- Distinguish the meanings of different sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions



Figure 12.2: While the biological differences between males and females are fairly straightforward, the social and cultural aspects of being a man or woman can be complicated. (Credit: Mapbox Uncharted ERG /flickr)

When filling out a document such as a job application or school registration form, you are often asked to provide your name, address, phone number, birth date, and sex or gender. But have you ever been asked to provide your sex *and* your gender? Like most people, you may not have realized that sex and gender are not the same. However, sociologists and most other social scientists view them as conceptually distinct. Sex refers to physical or physiological differences between males and females, including both primary sex characteristics (the reproductive system) and secondary characteristics such as height and muscularity. Gender refers to behaviors, personal traits, and social positions that society attributes to being female or male.

A person's sex, as determined by their biology, does not always correspond with their gender. Therefore, the terms *sex* and *gender* are not interchangeable. A baby who is born with male genitalia will most likely be identified as male. As a child or adult, however, they may identify with the feminine aspects of culture. Since the term *sex* refers to biological or physical distinctions, characteristics of sex will not vary significantly between different human societies. Generally, persons of the female sex, regardless of culture, will eventually menstruate and develop breasts that can lactate. Characteristics of gender, on the other hand, may vary greatly between different societies. For example, in U.S. culture, it is considered feminine (or a trait of the female gender) to wear a dress or skirt. However, in many Middle Eastern, Asian, and African cultures, sarongs, robes, or gowns are considered masculine. The kilt worn by a Scottish man does not make him appear feminine in that culture.

The dichotomous or binary view of gender (the notion that someone is either male or female) is specific to certain cultures and is not universal. In some cultures gender is viewed as fluid. In the past, some anthropologists used the term *berdache* to refer to individuals who occasionally or permanently dressed and lived as a different gender. The practice has been noted among certain Native American tribes (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 1997). Samoan culture accepts what Samoans refer to as a "third gender." *Fa'afafine*, which translates as "the way of the woman," is a term used to describe individuals who are born biologically male but embody both masculine and feminine traits. Fa'afafines are considered an important part of Samoan culture. Individuals from other cultures may mislabel their sexuality because fa'afafines have a varied sexual life that may include men and women (Poasa 1992).

Social Policy and Debate: The Legalese of Sex and Gender

The terms *sex* and *gender* have not always been differentiated in the English language. It was not until the 1950s that U.S. and British psychologists and other professionals formally began distinguishing between sex and gender. Since then, professionals have increasingly used the term gender (Moi 2005). By the end of the twenty-first century, expanding the proper usage of the term *gender* to everyday language became more challenging—particularly where legal language is concerned. In an effort to clarify usage of the terms *sex* and *gender*, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia wrote in a 1994 briefing, "The word gender has acquired the new and useful connotation of cultural or attitudinal characteristics (as opposed to physical characteristics) distinctive to the sexes. That is to say, gender is to sex as feminine is to female and masculine is to male" (*J.E.B. v. Alabama*, 144 S. Ct. 1436 [1994]). Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg had a different take, however. She freely swapped them in her briefings so as to avoid having the word "sex" pop up too often. Ginsburg decided on this approach earlier in her career while she was arguing before the Supreme court; her Columbia Law School secretary suggested it to Ginsburg, saying that when "those nine men" (the Supreme Court justices), "hear that word and their first association is not the way you want them to be thinking" (Block 2020).

More recently, the word "sex" was a key element of the landmark Supreme Court case affirming that the Civil Rights Act's workplace protections applied to LGBTQ people. Throughout the case documents and discussions, the term and its meanings are discussed extensively. In his decision statement, Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote, "It is impossible to discriminate against a person for being homosexual or transgender without discriminating ... based on sex" (Supreme Court 2020). Dissenting justices and commentators felt that Gorsuch and the other justices in the majority were recalibrating the original usage of the term. The arguments about the language itself, which occupy much of the Court's writings on the matter, are further evidence of the evolving nature of the words, as well as their significance.

Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

A person's sexuality is their capacity to experience sexual feelings and attraction. Studying sexual attitudes and practices is a particularly interesting field of sociology because sexual behavior and attitudes about sexual behavior have cultural and societal influences and impacts. As you will see in the Relationships, Marriage, and Family chapter, each society interprets sexuality and sexual activity in different ways, with different attitudes about premarital sex, the age of sexual consent, homosexuality, masturbation, and other sexual behaviors (Widmer 1998).

A person's sexual orientation is their physical, mental, emotional, and sexual attraction to a particular sex (male and/or female). Sexual orientation is typically divided into several categories: *heterosexuality*, the attraction to individuals of the other sex; *homosexuality*, the attraction to individuals of the same sex; *bisexuality*, the attraction to individuals of either sex; *asexuality*, a lack of sexual attraction or desire for sexual contact; *pansexuality*, an attraction to people regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, or gender expression; *omnisexuality*, an attraction to people of all sexes, genders, gender identities, and gender expressions that considers the person's gender, and *queer*, an umbrella term used to describe sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Other categories may not refer to a sexual attraction, but rather a romantic one. For example, an *aromantic* person does not experience romantic attraction; this is different from asexuality, which refers to a lack of sexual attraction. And some sexual orientations do not refer to gender in their description, though those who identify as having that orientation may feel attraction to a certain gender. For example, *demisexual* refers to someone who feels a sexual attraction to someone only after they form an emotional bond; the term itself doesn't distinguish among gender identities, but the person may feel attraction based on gender (PFLAG 2021). It is important to acknowledge and understand that many of these orientations exist on on a spectrum, and there may be no specific term to describe how an individual feels. Some terms have been developed to address this—such as *graysexual* or *grayromantic*—but their usage is a personal choice (Asexual Visibility and Education Network 2021).

People who are attracted to others of a different gender are typically referred to as "straight," and people attracted to others of the same gender are typically referred to as "gay" for men and "lesbian" for women. As discussed, above, however, there are many more sexual and romantic orientations, so the term "gay," for example, should not be used to describe all of them. Proper terminology includes the acronyms LGBT and LGBTQ, which stands for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender” (and “Queer” or “Questioning” when the Q is added). In other cases, people and organizations may add "I" to represent Intersex people (described below), and "A" for Asexual or Aromantic people (or sometimes for "Allies"), as well as one "P" to describe Pansexual people and sometimes another "P" to describe Polysexual people. Finally, some people and organizations add a plus sign (+) to represent other possible identities or orientations. Sexuality and gender terminology are constantly changing, and may mean different things to different people; they are not universal, and each individual defines them for themselves (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center 2020). Finally, a person who does not fully understand all of these terms can still be supportive of people who have those orientations or others; in fact, advocacy and support organizations indicate it is much better to admit you don't know something than to make assumptions or apply an incorrect label to someone (GLAAD 2021).

While the descriptions above are evidence of a vast degree of diversity, the United States and many other countries are heteronormative societies, meaning many people assume heterosexual orientation is biologically determined and is the default or normal type of orientation. While awareness and acceptance of different sexual orientations and identities seems to be increasing, the influence of a heteronormative society can lead LGBTQ people to be treated like "others," even by people who do not deliberately seek to cause them harm. This can lead to significant distress (Boyer 2020). Causes of these heteronormative behaviors and expectations are tied to implicit biases; they can be especially harmful for children and young adults (Tompkins 2017).

There is not a wealth of research describing exactly when people become aware of their sexual orientation. According to current scientific understanding, individuals are usually aware of their sexual orientation between middle childhood and early adolescence (American Psychological Association 2008). They do not have to participate in sexual activity to be aware of these emotional, romantic, and physical attractions; people can be celibate and still recognize their sexual orientation, and may have very different experiences of discovering and accepting their sexual orientation. Some studies have shown that a percentage of people may start to have feelings related to attraction or orientation at ages nine or ten, even if these feelings are not sexual (Calzo 2018). At the point of puberty, some may be able to announce their sexual orientation, while others may be unready or unwilling to make their sexual orientation or identity known since it goes against society’s historical norms (APA 2008). And finally, some people recognize their true sexual orientation later in life—in their 30s, 40s, and beyond.

There is no scientific consensus regarding the exact reasons why an individual holds a specific sexual orientation. Research has been conducted to study the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, but there has been no evidence that links sexual orientation to one factor (APA 2008). Alfred Kinsey was among the first to conceptualize sexuality as a continuum rather than a strict dichotomy of gay or straight. He created a six-point rating scale that ranges from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual. See the figure below. In his 1948 work *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Kinsey writes, “Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats … The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects” (Kinsey 1948). Many of Kinsey's specific research findings have been criticized or discredited, but his influence on future research is widely accepted.

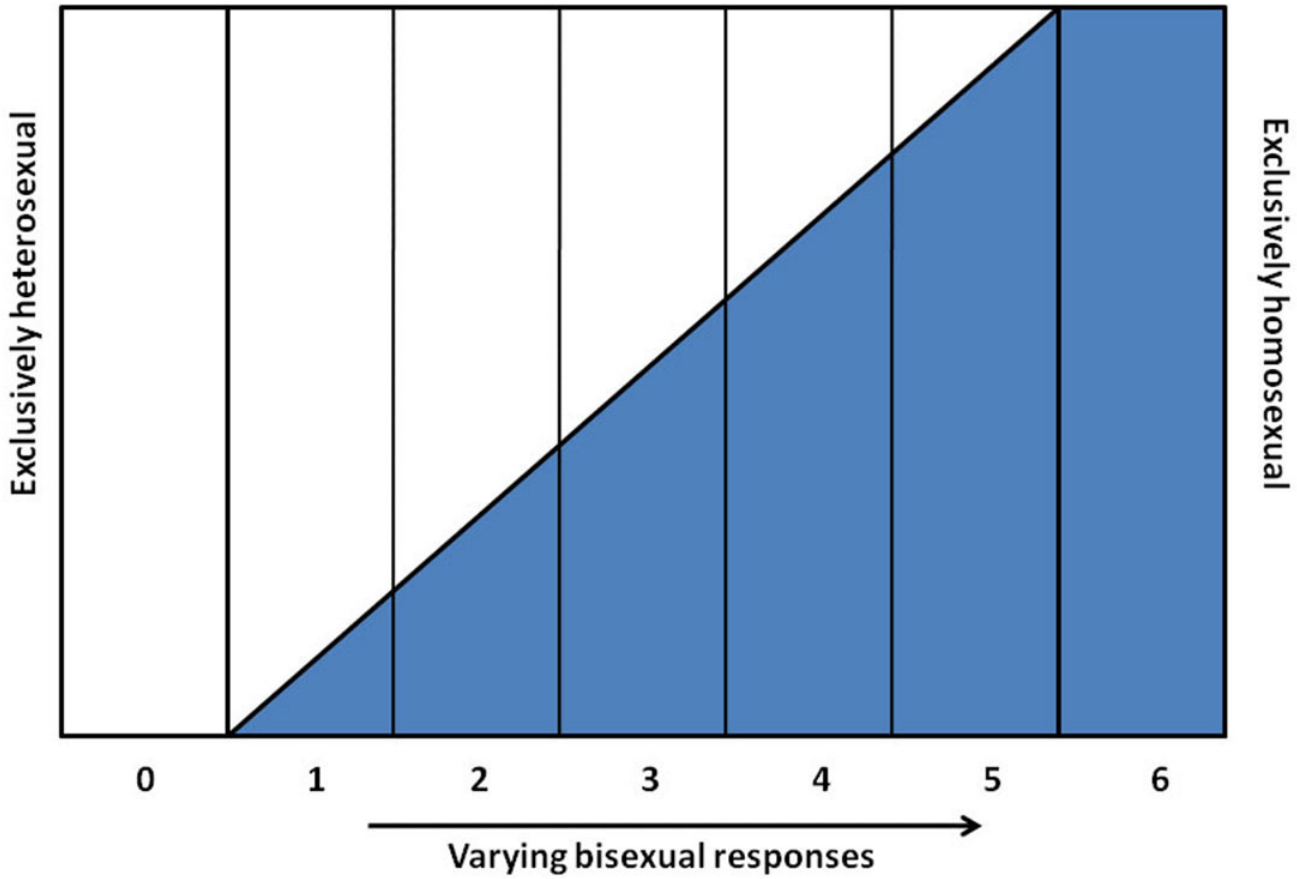


Figure 12.3: The Kinsey scale was one of the first attempts to frame the diversity of human sexual orientation.

Later scholarship by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick expanded on Kinsey's notions. She coined the term "homosocial" to oppose "homosexual," describing nonsexual same-sex relations. Sedgwick recognized that in U.S. culture, males are subject to a clear divide between the two sides of this continuum, whereas females enjoy more fluidity. This can be illustrated by the way women in the United States can express homosocial feelings (nonsexual regard for people of the same sex) through hugging, handholding, and physical closeness. In contrast, U.S. males refrain from these expressions since they violate the heteronormative expectation that male sexual attraction should be exclusively for females. Research suggests that it is easier for women violate these norms than men, because men are subject to more social disapproval for being physically close to other men (Sedgwick 1985).

Because of the deeply personal nature of sexual orientation, as well as the societal biases against certain orientations, many people may question their sexual orientation before fully accepting it themselves. In a similar way, parents may question their children's sexual orientation based on certain behaviors. Simply viewing the many web pages and discussion forums dedicated to people expressing their questions makes it very clear that sexual orientation is not always clear. Feelings of guilt, responsibility, rejection, and simple uncertainty can make the process and growth very challenging. For example, a woman married to a man who recognizes that she is asexual, or a man married to a woman who recognizes that he is attracted to men, may both have extreme difficulty coming to terms with their sexuality, as well as disclosing it to others. At younger ages, similarly challenging barriers and difficulties exist. For example, adolescence can be a difficult and uncertain time overall, and feelings of different or changing orientation or nonconformity can only add to the challenges (Mills-Koonce 2018).

Gender Roles

As we grow, we learn how to behave from those around us. In this socialization process, children are introduced to certain roles that are typically linked to their biological sex. The term gender role refers to society's concept of how men and women are expected to look and how they should behave. These roles are based on norms, or standards, created by society. In U.S. culture, masculine roles are usually associated with strength, aggression, and dominance, while feminine roles are usually associated with passivity, nurturing, and subordination. Role learning starts with socialization at birth. Even today, our society is quick to outfit male infants in blue and girls in pink, even applying these color-coded gender labels while a baby is in the womb.

One way children learn gender roles is through play. Parents typically supply boys with trucks, toy guns, and superhero paraphernalia, which are active toys that promote motor skills, aggression, and solitary play. Daughters are often given dolls and dress-up apparel that foster nurturing, social proximity, and role play. Studies have shown that children will most likely choose to play with “gender appropriate” toys (or same-gender toys) even when cross-gender toys are available because parents give children positive feedback (in the form of praise, involvement, and physical closeness) for gender normative behavior (Caldera, Huston, and O’Brien 1998). As discussed in the Socialization chapter, some parents and experts become concerned about young people becoming too attached to these stereotypical gender roles.



