SOCI 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY



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Glossary

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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.