Figure 12.4: Childhood activities and instruction, like this father-daughter duck-hunting trip, can influence people's lifelong views on gender roles. (Credit: Tim Miller, USFWS Midwest Region/flickr)

The drive to adhere to masculine and feminine gender roles continues later in life, in a tendency sometimes referred to as "occupational sorting" (Gerdeman 2019). Men tend to outnumber women in professions such as law enforcement, the military, and politics. Women tend to outnumber men in care-related occupations such as childcare, healthcare (even though the term “doctor” still conjures the image of a man), and social work. These occupational roles are examples of typical U.S. male and female behavior, derived from our culture’s traditions. Adherence to these roles demonstrates fulfillment of social expectations but not necessarily personal preference (Diamond 2002); sometimes, people work in a profession because of societal pressure and/or the opportunities afforded to them based on their gender.

Historically, women have had difficulty shedding the expectation that they cannot be a "good mother" and a "good worker" at the same time, which results in fewer opportunities and lower levels of pay (Ogden 2019). Generally, men do not share this difficulty: Since the assumed role of a men as a fathers does not seem to conflict with their perceived work role, men who are fathers (or who are expected to become fathers) do not face the same barriers to employment or promotion (González 2019). This is sometimes referred to as the "motherhood penalty" versus the "fatherhood premium," and is prevalent in many higher income countries (Bygren 2017). These concepts and their financial and societal implications will be revisited later in the chapter.

Gender Identity

U.S. society allows for some level of flexibility when it comes to acting out gender roles. To a certain extent, men can assume some feminine roles and women can assume some masculine roles without interfering with their gender identity. Gender identity is a person’s deeply held internal perception of one's gender.

Transgender people's sex assigned at birth and their gender identity are not necessarily the same. A transgender woman is a person who was assigned male at birth but who identifies and/or lives as a woman; a transgender man was assigned female at birth but lives as a man. While determining the size of the transgender population is difficult, it is estimated that 1.4 million adults (Herman 2016) and 2 percent of high school students in the U.S. identify as transgender (Johns 2019). The term "transgender" does not indicate sexual orientation or a particular gender expression, and we should avoid making assumptions about people's sexual orientation based on knowledge about their gender identity (GLAAD 2021).



Figure 12.5: Actress Laverne Cox is the first openly transgender person to play a transgender character on a major show. She won a producing Emmy and was nominated four times for the Best Actress Emmy. She is also an advocate for LGBTQ issues outside of her career, such as in this "Ain't I a Woman?" speaking tour. (Credit: modification of work by "KOMUnews_Flickr"/Flickr)

Some transgender individuals may undertake a process of transition, in which they move from living in a way that is more aligned with the sex assigned at birth to living in a way that is aligned with their gender identity. Transitioning may take the form of social, legal or medical aspects of someone's life, but not everyone undertakes any or all types of transition. Social transition may involve the person's presentation, name, pronouns, and relationships. Legal transition can include changing their gender on government or other official documents, changing their legal name, and so on. Some people may undergo a physical or medical transition, in which they change their outward, physical, or sexual characteristics in order for their physical being to better align with their gender identity (UCSF Transgender Care 2019). Not all transgender individuals choose to alter their bodies: many will maintain their original anatomy but may present themselves to society as another gender. This is typically done by adopting the dress, hairstyle, mannerisms, or other characteristic typically assigned to another gender. It is important to note that people who cross-

dress, or wear clothing that is traditionally assigned to a gender different from their biological sex, are not necessarily transgender. Cross-dressing is typically a form of self-expression or personal style, and it does not indicate a person's gender identity or that they are transgender (TSER 2021).



Figure 12.6: The most widely known transgender pride flag was designed by transgender woman and U.S. Navy veteran Monica Helms. Other designers have different interpretation of the transgender flag, and other groups within the LGBTQ community have their own flags and symbols. Interestingly, Gilbert Baker, the designer of the first widely adopted pride flag, made a point to avoid trademark or other limits on the flag, so that it could be reinterpreted and reused by others. (Credit: crudmucosa/flickr)

There is no single, conclusive explanation for why people are transgender. Transgender expressions and experiences are so diverse that it is difficult to identify their origin. Some hypotheses suggest biological factors such as genetics or prenatal hormone levels as well as social and cultural factors such as childhood and adulthood experiences. Most experts believe that all of these factors contribute to a person’s gender identity (APA 2008).

Intersex is a general term used to describe people whose sex traits, reproductive anatomy, hormones, or chromosomes are different from the usual two ways human bodies develop. Some intersex traits are recognized at birth, while others are not recognizable until puberty or later in life (interACT 2021). While some intersex people have physically recognizable features that are described by specific medical terms, intersex people and newborns are healthy. Most in the medical and intersex community reject unnecessary surgeries intended to make a baby conform to a specific gender assignment; medical ethicists indicate that any surgery to alter intersex characteristics or traits—if desired—should be delayed until an individual can decide for themselves (Behrens 2021). If a physical trait or medical condition prohibits a baby from urinating or performing another bodily function (which is very rare), then a medical procedure such as surgery will be needed; in other cases, hormonal issues related to intersex characteristics may require medical intervention. Intersex and transgender are not interchangeable terms; many transgender people have no intersex traits, and many intersex people do not consider themselves transgender. Some intersex people believe that intersex people should be included within the LGBTQ community, while others do not (Koyama n.d.).

Those who identify with the sex they were assigned at birth are often referred to as *cisgender*, utilizing the Latin prefix "cis," which means "on the same side." (The prefix "trans" means "across.") Because they are in the majority and do not have a potential component to transition, many cisgender people do not self-identify as such. As with transgender people, the term or usage of cisgender does not indicate a person's sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression (TSER 2021). And as many societies are heteronormative, they are also *cisnormative*, which is the assumption or expectation that everyone is cisgender, and that anything other than cisgender is not normal.

The language of sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression is continually changing and evolving. In order to get an overview of some of the most commonly used terms, explore the Trans Student Educational Resources Online Glossary: http://openstax.org/r/tsero

When individuals do not feel comfortable identifying with the gender associated with their biological sex, then they may experience gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is a diagnostic category in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) that describes individuals who do not identify as the gender that most people would assume they are. This dysphoria must persist for at least six months and result in significant distress or dysfunction to meet DSM-5 diagnostic criteria. In order for children to be assigned this diagnostic category, they must verbalize their desire to become the other gender. It is important to note that not all transgender people experience gender dysphoria, and that its diagnostic categorization is not universally accepted. For example, in 2019, the World Health Organization reclassified “gender identity disorder” as “gender incongruence,” and categorized it under sexual health rather than a mental disorder. However, health and mental health professionals indicate that the presence of the diagnostic category does assist in supporting those who need treatment or help.

People become aware that they may be transgender at different ages. Even if someone does not have a full (or even partial) understanding of gender terminology and its implications, they can still develop an awareness that their gender assigned at birth does not align with their gender identity. Society, particularly in the United States, has been reluctant to accept transgender identities at any age, but we have particular difficulty accepting those identities in children. Many people feel that children are too young to understand their feelings, and that they may "grow out of it." And it is true that some children who verbalize their identification or desire to live as another gender may ultimately decide to live in alignment with their assigned gender. But if a child consistently describes themselves as a gender (or as both genders) and/or expresses themselves as that gender over a long period of time, their feelings cannot be attributed to going through a "phase" (Mayo Clinic 2021).

Some children, like many transgender people, may feel pressure to conform to social norms, which may lead them to suppress or hide their identity. Experts find evidence of gender dysphoria—the long-term distress associated with gender identification—in children as young as seven (Zaliznyak 2020). Again, most children have a limited understanding of the social and societal impacts of being transgender, but they can feel strongly that they are not aligned with their assigned sex. And considering that many transgender people do not come out or begin to transition until much later in life—well into their twenties—they may live for a long time under that distress.

Discrimination Against LGBTQ people

Recall from the chapter on Crime and Deviance that the FBI's hate crime data indicates that crimes against LGBTQ people have been increasing, and that those crimes account for nearly one in five hate crimes committed in the United States (FBI 2020). While the disbanding of anti-LGBTQ laws in the United States has reduced government or law enforcement oppression or abuse, it has not eliminated it. In other countries, however, LGBTQ people can face even more danger. Reports from the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, and the International Lesbian, Gay, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA) indicate that many countries impose penalties for same-sex relationships, gender noncomformity, and other acts deemed opposed to the cultural or religious observances of the nation. As of 2020, six United Nations members imposed the death penalty for consensual same-sex acts, and another 61 countries penalized same sex acts, through jail time, corporal punishment (such as lashing), or other measures. These countries include prominent United States allies such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia (both of which can legally impose the death penalty for same-sex acts). Some nearby nations criminalize same-sex relations: Barbados can impose lifetime imprisonment for same-sex acts, and Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia have lesser penalties, though Saint Lucia's government indicates it does not enforce those laws (ILGA 2020). Even when the government criminal code does not formalize anti-LGBTQ penalties, local ordinances or government agents may have wide discretion. For example, many people fleeing Central American countries do so as a result of anti-LGBTQ violence, sometimes at the hands of police (Human Rights Watch 2020).

Such severe treatment at the hands of the government is no longer the case in the United States. But until the 1960s and 1970s, every state in the country criminalized same-sex acts, which allowed the military to dishonorably discharge gay veterans (stripping them of all benefits) and law enforcement agencies to investigate and detain people suspected of same-sex acts. Police regularly

raided bars and clubs simply for allowing gay and lesbian people to dance together. Public decency laws allowed police to arrest people if they did not wear clothing aligning with the typical dress for their biological sex. Criminalization of same-sex acts began to unravel at the state level in the 1960's and 1970s, and was fully invalidated in a 2003 Supreme Court decision.

Hate crimes and anti-LGBTQ legislation are overt types of discrimination, but LGBTQ people are also treated differently from straight and cisgender people in schools, housing, and in healthcare. This can have effects on mental health, employment and financial opportunities, and relationships. For example, more than half of LGBTQ adults and 70 percent of those who are transgender or gender nonconforming report experiencing discrimination from a health care professional; this leads to delays or reluctance in seeking care or preventative visits, which has negative health outcomes (American Heart Association 2020). Similarly, elderly LGBTQ people are far less likely to come out to healthcare professionals than are straight or cisgender people, which may also lead to healthcare issues at an age that is typically highly reliant on medical care (Foglia 2014).

Much of this discrimination is based on stereotypes and misinformation. Some is based on heterosexism, which Herek (1990) suggests is both an ideology and a set of institutional practices that privilege straight people and heterosexuality over other sexual orientations. Much like racism and sexism, heterosexism is a systematic disadvantage embedded in our social institutions, offering power to those who conform to heterosexual orientation while simultaneously disadvantaging those who do not. *Homophobia*, an extreme or irrational aversion to gay, lesbian, bisexual, or all LGBTQ people, which often manifests as prejudice and bias. *Transphobia* is a fear, hatred, or dislike of transgender people, and/or prejudice and discrimination against them by individuals or institutions.

Fighting discrimination and being an ally



Figure 12.7: Hashtags, pride parades, and other activism are important elements of supporting LGBTQ people, but most experts and advocates agree that some of the most important steps are ones taken internally to better educate ourselves, and on interpersonal levels with friends, coworkers, and family members. (Credit: Lars Verket/flickr)

Major policies to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation have not come into effect until recent years. In 2011, President Obama overturned “don’t ask, don’t tell,” a controversial policy that required gay and lesbian people in the US military to keep their sexuality undisclosed. In 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Obgerfell vs. Hodges* that the right to civil marriage was guaranteed to same-sex couples. And, as discussed above, in the landmark 2020 Supreme Court decision added sexual

orientation and gender identity as categories protected from employment discrimination by the Civil Rights Act. At the same time, laws passed in several states permit some level of discrimination against same-sex couples and other LGBTQ people based on a person's individual religious beliefs or prejudices.

Supporting LGTBQ people requires effort to better understand them without making assumptions. Understand people by listening, respecting them, and by remembering that every person—LGBTQ or otherwise— is different. Being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual is not a choice, but the way a person expresses or reveals that reality is their choice. Your experience or knowledge of other LGBTQ people (even your own experience if you are LGBTQ) cannot dictate how another person feels or acts. Finally, as discussed in the Race and Ethnicity chapter, intersectionality means that people are defined by more than their gender identity and sexual orientation. People from different age groups, races, abilities, and experiences within the LGTBQ community have different perspectives and needs.

While each individual has their own perspective, respecting their feelings and protecting their equality and wellbeing does have some common elements. These include referring to a person as they would like to be referred to, including the avoidance of abbreviations or slang terms unless you are sure they accept them. For example, many people and organizations (including those referenced in this chapter) use the abbreviation "trans" to represent transgender people, but a non-transgender person should not use that abbreviation unless they know the person or subject is comfortable with it. Respect also includes people's right to privacy: One person should never out a person to someone else or assume that someone is publicly out. LGBTQ allies can support everyone's rights to be equal and empowered members of society, including within organizations, institutions, and even individual classrooms.

Supporting others may require a change in mindset and practice. For example, if a transgender person wants to be referred to by a different name, or use different pronouns, it might take some getting used to, especially if you have spent years referring to the person by another name or by other pronouns. However, making the change is worthwhile and not overly onerous.

You can learn more about being an ally through campus, government, and organizational resources like the Human Rights Campaign's guide https://www.hrc.org/resources/being-an-lgbtq-ally

Language is an important part of culture, and it has been evolving to better include and describe people who are not gender-binary. In many languages, including English, pronouns are gendered. That is, pronouns are intended to identify the gender of the individual being referenced. English has traditionally been binary, providing only “he/him/his,” for male subjects and “she/her/hers,” for female subjects.

This binary system excludes those who identify as neither male nor female. The word “they,” which was used for hundreds of years as a singular pronoun, is more inclusive. As a result, in fact, Merriam Webster selected this use of “they” as Word of the Year for 2019. “They” and other pronouns are now used to reference those who do not identify as male or female on the spectrum of gender identities.

Gender inclusive language has impacts beyond personal references. In biology, anatomy, and healthcare, for example, people commonly refer to organs or processes with gender associations. However, more accurate and inclusive language avoids such associations. For example, *women* do not produce eggs; *ovaries* produce eggs. *Men* are not more likely to be color-blind; those with *XY chromosomes* are more likely to be color blind (Gender Inclusive Biology 2019).

Beyond the language of gender, the language of society and culture itself can be either a barrier or an opening to inclusivity. Societal norms are important sociological concepts, and behaviors outside of those norms can lead to exclusion. By disassociating gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation from the concept of norms, we can begin to eliminate the implicit and explicit biases regarding those realities. In everyday terms, this can take the form of avoiding references to what is normal or not normal in regard to sexuality or gender (Canadian Public Health Association 2019).

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11.3: Gender and Gender Inequality

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the influence of socialization on gender roles in the United States
- Explain the stratification of gender in major American institutions
- Provide examples of gender inequality in the United States
- Describe the rise of feminism in the United States
- Describe gender from the view of each sociological perspective



Figure 12.8: Traditional images of U.S. gender roles reinforce the idea that women should be subordinate to men. (Credit: Sport Suburban/flickr)

Gender and Socialization

The phrase “boys will be boys” is often used to justify behavior such as pushing, shoving, or other forms of aggression from young boys. The phrase implies that such behavior is unchangeable and something that is part of a boy’s nature. Aggressive behavior, when it does not inflict significant harm, is often accepted from boys and men because it is congruent with the cultural script for masculinity. The “script” written by society is in some ways similar to a script written by a playwright. Just as a playwright expects actors to adhere to a prescribed script, society expects women and men to behave according to the expectations of their respective gender roles. Scripts are generally learned through a process known as socialization, which teaches people to behave according to social norms.

Socialization

Children learn at a young age that there are distinct expectations for boys and girls. Cross-cultural studies reveal that children are aware of gender roles by age two or three. At four or five, most children are firmly entrenched in culturally appropriate gender roles (Kane 1996). Children acquire these roles through socialization, a process in which people learn to behave in a particular way as dictated by societal values, beliefs, and attitudes. For example, society often views riding a motorcycle as a masculine activity and, therefore, considers it to be part of the male gender role. Attitudes such as this are typically based on stereotypes,

oversimplified notions about members of a group. Gender stereotyping involves overgeneralizing about the attitudes, traits, or behavior patterns of women or men. For example, women may be thought of as too timid or weak to ride a motorcycle.



Figure 12.9: Although our society may have a stereotype that associates motorcycles with men, women make up a sizable portion of the biker community. (Credit: Robert Couse-Baker/flickr)

Gender stereotypes form the basis of sexism. Sexism refers to prejudiced beliefs that value one sex over another. It varies in its level of severity. In parts of the world where women are strongly undervalued, young girls may not be given the same access to nutrition, healthcare, and education as boys. Further, they will grow up believing they deserve to be treated differently from boys (UNICEF 2011; Thorne 1993). While it is illegal in the United States when practiced as discrimination, unequal treatment of women continues to pervade social life. It should be noted that discrimination based on sex occurs at both the micro- and macro-levels. Many sociologists focus on discrimination that is built into the social structure; this type of discrimination is known as institutional discrimination (Pincus 2008).

Gender socialization occurs through four major agents of socialization: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Each agent reinforces gender roles by creating and maintaining normative expectations for gender-specific behavior. Exposure also occurs through secondary agents such as religion and the workplace. Repeated exposure to these agents over time leads men and women into a false sense that they are acting naturally rather than following a socially constructed role.

Family is the first agent of socialization. There is considerable evidence that parents socialize sons and daughters differently. Generally speaking, girls are given more latitude to step outside of their prescribed gender role (Coltrane and Adams 2004; Kimmel 2000; Raffaelli and Ontai 2004). However, differential socialization typically results in greater privileges afforded to sons. For instance, boys are allowed more autonomy and independence at an earlier age than daughters. They may be given fewer restrictions on appropriate clothing, dating habits, or curfew. Sons are also often free from performing domestic duties such as cleaning or cooking and other household tasks that are considered feminine. Daughters are limited by their expectation to be passive and nurturing, generally obedient, and to assume many of the domestic responsibilities.

Even when parents set gender equality as a goal, there may be underlying indications of inequality. For example, boys may be asked to take out the garbage or perform other tasks that require strength or toughness, while girls may be asked to fold laundry or perform duties that require neatness and care. It has been found that fathers are firmer in their expectations for gender conformity than are mothers, and their expectations are stronger for sons than they are for daughters (Kimmel 2000). This is true in many types of activities, including preference for toys, play styles, discipline, chores, and personal achievements. As a result, boys tend to be particularly attuned to their father's disapproval when engaging in an activity that might be considered feminine, like dancing or

singing (Coltraine and Adams 2008). Parental socialization and normative expectations also vary along lines of social class, race, and ethnicity. African American families, for instance, are more likely than Caucasians to model an egalitarian role structure for their children (Staples and Boulin Johnson 2004).

The reinforcement of gender roles and stereotypes continues once a child reaches school age. Until very recently, schools were rather explicit in their efforts to stratify boys and girls. The first step toward stratification was segregation. Girls were encouraged to take home economics or humanities courses and boys to take math and science.

Studies suggest that gender socialization still occurs in schools today, perhaps in less obvious forms (Lips 2004). Teachers may not even realize they are acting in ways that reproduce gender differentiated behavior patterns. Yet any time they ask students to arrange their seats or line up according to gender, teachers may be asserting that boys and girls should be treated differently (Thorne 1993).

Even in levels as low as kindergarten, schools subtly convey messages to girls indicating that they are less intelligent or less important than boys. For example, in a study of teacher responses to male and female students, data indicated that teachers praised male students far more than female students. Teachers interrupted girls more often and gave boys more opportunities to expand on their ideas (Sadker and Sadker 1994). Further, in social as well as academic situations, teachers have traditionally treated boys and girls in opposite ways, reinforcing a sense of competition rather than collaboration (Thorne 1993). Boys are also permitted a greater degree of freedom to break rules or commit minor acts of deviance, whereas girls are expected to follow rules carefully and adopt an obedient role (Ready 2001).

Mimicking the actions of significant others is the first step in the development of a separate sense of self (Mead 1934). Like adults, children become agents who actively facilitate and apply normative gender expectations to those around them. When children do not conform to the appropriate gender role, they may face negative sanctions such as being criticized or marginalized by their peers. Though many of these sanctions are informal, they can be quite severe. For example, a girl who wishes to take karate class instead of dance lessons may be called a “tomboy” and face difficulty gaining acceptance from both male and female peer groups (Ready 2001). Boys, especially, are subject to intense ridicule for gender nonconformity (Coltrane and Adams 2004; Kimmel 2000).

Mass media serves as another significant agent of gender socialization. In television and movies, women tend to have less significant roles and are often portrayed as wives or mothers. When women are given a lead role, it often falls into one of two extremes: a wholesome, saint-like figure or a malevolent, hypersexual figure (Etaugh and Bridges 2003). This same inequality is pervasive in children’s movies (Smith 2008). Research indicates that in the ten top-grossing G-rated movies released between 1991 and 2013, nine out of ten characters were male (Smith 2008).

Television commercials and other forms of advertising also reinforce inequality and gender-based stereotypes. Women are almost exclusively present in ads promoting cooking, cleaning, or childcare-related products (Davis 1993). Think about the last time you saw a man star in a dishwasher or laundry detergent commercial. In general, women are underrepresented in roles that involve leadership, intelligence, or a balanced psyche. Of particular concern is the depiction of women in ways that are dehumanizing, especially in music videos. Even in mainstream advertising, however, themes intermingling violence and sexuality are quite common (Kilbourne 2000).

Social Stratification and Inequality

Stratification refers to a system in which groups of people experience unequal access to basic, yet highly valuable, social resources. There is a long history of gender stratification in the United States. When looking to the past, it would appear that society has made great strides in terms of abolishing some of the most blatant forms of gender inequality (see timeline below) but underlying effects of male dominance still permeate many aspects of society.

- Before 1809—Women could not execute a will
- Before 1840—Women were not allowed to own or control property
- Before 1920—Women were not permitted to vote
- Before 1963—Employers could legally pay a woman less than a man for the same work
- Before 1973—Women did not have the right to a safe and legal abortion (Imbornoni 2009)

The Pay Gap

Despite making up nearly half (49.8 percent) of payroll employment, men vastly outnumber women in authoritative, powerful, and, therefore, high-earning jobs (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Even when a woman’s employment status is equal to a man’s, she will

generally make only 81 cents for every dollar made by her male counterpart (Payscale 2020). Women in the paid labor force also still do the majority of the unpaid work at home. On an average day, 84 percent of women (compared to 67 percent of men) spend time doing household management activities (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). This double duty keeps working women in a subordinate role in the family structure (Hochschild and Machung 1989).

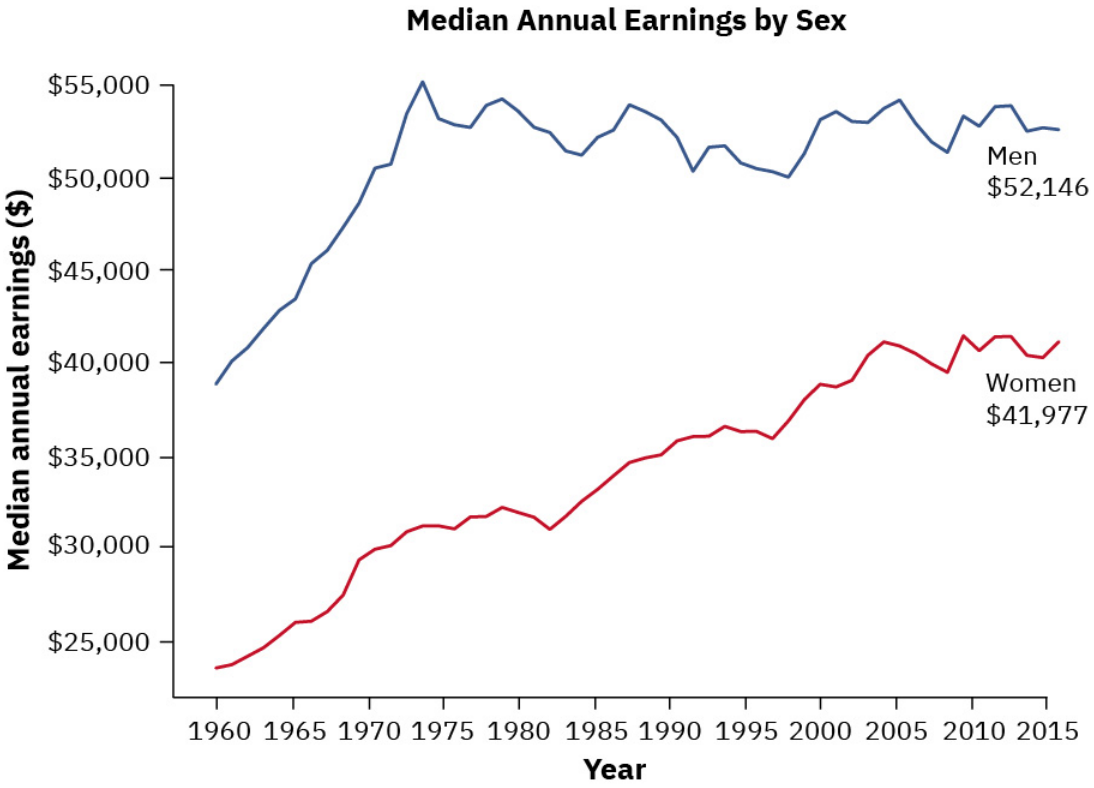


Figure 12.10: In 2017 men's overall median earnings were $52,146 and women's were $41,977. This means that women earned 80.1% of what men earned in the United States. (Credit: Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor)

Gender stratification through the division of labor is not exclusive to the United States. According to George Murdock's classic work, *Outline of World Cultures* (1954), all societies classify work by gender. When a pattern appears in all societies, it is called a cultural universal. While the phenomenon of assigning work by gender is universal, its specifics are not. The same task is not assigned to either men or women worldwide. But the way each task's associated gender is valued is notable. In Murdock's examination of the division of labor among 324 societies around the world, he found that in nearly all cases the jobs assigned to men were given greater prestige (Murdock and White 1968). Even if the job types were very similar and the differences slight, men's work was still considered more vital.



Figure 12.11: In some cultures, women do all of the household chores with no help from men, as doing housework is a sign of weakness, considered by society as a feminine trait. (Credit: Evil Erin/flickr)

Part of the gender pay gap can be attributed to unique barriers faced by women regarding work experience and promotion opportunities. A mother of young children is more likely to drop out of the labor force for several years or work on a reduced schedule than is the father. As a result, women in their 30s and 40s are likely, on average, to have less job experience than men. This effect becomes more evident when considering the pay rates of two groups of women: those who did *not* leave the workforce and those who did: In the United States, childless women with the same education and experience levels as men are typically paid with closer (but not exact) parity to men. However, women with families and children are paid less: Mothers are recommended a 7.9 percent lower starting salary than non-mothers, which is 8.6 percent lower than men (Correll 2007).

This evidence points to levels of discrimination that go beyond behaviors by individual companies or organizations. As discussed earlier in the gender roles section, many of these gaps are rooted in America's social patterns of discrimination, which involve the roles that different genders play in child-rearing, rather than individual discrimination by employers in hiring and salary decisions. On the other hand, legal and ethical practices demand that organizations do their part to promote more equity among all genders.

The Glass Ceiling

The idea that women are unable to reach the executive suite is known as the glass ceiling. It is an invisible barrier that women encounter when trying to win jobs in the highest level of business. At the beginning of 2021, for example, a record 41 of the world's largest 500 companies were run by women. While a vast improvement over the number twenty years earlier – where only two of the companies were run by women – these 41 chief executives still only represent eight percent of those large companies (Newcomb 2020).

Why do women have a more difficult time reaching the top of a company? One idea is that there is still a stereotype in the United States that women aren't aggressive enough to handle the boardroom or that they tend to seek jobs and work with other women (Reiners 2019). Other issues stem from the gender biases based on gender roles and motherhood discussed above.

Another idea is that women lack mentors, executives who take an interest and get them into the right meetings and introduce them to the right people to succeed (Murrell & Blake-Beard 2017).

Women in Politics

One of the most important places for women to help other women is in politics. Historically in the United States, like many other institutions, political representation has been mostly made up of White men. By not having women in government, their issues are being decided by people who don't share their perspective. The number of women elected to serve in Congress has increased over the years, but does not yet accurately reflect the general population. For example, in 2018, the population of the United States was 49 percent male and 51 percent female, but the population of Congress was 78.8 percent male and 21.2 percent female (Manning

2018). Over the years, the number of women in the federal government has increased, but until it accurately reflects the population, there will be inequalities in our laws.

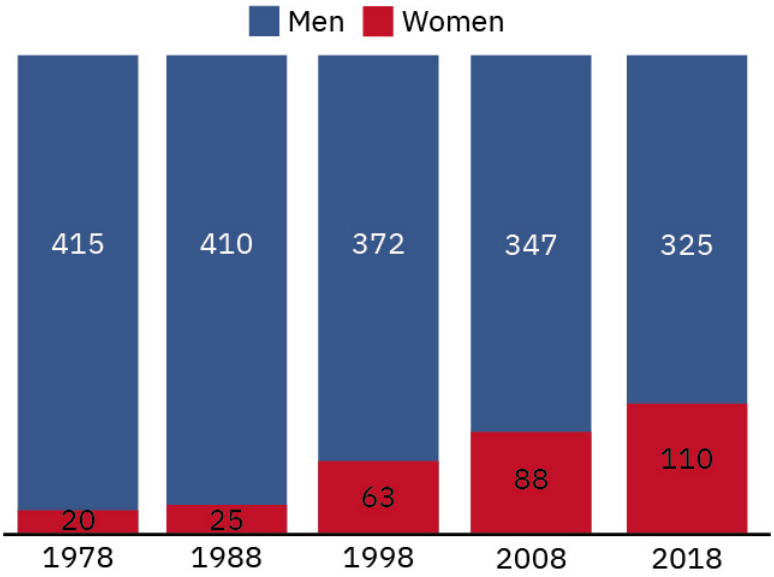


Figure 12.12: Breakdown of Congressional Membership by Gender. 2021 saw a record number of women in Congress, with 120 women serving in the House and 24 serving in the Senate. Gender representation has been steadily increasing over time, but is not close to being equal. (Credit: Based on data from Center for American Women in Politics, Rutgers University)

Movements for Change: Feminism

One of the underlying issues that continues to plague women in the United States is misogyny. This is the hatred of or, aversion to, or prejudice against women. Over the years misogyny has evolved as an ideology that men are superior to women in all aspects of life. There have been multiple movements to try and fight this prejudice.

In 1963, writer and feminist Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in which she contested the post-World War II belief that it was women's sole destiny to marry and bear children. Friedan's book began to raise the consciousness of many women who agreed that homemaking in the suburbs sapped them of their individualism and left them unsatisfied. In 1966, the National Organization for Women (NOW) formed and proceeded to set an agenda for the *feminist movement*. Framed by a statement of purpose written by Friedan, the agenda began by proclaiming NOW's goal to make possible women's participation in all aspects of American life and to gain for them all the rights enjoyed by men.

Feminists engaged in protests and actions designed to bring awareness and change. For example, the New York Radical Women demonstrated at the 1968 Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City to bring attention to the contest's—and society's—exploitation of women. The protestors tossed instruments of women's oppression, including high-heeled shoes, curlers, girdles, and bras, into a "freedom trash can." News accounts incorrectly described the protest as a "bra burning," which at the time was a way to demean and trivialize the issue of women's rights (Gay 2018).

Other protests gave women a more significant voice in a male-dominated social, political, and entertainment climate. For decades, *Ladies Home Journal* had been a highly influential women's magazine, managed and edited almost entirely by men. Men even wrote the advice columns and beauty articles. In 1970, protesters held a sit-in at the magazine's offices, demanding that the company hire a woman editor-in-chief, add women and non-White writers at fair pay, and expand the publication's focus.

Feminists were concerned with far more than protests, however. In the 1970s, they opened battered women's shelters and successfully fought for protection from employment discrimination for pregnant women, reform of rape laws (such as the abolition of laws requiring a witness to corroborate a woman's report of rape), criminalization of domestic violence, and funding for schools that sought to counter sexist stereotypes of women. In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* invalidated a number of state laws under which abortions obtained during the first three months of pregnancy were illegal. This made a nontherapeutic abortion a legal medical procedure nationwide.

Gloria Steinem had pushed through gender barriers to take on serious journalism subjects, and had emerged as a prominent advocate for women's rights. Through her work, Steinem met Dorothy Pittman-Hughes, who had founded New York City's first shelter for domestic violence victims as well as the city's Agency for Child Development. Together they founded *Ms*. Magazine,

which avoided articles on homemaking and fashion in favor of pieces on women's rights and empowerment. *Ms.* showcased powerful and accomplished women such as Shirley Chisholm and Sissy Farenthold, and was among the first publications to bring domestic violence, sexual harassment, and body image issues to the national conversation (Pogrebrin 2011).

Many advances in women's rights were the result of women's greater engagement in politics. For example, Patsy Mink, the first Asian American woman elected to Congress, was the co-author of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Title IX of which prohibits sex discrimination in education. Mink had been interested in fighting discrimination in education since her youth, when she opposed racial segregation in campus housing while a student at the University of Nebraska. She went to law school after being denied admission to medical school because of her gender. Like Mink, many other women sought and won political office, many with the help of the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC). In 1971, the NWPC was formed by Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, and other leading feminists to encourage women's participation in political parties, elect women to office, and raise money for their campaign.



Figure 12.13: "Unbought and Unbossed": Shirley Chisholm was the first Black United States Congresswoman, the co-founder of the Congressional Black Caucus, and a candidate for a major-party Presidential nomination.

Shirley Chisholm personally took up the mantle of women's involvement in politics. Born of immigrant parents, she earned degrees from Brooklyn College and Columbia University, and began a career in early childhood education and advocacy. In the 1950's she joined various political action groups, worked on election campaigns, and pushed for housing and economic reforms. After leaving one organization over its refusal to involve women in the decision-making process, she sought to increase gender and racial diversity within political and activist organizations throughout New York City. In 1968, she became the first Black woman elected to Congress. Refusing to take the quiet role expected of new Representatives, she immediately began sponsoring bills and initiatives. She spoke out against the Vietnam War, and fought for programs such as Head Start and the national school lunch program, which was eventually signed into law after Chisholm led an effort to override a presidential veto. Chisholm would eventually undertake a groundbreaking presidential run in 1972, and is viewed as paving the way for other women, and especially women of color, achieving political and social prominence (Emmrich 2019).

Theoretical Perspectives on Gender

Sociological theories help sociologists to develop questions and interpret data. For example, a sociologist studying why middle-school girls are more likely than their male counterparts to fall behind grade-level expectations in math and science might use a feminist perspective to frame her research. Another scholar might proceed from the conflict perspective to investigate why women are underrepresented in political office, and an interactionist might examine how the symbols of femininity interact with symbols of political authority to affect how women in Congress are treated by their male counterparts in meetings.

Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism has provided one of the most important perspectives of sociological research in the twentieth century and has been a major influence on research in the social sciences, including gender studies. Viewing the family as the most integral component of society, assumptions about gender roles within marriage assume a prominent place in this perspective.

Functionalists argue that gender roles were established well before the pre-industrial era when men typically took care of responsibilities outside of the home, such as hunting, and women typically took care of the domestic responsibilities in or around the home. These roles were considered functional because women were often limited by the physical restraints of pregnancy and nursing and unable to leave the home for long periods of time. Once established, these roles were passed on to subsequent generations since they served as an effective means of keeping the family system functioning properly.

When changes occurred in the social and economic climate of the United States during World War II, changes in the family structure also occurred. Many women had to assume the role of breadwinner (or modern hunter-gatherer) alongside their domestic role in order to stabilize a rapidly changing society. When the men returned from war and wanted to reclaim their jobs, society fell back into a state of imbalance, as many women did not want to forfeit their wage-earning positions (Hawke 2007).

Conflict Theory

According to conflict theory, society is a struggle for dominance among social groups (like women versus men) that compete for scarce resources. When sociologists examine gender from this perspective, we can view men as the dominant group and women as the subordinate group. According to conflict theory, social problems are created when dominant groups exploit or oppress subordinate groups. Consider the Women's Suffrage Movement or the debate over women's "right to choose" their reproductive futures. It is difficult for women to rise above men, as dominant group members create the rules for success and opportunity in society (Farrington and Chertok 1993).

Friedrich Engels, a German sociologist, studied family structure and gender roles. Engels suggested that the same owner-worker relationship seen in the labor force is also seen in the household, with women assuming the role of the proletariat. This is due to women's dependence on men for the attainment of wages, which is even worse for women who are entirely dependent upon their spouses for economic support. Contemporary conflict theorists suggest that when women become wage earners, they can gain power in the family structure and create more democratic arrangements in the home, although they may still carry the majority of the domestic burden, as noted earlier (Rismanand and Johnson-Sumerford 1998).

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is a type of conflict theory that examines inequalities in gender-related issues. It uses the conflict approach to examine the maintenance of gender roles and inequalities. Radical feminism, in particular, considers the role of the family in perpetuating male dominance. In patriarchal societies, men's contributions are seen as more valuable than those of women. Patriarchal perspectives and arrangements are widespread and taken for granted. As a result, women's viewpoints tend to be silenced or marginalized to the point of being discredited or considered invalid.

Sanday's study of the Indonesian Minangkabau (2004) revealed that in societies some consider to be matriarchies (where women comprise the dominant group), women and men tend to work cooperatively rather than competitively regardless of whether a job is considered feminine by U.S. standards. The men, however, do not experience the sense of bifurcated consciousness under this social structure that modern U.S. females encounter (Sanday 2004).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism aims to understand human behavior by analyzing the critical role of symbols in human interaction. This is certainly relevant to the discussion of masculinity and femininity. Imagine that you walk into a bank hoping to get a small loan for school, a home, or a small business venture. If you meet with a male loan officer, you may state your case logically by listing all the hard numbers that make you a qualified applicant as a means of appealing to the analytical characteristics associated with masculinity. If you meet with a female loan officer, you may make an emotional appeal by stating your good intentions as a means of appealing to the caring characteristics associated with femininity.

Because the meanings attached to symbols are socially created and not natural, and fluid, not static, we act and react to symbols based on the current assigned meaning. The word *gay*, for example, once meant "cheerful," but by the 1960s it carried the primary meaning of "homosexual." In transition, it was even known to mean "careless" or "bright and showing" (Oxford American Dictionary 2010). Furthermore, the word *gay* (as it refers to a person), carried a somewhat negative and unfavorable meaning fifty years ago, but it has since gained more neutral and even positive connotations. When people perform tasks or possess

characteristics based on the gender role assigned to them, they are said to be doing gender. This notion is based on the work of West and Zimmerman (1987). Whether we are expressing our masculinity or femininity, West and Zimmerman argue, we are always "doing gender." Thus, gender is something we do or perform, not something we are.

In other words, both gender and sexuality are socially constructed. The social construction of sexuality refers to the way in which socially created definitions about the cultural appropriateness of sex-linked behavior shape the way people see and experience sexuality. This is in marked contrast to theories of sex, gender, and sexuality that link male and female behavior to biological determinism, or the belief that men and women behave differently due to differences in their biology.

Sociological Research: Being Male, Being Female, and Being Healthy

In 1971, Broverman and Broverman conducted a groundbreaking study on the traits mental health workers ascribed to males and females. When asked to name the characteristics of a female, the list featured words such as unaggressive, gentle, emotional, tactful, less logical, not ambitious, dependent, passive, and neat. The list of male characteristics featured words such as aggressive, rough, unemotional, blunt, logical, direct, active, and sloppy (Seem and Clark 2006). Later, when asked to describe the characteristics of a healthy person (not gender specific), the list was nearly identical to that of a male.

This study uncovered the general assumption that being female is associated with being somewhat unhealthy or not of sound mind. This concept seems extremely dated, but in 2006, Seem and Clark replicated the study and found similar results. Again, the characteristics associated with a healthy male were very similar to that of a healthy (genderless) adult. The list of characteristics associated with being female broadened somewhat but did not show significant change from the original study (Seem and Clark 2006). This interpretation of feminine characteristic may help us one day better understand gender disparities in certain illnesses, such as why one in eight women can be expected to develop clinical depression in her lifetime (National Institute of Mental Health 1999). Perhaps these diagnoses are not just a reflection of women's health, but also a reflection of society's labeling of female characteristics, or the result of institutionalized sexism.

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11.4: Sexuality

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate among attitudes associated with sex and sexuality
- Describe sex education issues in the United States
- Discuss theoretical perspectives on sex and sexuality



Figure 12.14: Sexual practices can differ greatly among groups. Recent trends include the finding that married couples have sex more frequently than do singles and that 27 percent of married couples in their 30s have sex at least twice a week (NSSHB 2010). (Credit: epSos.de/flickr)

Sexual Attitudes and Practices

In the area of sexuality, sociologists focus their attention on sexual attitudes and practices, not on physiology or anatomy. As mentioned earlier, sexuality is viewed as a person's capacity for sexual feelings. Studying sexual attitudes and practices is a particularly interesting field of sociology because sexual behavior is a cultural universal. Throughout time and place, the vast majority of human beings have participated in sexual relationships (Broude 2003). Each society, however, interprets sexuality and sexual activity in different ways. At the same time, sociologists have learned that certain norms are shared among most societies. The incest taboo is present in every society, though which relative is deemed unacceptable for sex varies widely from culture to culture. For example, sometimes the relatives of the father are considered acceptable sexual partners for a woman while the relatives of the mother are not. Likewise, societies generally have norms that reinforce their accepted social system of sexuality.

What is considered "normal" in terms of sexual behavior is based on the mores and values of the society. Societies that value monogamy, for example, would likely oppose extramarital sex. Individuals are socialized to sexual attitudes by their family, education system, peers, media, and religion. Historically, religion has been the greatest influence on sexual behavior in most

societies, but in more recent years, peers and the media have emerged as two of the strongest influences, particularly among U.S. teens (Potard, Courtois, and Rusch 2008). Let us take a closer look at sexual attitudes in the United States and around the world.

Sexuality around the World

Cross-national research on sexual attitudes in industrialized nations reveals that normative standards differ across the world. For example, several studies have shown that Scandinavian students are more tolerant of premarital sex than are U.S. students (Grose 2007). A study of 37 countries reported that non-Western societies—like China, Iran, and India—valued chastity highly in a potential mate, while Western European countries—such as France, the Netherlands, and Sweden—placed little value on prior sexual experiences (Buss 1989).

Even among Western cultures, attitudes can differ. For example, according to a 33,590-person survey across 24 countries, 89 percent of Swedes responded that there is nothing wrong with premarital sex, while only 42 percent of Irish responded this way. From the same study, 93 percent of Filipinos responded that sex before age 16 is always wrong or almost always wrong, while only 75 percent of Russians responded this way (Widmer, Treas, and Newcomb 1998). Sexual attitudes can also vary within a country. For instance, 45 percent of Spaniards responded that homosexuality is always wrong, while 42 percent responded that it is never wrong; only 13 percent responded somewhere in the middle (Widmer, Treas, and Newcomb 1998).

Of industrialized nations, several European nations are is thought to be the most liberal when it comes to attitudes about sex, including sexual practices and sexual openness. Sweden, for example, has very few regulations on sexual images in the media, and sex education, which starts around age six, is a compulsory part of Swedish school curricula. Switzerland, Belgium, Iceland, Denmark, and The Netherlands have similar policies. Their more open approach to sex has helped countries avoid some of the major social problems associated with sex. For example, rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease are among the world's lowest in Switzerland and the Netherlands – lower than other European countries and far lower than the United States (Grose 2007 and Dutch News 2017). It would appear that these approaches are models for the benefits of sexual freedom and frankness. However, implementing their ideals and policies regarding sexuality in other, more politically conservative, nations would likely be met with resistance.

Sexuality in the United States

The United States prides itself on being the land of the "free," but it is rather restrictive when it comes to its citizens' general attitudes about sex compared to other industrialized nations. In an international survey, 25 percent of U.S. respondents stated that premarital sex is always wrong, while the average among the 24 countries surveyed was 17 percent, with less than ten percent of respondents from France, Germany, and Spain saying premarital sex was unacceptable (Chamie 2018). Similar discrepancies were found in questions about the condemnation of sex before the age of 16, extramarital sex, and homosexuality, with total disapproval of these acts being 12, 13, and 11 percent higher, respectively, in the United States, than the study's average (Widmer, Treas, and Newcomb 1998). U.S. culture is particularly restrictive in its attitudes about sex when it comes to women and sexuality.

It is widely believed that men are more sexual than are women. In fact, there was a popular notion that men think about sex every seven seconds. Research, however, suggests that men think about sex an average of 19 times per day, which is closer to once an hour, compared to 10 times per day for women (Fisher, Moore, and Pittenger 2011).

Belief that men have—or have the right to—more sexual urges than women creates a double standard. Ira Reiss, a pioneer researcher in the field of sexual studies, defined the *double standard* as prohibiting premarital sexual intercourse for women but allowing it for men (Reiss 1960). This standard has evolved into allowing women to engage in premarital sex only within committed love relationships, but allowing men to engage in sexual relationships with as many partners as they wish without condition (Milhausen and Herold 1999). Due to this double standard, a woman is likely to have fewer sexual partners in her life time than a man. According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) survey, the average thirty-five-year-old woman has had three opposite-sex sexual partners while the average thirty-five-year-old man has had twice as many (Centers for Disease Control 2011).

The future of a society's sexual attitudes may be somewhat predicted by the values and beliefs that a country's youth expresses about sex and sexuality. Data from the most recent National Survey of Family Growth reveals that 70 percent of boys and 78 percent of girls ages fifteen to nineteen said they "agree" or "strongly agree" that "it's okay for an unmarried female to have a child" (National Survey of Family Growth 2013). In a separate survey, 65 percent of teens stated that they "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that although waiting until marriage for sex is a nice idea, it's not realistic (NBC News 2005). This does not mean that today's youth have given up traditional sexual values such as monogamy. Nearly all college men (98.9 percent) and

women (99.2 percent) who participated in a 2002 study on sexual attitudes stated they wished to settle down with one mutually exclusive sexual partner at some point in their lives, ideally within the next five years (Pedersen et al. 2002).

Sex Education

One of the biggest controversies regarding sexual attitudes is sexual education in U.S. classrooms. Unlike many other countries, sex education is not required in all public school curricula in the United States. The heart of the controversy is not about whether sex education should be taught in school (studies have shown that only seven percent of U.S. adults oppose sex education in schools); it is about the *type* of sex education that should be taught.

Much of the debate is over the issue of abstinence as compared to a comprehensive sex education program. Abstinence-only programs focus on avoiding sex until marriage and/or delaying it as long as possible. So they do not focus on other types of prevention of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. As a result, according to the Sexuality and Information Council of the United States, only 38 percent of high schools and 14 percent of middle schools across the country teach all 19 topics identified as critical for sex education by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Janfaza 2020).

Research suggests that while government officials may still be debating about the content of sexual education in public schools, the majority of U.S. adults are not. Two-thirds (67 percent) of Americans say education about safer sexual practices is more effective than abstinence-only education in terms of reducing unintended pregnancies. A slightly higher percentage—69 percent—say that emphasizing safer sexual practices and contraception in sexuality education is a better way to reduce the spread of STIs than is emphasizing abstinence (Davis 2018).

Even with these clear majorities in favor of comprehensive education, the Federal government offers roughly $85 million per year to communities that will drive abstinence-only sex education (Columbia Public Health 2017 a). The results, as stated earlier, are relatively clear: the United States has nearly four times the rate of teenage pregnancy than a country like Germany, which has a comprehensive sex education program.

In a similar educational issue not necessarily related to sexuality, researchers and public health advocates find that young girls feel underprepared for puberty. Ages of first menstruation (menarche) and breast development are continually declining in the United States, but education about these changes typically doesn't begin until middle school, which is generally too late. Young people indicate concerns about misinformation and discomfort during the informal conversations about the topics with friends, sisters, or mothers (Columbia Public Health 2017 b)

Sociological Perspectives on Sex and Sexuality

Sociologists representing all three major theoretical perspectives study the role sexuality plays in social life today. Scholars recognize that sexuality continues to be an important and defining social location and that the manner in which sexuality is constructed has a significant effect on perceptions, interactions, and outcomes.

Structural Functionalism

When it comes to sexuality, functionalists stress the importance of regulating sexual behavior to ensure marital cohesion and family stability. Since functionalists identify the family unit as the most integral component in society, they maintain a strict focus on it at all times and argue in favor of social arrangements that promote and ensure family preservation.

Functionalists such as Talcott Parsons (1955) have long argued that the regulation of sexual activity is an important function of the family. Social norms surrounding family life have, traditionally, encouraged sexual activity within the family unit (marriage) and have discouraged activity outside of it (premarital and extramarital sex). From a functionalist point of view, the purpose of encouraging sexual activity in the confines of marriage is to intensify the bond between spouses and to ensure that procreation occurs within a stable, legally recognized relationship. This structure gives offspring the best possible chance for appropriate socialization and the provision of basic resources.

In this context, the functionalist perspective does not take into account the increasing legal acceptance of same-sex marriage, or the rise in LGBTQ couples who choose to bear and raise children through a variety of available resources.

Conflict Theory

From a conflict theory perspective, sexuality is another area in which power differentials are present and where dominant groups actively work to promote their worldview as well as their economic interests.

For conflict theorists, there were two key dimensions to the debate over marriage equality—one ideological and the other economic. Dominant groups wish for their worldview—which embraces traditional marriage and the nuclear family—to win out over what they see as the intrusion of a secular, individually driven worldview. On the other hand, many LGBTQ activists argue that legal marriage is a fundamental right that cannot be denied based on sexual orientation and that, historically, there already exists a precedent for changes to marriage laws: the 1960s legalization of formerly forbidden interracial marriages is one example.

From an economic perspective, activists in favor of same-sex marriage point out that legal marriage brings with it certain entitlements, many of which are financial in nature, like Social Security benefits and medical insurance (Solmonese 2008). Denial of these benefits to same-sex couples is wrong, they argue. Conflict theory suggests that as long as people struggle over these social and financial resources, there will be some degree of conflict.

Symbolic Interactionism

Interactionists focus on the meanings associated with sexuality and with sexual orientation. Since femininity is devalued in U.S. society, those who adopt such traits are subject to ridicule; this is especially true for boys or men. Just as masculinity is the symbolic norm, so too has heterosexuality come to signify normalcy. Prior to 1973, the American Psychological Association (APA) defined homosexuality as an abnormal or deviant disorder. Interactionist labeling theory recognizes the impact this has made. Before 1973, the APA was powerful in shaping social attitudes toward homosexuality by defining it as pathological. Today, the APA cites no association between sexual orientation and psychopathology and sees homosexuality as a normal aspect of human sexuality (APA 2008).

Recall Cooley's "looking-glass self," which suggests that self develops as a result of our interpretation and evaluation of the responses of others (Cooley 1902). Constant exposure to derogatory labels, jokes, and pervasive homophobia would lead to a negative self-image, or worse, self-hate. The CDC reports that homosexual youths (as referred to in the study) who experience high levels of social rejection are six times more likely to have high levels of depression and eight times more likely to have attempted suicide (CDC 2011).

Queer Theory

Queer Theory is an interdisciplinary approach to sexuality studies that identifies Western society's rigid splitting of gender into specific roles and questions the manner in which we have been taught to think about sexual orientation. According to Jagose (1996), Queer [Theory] focuses on mismatches between anatomical sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, not just division into male/female or homosexual/hetereosexual. By calling their discipline "queer," scholars reject the effects of labeling; instead, they embraced the word "queer" and reclaimed it for their own purposes. The perspective highlights the need for a more flexible and fluid conceptualization of sexuality—one that allows for change, negotiation, and freedom. This mirrors other oppressive schemas in our culture, especially those surrounding gender and race (Black versus White, man versus woman).

Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argued against U.S. society's monolithic definition of sexuality and its reduction to a single factor: the sex of someone's desired partner. Sedgwick identified dozens of other ways in which people's sexualities were different, such as:

- Even identical genital acts mean very different things to different people.
- Sexuality makes up a large share of the self-perceived identity of some people, a small share of others'.
- Some people spend a lot of time thinking about sex, others little.
- Some people like to have a lot of sex, others little or none.
- Many people have their richest mental/emotional involvement with sexual acts that they don't do, or don't even want to do.
- Some people like spontaneous sexual scenes, others like highly scripted ones, others like spontaneous-sounding ones that are nonetheless totally predictable.
- Some people experience their sexuality as deeply embedded in a matrix of gender meanings and gender differentials. Others do not (Sedgwick 1990).

Thus, theorists utilizing queer theory strive to question the ways society perceives and experiences sex, gender, and sexuality, opening the door to new scholarly understanding.

Throughout this chapter we have examined the complexities of gender, sex, and sexuality. Differentiating between sex, gender, and sexual orientation is an important first step to a deeper understanding and critical analysis of these issues. Understanding the sociology of sex, gender, and sexuality will help to build awareness of the inequalities experienced by people outside the dominant groups.

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11.5: Key Terms

biological determinism | the belief that men and women behave differently due to inherent sex differences related to their biology

doing gender | the performance of tasks based upon the gender assigned to us by society and, in turn, ourselves

DOMA | Defense of Marriage Act, a 1996 U.S. law explicitly limiting the definition of “marriage” to a union between one man and one woman and allowing each individual state to recognize or deny same-sex marriages performed in other states

double standard | the concept that prohibits premarital sexual intercourse for women but allows it for men

gender | a term that refers to social or cultural distinctions of behaviors that are considered male or female

gender dysphoria | a condition listed in the DSM-5 in which people whose gender at birth is contrary to the one they identify with. This condition replaces "gender identity disorder"

gender identity | a person’s deeply held internal perception of one's gender

gender role | society’s concept of how men and women should behave

glass ceiling | an invisible barrier that women encounter when trying to win jobs in the highest level of business

heterosexism | an ideology and a set of institutional practices that privilege straight people and heterosexuality over other sexual orientations

homophobia | an extreme or irrational aversion to gay, lesbian, bisexual, or all LGBTQ people, which often manifests as prejudice and bias

intersex | people born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

misogyny | the hatred of or, aversion to, or prejudice against women

pay gap | the difference in earnings between men and women

sex | a term that denotes the presence of physical or physiological differences between males and females

sexism | the prejudiced belief that one sex should be valued over another

sexual orientation | a person’s physical, mental, emotional, and sexual attraction to a particular sex (male or female)

sexuality | a person’s capacity for sexual feelings

social construction of sexuality | socially created definitions about the cultural appropriateness of sex-linked behavior which shape how people see and experience sexuality

transgender | an adjective that describes individuals who identify with the behaviors and characteristics that are other than their biological sex

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11.6: Section Summary

12.1 Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

The terms “sex” and “gender” refer to two different identifiers. Sex denotes biological characteristics differentiating males and females, while gender denotes social and cultural characteristics of masculine and feminine behavior. Sex and gender are not always synchronous. Individuals who strongly identify with the opposing gender are considered transgender.

12.2 Gender and Gender Inequality

Children become aware of gender roles in their earliest years, and they come to understand and perform these roles through socialization, which occurs through four major agents: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Socialization into narrowly prescribed gender roles results in the stratification of men and women. The impacts of discrimination and inequality have deep implications for economics, social mobility, and political power. The feminist movement undertook protests, improvement programs, and political focus in order to improve equality and the lives of women. Each sociological perspective offers a valuable view for understanding how and why gender inequality occurs in our society.

12.3 Sexuality

When studying sex and sexuality, sociologists focus their attention on sexual attitudes and practices, not on physiology or anatomy. Norms regarding gender and sexuality vary across cultures. In general, the United States tends to be fairly conservative in its sexual attitudes. As a result, programs such as sex education are often limited or selective in what topics they cover.

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11.9: Intersectionality

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Ask Anything

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Ask Anything

intersectionality, in social theory, the interaction and cumulative effects of multiple forms of

and cumulative effects of multiple forms of discrimination affecting the daily lives of individuals, particularly women of color. The term also refers more broadly to an intellectual framework for understanding how various aspects

11.9: Intersectionality is shar

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Social Movements and Social Change

12.1: Introduction
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12.8: Social Movements (Khan Academy Video)

Thumbnail: Some flash mobs may function as political protests, while others are for fun. This flash mob pillow fight's purpose was to entertain. (Photo courtesy of Mattwi1S0n:/flickr)

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12.1: Introduction



Figure 21.1: Activism can take the form of enormous marches, violent clashes, fundraising, social media activity, or silent displays. In this 2016 photo, people wear hoods and prison jumpsuits to protest the conditions at Guantanamo Bay Prison, where suspected terrorists had been held for over a decade without trial and without the rights of most people being held for suspicion of crimes. (Credit: Debra Sweet/flickr)

Chapter Outline

21.1 Collective Behavior
21.2 Social Movements
21.3 Social Change

When considering social movements, the images that come to mind are often the most dramatic and dynamic: the Boston Tea Party, Martin Luther King's speech at the 1963 March on Washington, anti-war protesters putting flowers in soldiers' rifles, and Gloria Richardson brushing away a bayonet in Cambridge, Maryland. Or perhaps more violent visuals: burning buildings in Watts, protestors fighting with police, or a lone citizen facing a line of tanks in Tiananmen Square.

But social movement occurs every day, often without any pictures or fanfare, by people of all backgrounds and ages. Organizing an awareness event, volunteering at a shelter, donating to a cause, speaking at a school board meeting, running for office, or writing an article are all ways that people participate in or promote social movements. Some people drive social change by educating themselves through books or trainings. Others find one person to help at a time.

Occupy Wall Street (OWS) was a unique movement that defied some of the theoretical and practical expectations regarding social movements. OWS is set apart by its lack of a single message, its leaderless organization, and its target—financial institutions instead of the government. OWS baffled much of the public, and certainly the media, leading many to ask, "Who are they, and what do they want?"

On July 13, 2011, the organization Adbusters posted on its blog, "Are you ready for a Tahrir moment? On September 17th, flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street" (Castells 2012).

The "Tahrir moment" was a reference to the 2010 political uprising that began in Tunisia and spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa, including Egypt’s Tahrir Square in Cairo. Although OWS was a reaction to the continuing financial chaos that resulted from the 2008 market meltdown and not a political movement, the Arab Spring was its catalyst.

Manuel Castells (2012) notes that the years leading up to the Occupy movement had witnessed a dizzying increase in the disparity of wealth in the United States, stemming back to the 1980s. The top 1 percent in the nation had secured 58 percent of the economic growth in the period for themselves, while real hourly wages for the average worker had increased by only 2 percent. The wealth of the top 5 percent had increased by 42 percent. The average pay of a CEO was at that time 350 times that of the average worker, compared to less than 50 times in 1983 (AFL-CIO 2014). The country's leading financial institutions, to many clearly to blame for the crisis and dubbed "too big to fail," were in trouble after many poorly qualified borrowers defaulted on their mortgage loans when the loans' interest rates rose. The banks were eventually "bailed" out by the government with $700 billion of taxpayer money. According to many reports, that same year top executives and traders received large bonuses.

On September 17, 2011, an anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution, the occupation began. About one thousand protestors descended upon Wall Street, and up to 20,000 people moved into Zuccotti Park, only two blocks away, where they began building a village of tents and organizing a system of communication. The protest soon began spreading throughout the nation, and its members started calling themselves "the 99 percent." More than a thousand cities and towns had Occupy demonstrations.

What did they want? Castells has dubbed OWS "A non-demand movement: The process is the message." Using Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and live-stream video, the protesters conveyed a multifold message with a long list of reforms and social change, including the need to address the rising disparity of wealth, the influence of money on election outcomes, the notion of "corporate personhood," a corporatized political system (to be replaced by "direct democracy"), political favoring of the rich, and rising student debt.

What did they accomplish? Despite headlines at the time softly mocking OWS for lack of cohesion and lack of clear messaging, the movement is credited with bringing attention to income inequality and the seemingly preferential treatment of financial institutions accused of wrongdoing. Recall from the chapter on Crime and Deviance that many financial crimes are not prosecuted, and their perpetrators rarely face jail time. It is likely that the general population is more sensitive to those issues than they were before the Occupy and related movements made them more visible.

What is the long-term impact? Has the United States changed the way it manages inequality? Certainly not. As discussed in several chapters, income inequality has generally increased. But is a major shift in our future?

The late James C. Davies suggested in his 1962 paper, "Toward a Theory of Revolution" that major change depends upon the mood of the people, and that it is extremely unlikely those in absolute poverty will be able to overturn a government, simply because the government has infinitely more power.

Instead, a shift is more possible when those with more power become involved. When formerly prosperous people begin to have unmet needs and unmet expectations, they become more disturbed: their mood changes. Eventually an intolerable point is reached, and revolution occurs. Thus, change comes not from the very bottom of the social hierarchy, but from somewhere in the middle (Davies 1962). For example, the Arab Spring was driven by mostly young, educated people whose promise and expectations were thwarted by corrupt autocratic governments. OWS too came not from the bottom but from people in the middle, who exploited the power of social media to enhance communication.

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12.2: Collective Behavior

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe different forms of collective behavior
- Differentiate between types of crowds
- Discuss emergent norm, value-added, and assembling perspective analyses of collective behavior

Sociology in the Real World: Flash Mobs and Challenges



Figure 21.2: Is this a good time had by all? Some flash mobs may function as political protests, while others are for fun. (Credit Richard Wood/flickr)

In March 2014, a group of musicians got together in a fish market in Odessa for a spontaneous performance of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" from his Ninth Symphony. While tensions were building over Ukraine's efforts to join the European Union, and even as Russian troops had taken control of the Ukrainian airbase in Belbek, the Odessa Philharmonic Orchestra and Opera Chorus tried to lighten the troubled times for shoppers with music and song. Spontaneous gatherings like this are called flash mobs. They are often recorded or live streamed, and are sometimes planned to celebrate an event or person.

While flash mobs are often intensely designed and rehearsed in order to give the impression of spontaneity, challenges don't always go according to plan: Cinnamon is too intense, buckets may fall on people's heads, or a bottle breaks on the floor. But successes and failures on social media can tie people together. Challenges can lead to chats, recollections, and repeats.

Humans seek connections and shared experiences. Perhaps experiencing a flash mob event enhances this bond. It certainly interrupts our otherwise mundane routine with a reminder that we are social animals.

Forms of Collective Behavior

Flash mobs are examples of collective behavior, noninstitutionalized activity in which several or many people voluntarily engage. Other examples are a group of commuters traveling home from work and a population of teens adopting a favorite singer's

hairstyle. In short, collective behavior is any group behavior that is not mandated or regulated by an institution. There are three primary forms of collective behavior: the crowd, the mass, and the public.

It takes a fairly large number of people in close proximity to form a crowd (Lofland 1993). Examples include a group of people attending an Ani DiFranco concert, tailgating at a Patriots game, or attending a worship service. Turner and Killian (1993) identified four types of crowds. Casual crowds consist of people who are in the same place at the same time but who aren't really interacting, such as people standing in line at the post office. Conventional crowds are those who come together for a scheduled event that occurs regularly, like a religious service. Expressive crowds are people who join together to express emotion, often at funerals, weddings, or the like. The final type, acting crowds**,** focuses on a specific goal or action, such as a protest movement or riot.

In addition to the different types of crowds, collective groups can also be identified in two other ways. A mass is a relatively large number of people with a common interest, though they may not be in close proximity (Lofland 1993), such as players of the popular Facebook game Farmville. A public, on the other hand, is an unorganized, relatively diffused group of people who share ideas, such as the Libertarian political party. While these two types of crowds are similar, they are not the same. To distinguish between them, remember that members of a mass share interests, whereas members of a public share ideas.

Theoretical Perspectives on Collective Behavior

Early collective behavior theories (LeBon 1895; Blumer 1969) focused on the irrationality of crowds. Eventually, those theorists who viewed crowds as uncontrolled groups of irrational people were supplanted by theorists who viewed the behavior some crowds engaged in as the rational behavior of logical beings.

Emergent-Norm Perspective



Figure 21.3: According to the emergent-norm perspective, Hurricane Katrina victims sought needed supplies for survival, but to some outsiders their behavior was normally seen as looting. (Credit: Infrogmation/Wikimedia Commons)

Sociologists Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (1993) built on earlier sociological ideas and developed what is known as emergent norm theory. They believe that the norms experienced by people in a crowd may be disparate and fluctuating. They emphasize the importance of these norms in shaping crowd behavior, especially those norms that shift quickly in response to changing external factors. Emergent norm theory asserts that, in this circumstance, people perceive and respond to the crowd situation with their particular (individual) set of norms, which may change as the crowd experience evolves. This focus on the individual component of interaction reflects a symbolic interactionist perspective.

For Turner and Killian, the process begins when individuals suddenly find themselves in a new situation, or when an existing situation suddenly becomes strange or unfamiliar. For example, think about human behavior during Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans was decimated and people were trapped without supplies or a way to evacuate. In these extraordinary circumstances, what outsiders saw as "looting" was defined by those involved as seeking needed supplies for survival. Normally, individuals would not wade into a corner gas station and take canned goods without paying, but given that they were suddenly in a greatly changed situation, they established a norm that they felt was reasonable.

Once individuals find themselves in a situation ungoverned by previously established norms, they interact in small groups to develop new guidelines on how to behave. According to the emergent-norm perspective, crowds are not viewed as irrational,

impulsive, uncontrolled groups. Instead, norms develop and are accepted as they fit the situation. While this theory offers insight into why norms develop, it leaves undefined the nature of norms, how they come to be accepted by the crowd, and how they spread through the crowd.

Value-Added Theory

Neil Smelser's (1962) meticulous categorization of crowd behavior, called value-added theory**,** is a perspective within the functionalist tradition based on the idea that several conditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur. Each condition adds to the likelihood that collective behavior will occur. The first condition is *structural conduciveness*, which occurs when people are aware of the problem and have the opportunity to gather, ideally in an open area. *Structural strain*, the second condition, refers to people's expectations about the situation at hand being unmet, causing tension and strain. The next condition is the *growth and spread of a generalized belief*, wherein a problem is clearly identified and attributed to a person or group.

Fourth, *precipitating factors* spur collective behavior; this is the emergence of a dramatic event. The fifth condition is *mobilization for action*, when leaders emerge to direct a crowd to action. The final condition relates to action by the agents. Called *social control*, it is the only way to end the collective behavior episode (Smelser 1962).

A real-life example of these conditions occurred after the fatal police shooting of teenager Michael Brown, an unarmed eighteen-year-old African American, in Ferguson, MO on August 9, 2014. The shooting drew national attention almost immediately. A large group of mostly Black, local residents assembled in protest—a classic example of structural conduciveness. When the community perceived that the police were not acting in the people's interest and were withholding the name of the officer, structural strain became evident. A growing generalized belief evolved as the crowd of protesters were met with heavily armed police in military-style protective uniforms accompanied by an armored vehicle. The precipitating factor of the arrival of the police spurred greater collective behavior as the residents mobilized by assembling a parade down the street. Ultimately they were met with tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets used by the police acting as agents of social control. The element of social control escalated over the following days until August 18, when the governor called in the National Guard.



Figure 21.4: Agents of social control bring collective behavior to an end. (Credit: hozinja/flickr)

Assembling Perspective

Interactionist sociologist Clark McPhail (1991) developed assembling perspective**,** another system for understanding collective behavior that credited individuals in crowds as rational beings. Unlike previous theories, this theory refocuses attention from collective behavior to collective action. Remember that collective behavior is a noninstitutionalized gathering, whereas collective action is based on a shared interest. McPhail's theory focused primarily on the processes associated with crowd behavior, plus the lifecycle of gatherings. He identified several instances of convergent or collective behavior, as shown on the chart below.

Table 21.1: Clark McPhail identified various circumstances of convergent and collective behavior (McPhail 1991).

Type of crowd	Description	Example
Convergence clusters	Family and friends who travel together	Carpooling parents take several children to the movies
Convergent orientation	Group all facing the same direction	A semi-circle around a stage
Collective vocalization	Sounds or noises made collectively	Screams on a roller coaster
Collective verbalization	Collective and simultaneous participation in a speech or song	Pledge of Allegiance in the school classroom
Collective gesticulation	Body parts forming symbols	The YMCA dance
Collective manipulation	Objects collectively moved around	Holding signs at a protest rally
Collective locomotion	The direction and rate of movement to the event	Children running to an ice cream truck

As useful as this is for understanding the components of how crowds come together, many sociologists criticize its lack of attention on the large cultural context of the described behaviors, instead focusing on individual actions.

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12.3: Social Movements

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate awareness of social movements on a state, national, and global level
- Distinguish between different types of social movements
- Identify stages of social movements
- Discuss theoretical perspectives on social movements, like resource mobilization, framing, and new social movement theory

Social movements are purposeful, organized groups that strive to work toward a common social goal. While most of us learned about social movements in history classes, we tend to take for granted the fundamental changes they caused —and we may be completely unfamiliar with the trend toward global social movements. But from the antitobacco movement that has worked to outlaw smoking in public buildings and raise the cost of cigarettes, to political uprisings throughout the Arab world, movements are creating social change on a global scale.

Levels of Social Movements

Movements happen in our towns, in our nation, and around the world. Let's take a look at examples of social movements, from local to global. No doubt you can think of others on all of these levels, especially since modern technology has allowed us a near-constant stream of information about the quest for social change around the world.



Figure 21.5: Staff at University of Wisconsin protest a proposed law that would significantly reduce their ability to bargain for better pay and benfits. (Credit: marctasman/flickr)

Local

Local social movements typically refer to those in cities or towns, but they can also affect smaller constituencies, such as college campuses. Sometimes colleges are smaller hubs of a national movement, as seen during the Vietnam War protests or the Black Lives Matter protests. Other times, colleges are managing a more local issue. In 2012, The Cooper Union in New York City announced that, due to financial mismanagement and unforeseen downturns from the Great Recession, the college had a massive shortfall; it would be forced to charge tuition for the first time. To students at most other colleges, tuition would not seem out of line, but Cooper Union was founded (and initially funded) under the principle that it would not charge tuition. When the school formally announced the plan to charge tuition, students occupied a building and, later, the college president's office. Student action eventually contributed to the president's resignation and a financial recovery plan in partnership with the state attorney general.

Another example occurred in Wisconsin. After announcing a significant budget shortfall, Governor Scott Walker put forth a financial repair bill that would reduce the collective bargaining abilities of unions and other organizations in the state. (Collective bargaining was used to attain workplace protections, benefits, healthcare, and fair pay.) Faculty at the state's college system were not in unions, but teaching assistants, researchers, and other staff had regularly collectively bargained. Faced with the prospect of reduced job protections, pay, and benefits, the staff members began one of the earliest protests against Walker's action, by protesting on campus and sending an ironic message of love to the governor on Valentine's Day. Over time, these efforts would spread to other organizations in the state.

State



Figure 21.6: Texas Secede! is an organization which would like Texas to secede from the United States. (Credit: Tim Pearce/flickr)

The most impactful state-level protest would be to cease being a state, and organizations in several states are working toward that goal. Texas secession has been a relatively consistent movement since about 1990. The past decade has seen an increase in rhetoric and campaigns to drive interest and support for a public referendum (a direct vote on the matter by the people). The Texas Nationalist Movement, Texas Secede!, and other groups have provided formal proposals and programs designed to make the idea seem more feasible. Texit has become a widely used nickname and hashtag for the movement. And in February 2021, a bill was introduced to hold a referendum that would begin formal discussions on creating an independent nation—though the bill's sponsor indicated that it was mainly intended to begin conversation and evaluations rather than directly lead to secession (De Alba 2021).

States also get involved before and after national decisions. The legalization of same-sex marriage throughout the United States led some people to feel their religious beliefs were under attack. Following swiftly upon the heels of the Supreme Court Obergefell ruling, the Indiana legislature passed a Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA, pronounced "rifra"). Originally crafted decades ago with the purpose of preserving the rights of minority religious people, more recent RFRA laws allow individuals, businesses, and other organizations to decide whom they will serve based on religious beliefs. For example, Arkansas's 2021 law allowed doctors to refuse to treat patients based on the doctor's religious beliefs (Associated Press 2021). In this way, state-level organizations and social movements are responding to a national decision.



Figure 21.7: At the time of this writing, more than thirty states and the District of Columbia allow marriage for same-sex couples. State constitutional bans are more difficult to overturn than mere state bans because of the higher threshold of votes required to change a constitution. Now that the Supreme Court has stricken a key part of the Defense of Marriage Act, same-sex couples married in states that allow it are now entitled to federal benefits afforded to heterosexual couples (CNN 2014). (Credit: Jose Antonio Navas/flickr).

Global

Social organizations worldwide take stands on such general areas of concern as poverty, sex trafficking, and the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in food. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are sometimes formed to support such movements, such as the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (FOAM). Global efforts to reduce poverty are represented by the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), among others. The Fair Trade movement exists to protect and support food producers in developing countries. Occupy Wall Street, although initially a local movement, also went global throughout Europe and, as the chapter's introductory photo shows, the Middle East.

Types of Social Movements

We know that social movements can occur on the local, national, or even global stage. Are there other patterns or classifications that can help us understand them? Sociologist David Aberle (1966) addresses this question by developing categories that distinguish among social movements based on what they want to change and how much change they want. Reform movements seek to change something specific about the social structure. Examples include antinuclear groups, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the Dreamers movement for immigration reform, and the Human Rights Campaign's advocacy for Marriage Equality. Revolutionary movements seek to completely change every aspect of society. These include the 1960s counterculture movement, including the revolutionary group The Weather Underground, as well as anarchist collectives. Texas Secede! is a revolutionary movement. Religious/Redemptive movements are "meaning seeking," and their goal is to provoke inner change or spiritual growth in individuals. Organizations pushing these movements include Heaven's Gate or the Branch Davidians. The latter is still in existence despite government involvement that led to the deaths of numerous Branch Davidian members in 1993. Alternative movements are focused on self-improvement and limited, specific changes to individual beliefs and behavior. These include trends like transcendental meditation or a macrobiotic diet. Resistance movements seek to prevent or undo change to the social structure. The Ku Klux Klan, the Minutemen, and pro-life movements fall into this category.

Stages of Social Movements

Later sociologists studied the lifecycle of social movements—how they emerge, grow, and in some cases, die out. Blumer (1969) and Tilly (1978) outline a four-stage process. In the *preliminary stage*, people become aware of an issue, and leaders emerge. This is followed by the *coalescence stage* when people join together and organize in order to publicize the issue and raise awareness. In the *institutionalization stage*, the movement no longer requires grassroots volunteerism: it is an established organization, typically with a paid staff. When people fall away and adopt a new movement, the movement successfully brings about the change it sought, or when people no longer take the issue seriously, the movement falls into the *decline stage*. Each social movement discussed earlier belongs in one of these four stages. Where would you put them on the list?



Figure 21.8: Are these activists most likely to have a larger impact through people who see their sign from the shore, or through people who will see pictures of their event on social media? (Credit: Backbone Campaign/flickr)

As we have mentioned throughout this text, and likely as you have experienced in your life, social media is a widely used mechanism in social movements. In the Groups and Organizations chapter, we discussed Tarana Burke first using "Me Too" in 2006 on a major social media venue of the time (MySpace). The phrase later grew into a massive movement when people began using it on Twitter to drive empathy and support regarding experiences of sexual harassment or sexual assault. In a similar way, Black Lives Matter began as a social media message after George Zimmerman was acquitted in the shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, and the phrase burgeoned into a formalized (though decentralized) movement in subsequent years.

Social media has the potential to dramatically transform how people get involved in movements ranging from local school district decisions to presidential campaigns. As discussed above, movements go through several stages, and social media adds a dynamic to each of them. In the the *preliminary stage*, people become aware of an issue, and leaders emerge. Compared to movements of 20 or 30 years ago, social media can accelerate this stage substantially. Issue awareness can spread at the speed of a click, with thousands of people across the globe becoming informed at the same time. In a similar vein, those who are savvy and engaged with social media may emerge as leaders, even if, for example, they are not great public speakers.

At the next stage, the *coalescence stage*, social media is also transformative. Coalescence is the point when people join together to publicize the issue and get organized. President Obama’s 2008 campaign was a case study in organizing through social media. Using Twitter and other online tools, the campaign engaged volunteers who had typically not bothered with politics. Combined with comprehensive data tracking and the ability to micro-target, the campaign became a blueprint for others to build on. The 2020 elections featured a level of data analysis and rapid response capabilities that, while echoing the Obama campaign's early work, made the 2008 campaign look quaint. The campaigns and political analysts could measure the level of social media interaction following any campaign stop, debate, statement by the candidate, news mention, or any other event, and measure whether the tone or "sentiment" was positive or negative. Political polls are still important, but social media provides instant feedback and opportunities for campaigns to act, react, or—on a daily basis—ask for donations based on something that had occurred just hours earlier (Knowledge at Wharton 2020).

Interestingly, social media can have interesting outcomes once a movement reaches the *institutionalization* stage. In some cases, a formal organization might exist alongside the hashtag or general sentiment, as is the case with Black Lives Matter. At any one time, BLM is essentially three things: a structured organization, an idea with deep and personal meaning for people, and a widely used phrase or hashtag. It's possible that users of the hashtag are not referring to the formal organization. It's even possible that people who hold a strong belief that Black lives matter do not agree with all of the organization's principles or its leadership. And in other cases, people may be very aligned with all three contexts of the phrase. Social media is still crucial to the social movement, but its interplay is both complex and evolving.

In a similar way, MeToo activists, including Tarana Burke herself, have sought to clarify the interweaving of different aspects of the movement. She told the Harvard Gazette in 2020:

> *I think we have to be careful about what we're calling the movement. And I think one of the things I've learned in the last two years is that folks don't really understand what a movement is or how it's defined. The people using the hashtag on the internet were the impetus for Me Too being put into the public sphere. The media coverage of the viralness of Me Too and the people being accused are media coverage of a popular story that derived from the hashtag. The movement is the work that our organization and others like us are doing to both support survivors and move people to action (Walsh 2020).*

Sociologists have identified high-risk activism, such as the civil rights movement, as a "strong-tie" phenomenon, meaning that people are far more likely to stay engaged and not run home to safety if they have close friends who are also engaged. The people who dropped out of the movement—who went home after the danger became too great—did not display any less ideological commitment. But they lacked the strong-tie connection to other people who were staying. Social media had been considered "weak-tie" (McAdam 1993 and Brown 2011). People follow or friend people they have never met. Weak ties are important for our social structure, but they seemed to limit the level of risk we'll take on their behalf. For some people, social media remains that way, but for others it can relate to or build stronger ties. For example, if people, who had for years known each other only through an online group, meet in person at an event, they may feel far more connected at that event and afterward than people who had never interacted before. And as we discussed in the Groups chapter, social media itself, even if people never meet, can bring people into primary group status, forming stronger ties.

Another way to consider the impact of social media on activism is through something that may or may not be emotional, has little implications regarding tie strength, and may be fleeting rather than permanent, but still be one of the largest considerations of any formal social movement: money. Returning to politics, think of the massive amounts of campaign money raised in each election cycle through social media. In the 2020 Presidential election and its aftermath, hundreds of millions of dollars were raised through social media. Likewise, 55 percent of people who engage with nonprofits through social media take some sort of action; and for 60 percent of them (or 33 percent of the total) that action is to give money to support the cause (Nonprofit Source 2020).

Theoretical Perspectives on Social Movements

Most theories of social movements are called collective action theories, indicating the purposeful nature of this form of collective behavior. The following three theories are but a few of the many classic and modern theories developed by social scientists.

Resource Mobilization

McCarthy and Zald (1977) conceptualize resource mobilization theory as a way to explain movement success in terms of the ability to acquire resources and mobilize individuals. Resources are primarily time and money, and the more of both, the greater the power of organized movements. Numbers of social movement organizations (SMOs), which are single social movement groups, with the same goals constitute a social movement industry (SMI). Together they create what McCarthy and Zald (1977) refer to as "the sum of all social movements in a society."

Resource Mobilization and the Civil Rights Movement

An example of resource mobilization theory is activity of the civil rights movement in the decade between the mid 1950s and the mid 1960s. Social movements had existed before, notably the Women's Suffrage Movement and a long line of labor movements, thus constituting an existing social movement sector, which is the multiple social movement industries in a society, even if they have widely varying constituents and goals. The civil rights movement had also existed well before Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man. Less known is that Parks was a member of the NAACP and trained in leadership (A&E Television

Networks, LLC. 2014). But her action that day was spontaneous and unplanned (Schmitz 2014). Her arrest triggered a public outcry that led to the famous Montgomery bus boycott, turning the movement into what we now think of as the "civil rights movement" (Schmitz 2014).

Mobilization had to begin immediately. Boycotting the bus made other means of transportation necessary, which was provided through car pools. Churches and their ministers joined the struggle, and the protest organization In Friendship was formed as well as The Friendly Club and the Club From Nowhere. A social movement industry, which is the collection of the social movement organizations that are striving toward similar goals, was growing.

Martin Luther King Jr. emerged during these events to become the charismatic leader of the movement, gained respect from elites in the federal government, and aided by even more emerging SMOs such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), among others. Several still exist today. Although the movement in that period was an overall success, and laws were changed (even if not attitudes), the "movement" continues. So do struggles to keep the gains that were made, even as the U.S. Supreme Court has recently weakened the Voter Rights Act of 1965, once again making it more difficult for Black Americans and other minorities to vote.

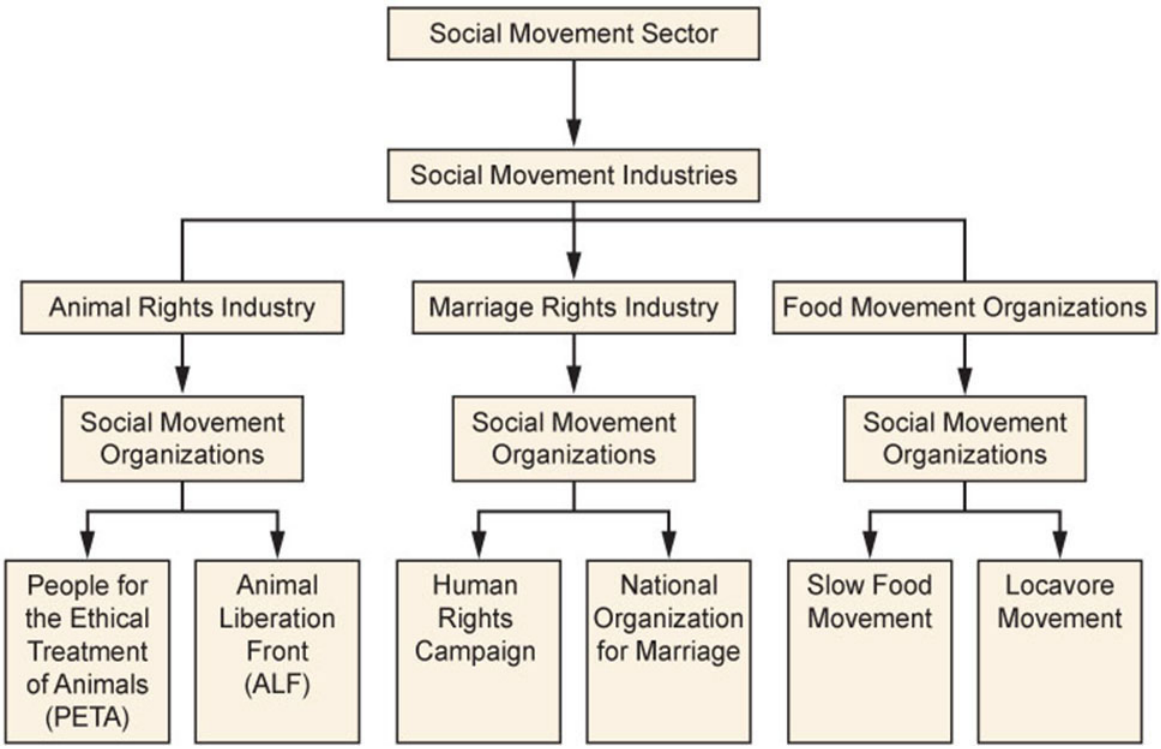


Figure 21.9: Multiple social movement organizations concerned about the same issue form a social movement industry. A society's many social movement industries comprise its social movement sector. With so many options, to whom will you give your time and money?

Framing/Frame Analysis

Over the past several decades, sociologists have developed the concept of frames to explain how individuals identify and understand social events and which norms they should follow in any given situation (Goffman 1974; Snow et al. 1986; Benford and Snow 2000). Imagine entering a restaurant. Your "frame" immediately provides you with a behavior template. It probably does not occur to you to wear pajamas to a fine-dining establishment, throw food at other patrons, or spit your drink onto the table. However, eating food at a sleepover pizza party provides you with an entirely different behavior template. It might be perfectly acceptable to eat in your pajamas and maybe even throw popcorn at others or guzzle drinks from cans.

Successful social movements use three kinds of frames (Snow and Benford 1988) to further their goals. The first type, diagnostic framing, states the problem in a clear, easily understood way. When applying diagnostic frames, there are no shades of gray: instead, there is the belief that what "they" do is wrong and this is how "we" will fix it. The anti-gay marriage movement is an example of diagnostic framing with its uncompromising insistence that marriage is only between a man and a woman. Prognostic framing, the second type, offers a solution and states how it will be implemented. Some examples of this frame, when looking at

the issue of marriage equality as framed by the anti-gay marriage movement, include the plan to restrict marriage to “one man/one woman” or to allow only “civil unions” instead of marriages. As you can see, there may be many competing prognostic frames even within social movements adhering to similar diagnostic frames. Finally, motivational framing is the call to action: what should you do once you agree with the diagnostic frame and believe in the prognostic frame? These frames are action-oriented. In the gay marriage movement, a call to action might encourage you to vote “no” on Proposition 8 in California (a move to limit marriage to male-female couples), or conversely, to contact your local congressperson to express your viewpoint that marriage should be restricted to male-female couples.

With so many similar diagnostic frames, some groups find it best to join together to maximize their impact. When social movements link their goals to the goals of other social movements and merge into a single group, a frame alignment process (Snow et al. 1986) occurs—an ongoing and intentional means of recruiting participants to the movement.

This frame alignment process has four aspects: bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation. *Bridging* describes a “bridge” that connects uninvolved individuals and unorganized or ineffective groups with social movements that, though structurally unconnected, nonetheless share similar interests or goals. These organizations join together to create a new, stronger social movement organization. Can you think of examples of different organizations with a similar goal that have banded together?

In the *amplification* model, organizations seek to expand their core ideas to gain a wider, more universal appeal. By expanding their ideas to include a broader range, they can mobilize more people for their cause. For example, the Slow Food movement extends its arguments in support of local food to encompass reduced energy consumption, pollution, obesity from eating more healthfully, and more.

In *extension*, social movements agree to mutually promote each other, even when the two social movement organization’s goals don’t necessarily relate to each other’s immediate goals. This often occurs when organizations are sympathetic to each others’ causes, even if they are not directly aligned, such as women’s equal rights and the civil rights movement.



Figure 21.10: Extension occurs when social movements have sympathetic causes. Women’s rights, racial equality, and LGBT advocacy are all human rights issues. (Credit: Photos (a) and (b) Wikimedia Commons; Photo (c) Charlie Nguyen/flickr)

Transformation means a complete revision of goals. Once a movement has succeeded, it risks losing relevance. If it wants to remain active, the movement has to change with the transformation or risk becoming obsolete. For instance, when the women’s suffrage movement gained women the right to vote, members turned their attention to advocating equal rights and campaigning to elect women to office. In short, transformation is an evolution in the existing diagnostic or prognostic frames that generally achieves a total conversion of the movement.

New Social Movement Theory

New social movement theory, a development of European social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s, attempts to explain the proliferation of postindustrial and postmodern movements that are difficult to analyze using traditional social movement theories. Rather than being one specific theory, it is more of a perspective that revolves around understanding movements as they relate to politics, identity, culture, and social change. Some of these more complex interrelated movements include ecofeminism, which focuses on the patriarchal society as the source of environmental problems, and the transgender rights movement. Sociologist Steven Buechler (2000) suggests that we should be looking at the bigger picture in which these movements arise—shifting to a macro-level, global analysis of social movements.

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12.4: Social Change

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain how technology, social institutions, population, and the environment can bring about social change
- Discuss the importance of modernization in relation to social change

Collective behavior and social movements are just two of the forces driving social change, which is the change in society created through social movements as well as external factors. Essentially, any disruptive shift in the status quo, be it intentional or random, human-caused or natural, can lead to social change.

Causes of Social Change

Throughout this text, we have discussed various causes and effects of social change. Below is a recap of some major drivers, including technology, social institutions, population, and the environment. Alone or in combination, these agents can disturb, improve, disrupt, or otherwise influence society.

Technology

Some would say that improving technology has made our lives easier. Imagine what your day would be like without the Internet, the automobile, or electricity. In *The World Is Flat*, Thomas Friedman (2005) argues that technology is a driving force behind globalization, while the other forces of social change (social institutions, population, environment) play comparatively minor roles. He suggests that we can view globalization as occurring in three distinct periods. First, globalization was driven by military expansion, powered by horsepower and wind power. The countries best able to take advantage of these power sources expanded the most, and exert control over the politics of the globe from the late fifteenth century to around the year 1800. The second shorter period from approximately 1800 C.E. to 2000 C.E. consisted of a globalizing economy. Steam and rail power were the guiding forces of social change and globalization in this period. Finally, Friedman brings us to the post-millennial era. In this period of globalization, change is driven by technology, particularly the Internet (Friedman 2005).

Technology can change other societal forces. For example, advances in medical technology allow people to live longer, have more children, and survive some natural disasters or problems. Advances in agricultural technology have allowed us to alter food products, which impacts our health as well as the environment. A given technology can create beneficiaries, but that same technology—especially if it is disruptive—can lead others to lose their jobs, suffer from pollution, or be monitored or victimized.

The digital divide—the increasing gap between the technological haves and have-nots—exists both locally and globally. Added security issues include theft of personal information, cyber aggression, and loss of privacy. The constant change in technology leads to an almost inevitable lack of preparation for new risks on both personal and societal scales.

Sociology in the Real World: Crowdsourcing: Using the Web to Get Things Done

Millions of people today walk around with their heads tilted toward a small device held in their hands. Perhaps you are reading this textbook on a phone or tablet. People in developed societies now take communication technology for granted. How has this technology affected social change in our society and others? One very positive way is crowdsourcing.

Thanks to the web, digital crowdsourcing is the process of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people, and especially from an online community rather than from traditional employees or suppliers. Web-based companies such as Kickstarter have been created precisely for the purposes of raising large amounts of money in a short period of time, notably by sidestepping the traditional financing process. This book, or virtual book, is the product of a kind of crowdsourcing effort. It has been written and reviewed by several authors in a variety of fields to give you free access to a large amount of data produced at a low cost. The most common example of crowdsourced data is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, which is the result of thousands of volunteers adding and correcting material.

Perhaps the most striking use of crowdsourcing is disaster relief. By tracking tweets and e-mails and organizing the data in order of urgency and quantity, relief agencies can address the most urgent calls for help, such as for medical aid, food, shelter, or rescue. On January 12, 2010 a devastating earthquake hit the nation of Haiti. By January 25, a crisis map had been created

from more than 2,500 incident reports, and more reports were added every day. The same technology was used to assist victims of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

The Darker Side of Technology: Electronic Aggression in the Information Age

The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) uses the term "electronic aggression" to describe "any type of harassment or bullying that occurs through e-mail, a chat room, instant messaging, a website (including blogs), or text messaging" (CDC, n.d.) We generally think of this as cyberbullying. A 2011 study by the U.S. Department of Education found that 27.8 percent of students aged twelve through eighteen reported experiencing bullying. From the same sample 9 percent specifically reported having been a victim of cyberbullying (Robers et al. 2013).

Cyberbullying represents a powerful change in modern society. William F. Ogburn (1922) might have been describing it nearly a century ago when he defined "cultural lag," which occurs when material culture precedes nonmaterial culture. That is, society may not fully comprehend all the consequences of a new technology and so may initially reject it (such as stem cell research) or embrace it, sometimes with unintended negative consequences (such as pollution).

Cyberbullying is a special feature of the Internet. Unique to electronic aggression is that it can happen twenty-four hours a day, every day; it can reach a child (or an adult) even though she or he might otherwise feel safe in a locked house. The messages and images may be posted anonymously and to a very wide audience, and they might even be impossible to trace. Finally, once posted, the texts and images are very hard to delete. Its effects range from the use of alcohol and drugs to lower self-esteem, health problems, and even suicide (CDC, n.d.).

Social Institutions

Each change in a single social institution leads to changes in all social institutions. For example, the industrialization of society meant that there was no longer a need for large families to produce enough manual labor to run a farm. Further, new job opportunities were in close proximity to urban centers where living space was at a premium. The result is that the average family size shrunk significantly.

This same shift toward industrial corporate entities also changed the way we view government involvement in the private sector, created the global economy, provided new political platforms, and even spurred new religions and new forms of religious worship like Scientology. It has also informed the way we educate our children: originally schools were set up to accommodate an agricultural calendar so children could be home to work the fields in the summer, and even today, teaching models are largely based on preparing students for industrial jobs, despite that being an outdated need. A shift in one area, such as industrialization, means an interconnected impact across social institutions.

Population

Population composition is changing at every level of society. Births increase in one nation and decrease in another. Some families delay childbirth while others start bringing children into their folds early. Population changes can be due to random external forces, like an epidemic, or shifts in other social institutions, as described above. But regardless of why and how it happens, population trends have a tremendous interrelated impact on all other aspects of society.

In the United States, we are experiencing an increase in our senior population as Baby Boomers retire, which will in turn change the way many of our social institutions are organized. For example, there is an increased demand for housing in warmer climates, a massive shift in the need for elder care and assisted living facilities, and growing incidence of elder abuse. Retiring Boomers may also lead to labor or expertise shortages, and (as discussed extensively in the chapter on Aging and the Elderly) healthcare costs will increase to become a larger and larger portion of our economy.

Globally, often the countries with the highest fertility rates are least able to absorb and attend to the needs of a growing population. Family planning is a large step in ensuring that families are not burdened with more children than they can care for. On a macro level, the increased population, particularly in the poorest parts of the globe, also leads to increased stress on the planet’s resources.

The Environment

As discussed extensively in the chapter on Population, Urbanization, and the Environment, changes in the environment and our interaction with it can have promising or devastating effects. Access to safe water is a primary determinant of health and prosperity. And as human populations expand in more vulnerable areas while natural disasters occur with more frequency, we see an increase in the number of people affected by those disasters.

Overall health and wellbeing are deeply affected by the environment even in urbanized areas. Many types of cancers, which are collectively the leading cause of death in higher-income countries, have environmental influences (Mahase 2019).

Sociology in the Real World: Hurricane Katrina: When It All Comes Together

The four key elements that affect social change that are described in this chapter are the environment, technology, social institutions, and population. In 2005, New Orleans was struck by a devastating hurricane. But it was not just the hurricane that was disastrous. It was the converging of all four of these elements, and the text below will connect the elements by putting the words in parentheses.

Before Hurricane Katrina (environment) hit, poorly coordinated evacuation efforts had left about 25 percent of the population, almost entirely African Americans who lacked private transportation, to suffer the consequences of the coming storm (demographics). Then "after the storm, when the levees broke, thousands more [refugees] came. And the city buses, meant to take them to proper shelters, were underwater" (Sullivan 2005). No public transportation was provided, drinking water and communications were delayed, and FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (institutions), was headed by an appointee with no real experience in emergency management. Those who were eventually evacuated did not know where they were being sent or how to contact family members. African Americans were sent the farthest from their homes. When the displaced began to return, public housing had not been reestablished, yet the Superdome stadium, which had served as a temporary disaster shelter, had been rebuilt. Homeowners received financial support, but renters did not.

As it turns out, it was not entirely the hurricane that cost the lives of 1,500 people, but the fact that the city's storm levees (technology), which had been built too low and which failed to meet numerous other safety specifications, gave way, flooding the lower portions of the city, occupied almost entirely by African Americans.

Journalist Naomi Klein, in her book The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism, presents a theory of a "triple shock," consisting of an initial disaster, an economic shock that replaces public services with private (for-profit) ones, and a third shock consisting of the intense policing of the remaining public. Klein supports her claim by quoting then-Congressman Richard Baker as saying, "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did." She quotes developer Joseph Canizaro as stating, "I think we have a clean sheet to start again. And with that clean sheet we have some very big opportunities."

One clean sheet was that New Orleans began to replace public schools with charters, breaking the teachers' union and firing all public school teachers (Mullins 2014). Public housing was seriously reduced and the poor were forced out altogether or into the suburbs far from medical and other facilities (The Advocate 2013). Finally, by relocating African Americans and changing the ratio of African Americans to whites, New Orleans changed its entire demographic makeup.

Modernization

Modernization describes the processes that increase the amount of specialization and differentiation of structure in societies resulting in the move from an undeveloped society to a developed, technologically driven society (Irwin 1975). By this definition, the level of modernity within a society is judged by the sophistication of its technology, particularly as it relates to infrastructure, industry, and the like. However, it is important to note the inherent ethnocentric bias of such assessment. Why do we assume that those living in semi-peripheral and peripheral nations would find it so wonderful to become more like the core nations? Is modernization always positive?

One contradiction of all kinds of technology is that they often promise time-saving benefits, but somehow fail to deliver. How many times have you ground your teeth in frustration at an Internet site that refused to load or at a dropped call on your cell phone? Despite time-saving devices such as dishwashers, washing machines, and, now, remote control vacuum cleaners, the average amount of time spent on housework is the same today as it was fifty years ago. And the dubious benefits of 24/7 e-mail and immediate information have simply increased the amount of time employees are expected to be responsive and available. While once businesses had to travel at the speed of the U.S. postal system, sending something off and waiting until it was received before the next stage, today the immediacy of information transfer means there are no such breaks.

Further, the Internet bought us information, but at a cost. The morass of information means that there is as much poor information available as trustworthy sources. There is a delicate line to walk when core nations seek to bring the assumed benefits of modernization to more traditional cultures. For one, there are obvious procapitalist biases that go into such attempts, and it is short-sighted for western governments and social scientists to assume all other countries aspire to follow in their footsteps. Additionally,

there can be a kind of neo-liberal defense of rural cultures, ignoring the often crushing poverty and diseases that exist in peripheral nations and focusing only on a nostalgic mythology of the happy peasant. It takes a very careful hand to understand both the need for cultural identity and preservation as well as the hopes for future growth.

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12.5: Key Terms

acting crowds | crowds of people who are focused on a specific action or goal

alternative movements | social movements that limit themselves to self-improvement changes in individuals

assembling perspective | a theory that credits individuals in crowds as behaving as rational thinkers and views crowds as engaging in purposeful behavior and collective action

casual crowds | people who share close proximity without really interacting

collective behavior | a noninstitutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage

conventional crowds | people who come together for a regularly scheduled event

crowd | a fairly large number of people who share close proximity

crowdsourcing | the process of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people

diagnostic framing | a the social problem that is stated in a clear, easily understood manner

emergent norm theory | a perspective that emphasizes the importance of social norms in crowd behavior

expressive crowds | crowds who share opportunities to express emotions

flash mob | a large group of people who gather together in a spontaneous activity that lasts a limited amount of time

frame alignment process | using bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation as an ongoing and intentional means of recruiting participants to a movement

mass | a relatively large group with a common interest, even if they may not be in close proximity

modernization | the process that increases the amount of specialization and differentiation of structure in societies

motivational framing | a call to action

new social movement theory | a theory that attempts to explain the proliferation of postindustrial and postmodern movements that are difficult to understand using traditional social movement theories

NGO | nongovernmental organizations working globally for numerous humanitarian and environmental causes

prognostic framing | social movements that state a clear solution and a means of implementation

public | an unorganized, relatively diffuse group of people who share ideas

reform movements | movements that seek to change something specific about the social structure

religious/redemptive movements | movements that work to promote inner change or spiritual growth in individuals

resistance movements | those who seek to prevent or undo change to the social structure

resource mobilization theory | a theory that explains social movements' success in terms of their ability to acquire resources and mobilize individuals

revolutionary movements | movements that seek to completely change every aspect of society

social change | the change in a society created through social movements as well as through external factors like environmental shifts or technological innovations

social movement | a purposeful organized group hoping to work toward a common social goal

social movement industry | the collection of the social movement organizations that are striving toward similar goals

social movement organization | a single social movement group

social movement sector | the multiple social movement industries in a society, even if they have widely varying constituents and goals

value-added theory | a functionalist perspective theory that posits that several preconditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur

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12.6: Section Summary

21.1 Collective Behavior

Collective behavior is noninstitutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage. There are three different forms of collective behavior: crowd, mass, and public. There are three main theories on collective behavior. The first, the emergent-norm perspective, emphasizes the importance of social norms in crowd behavior. The next, the value-added theory, is a functionalist perspective that states that several preconditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur. Finally the assembling perspective focuses on collective action rather than collective behavior, addressing the processes associated with crowd behavior and the lifecycle and various categories of gatherings.

21.2 Social Movements

Social movements are purposeful, organized groups, either with the goal of pushing toward change, giving political voice to those without it, or gathering for some other common purpose. Social movements intersect with environmental changes, technological innovations, and other external factors to create social change. There are a myriad of catalysts that create social movements, and the reasons that people join are as varied as the participants themselves. Sociologists look at both the macro- and microanalytical reasons that social movements occur, take root, and ultimately succeed or fail.

21.3 Social Change

There are numerous and varied causes of social change. Four common causes, as recognized by social scientists, are technology, social institutions, population, and the environment. All four of these areas can impact when and how society changes. And they are all interrelated: a change in one area can lead to changes throughout. Modernization is a typical result of social change. Modernization refers to the process of increased differentiation and specialization within a society, particularly around its industry and infrastructure. While this assumes that more modern societies are better, there has been significant pushback on this western-centric view that all peripheral and semi-peripheral countries should aspire to be like North America and Western Europe.

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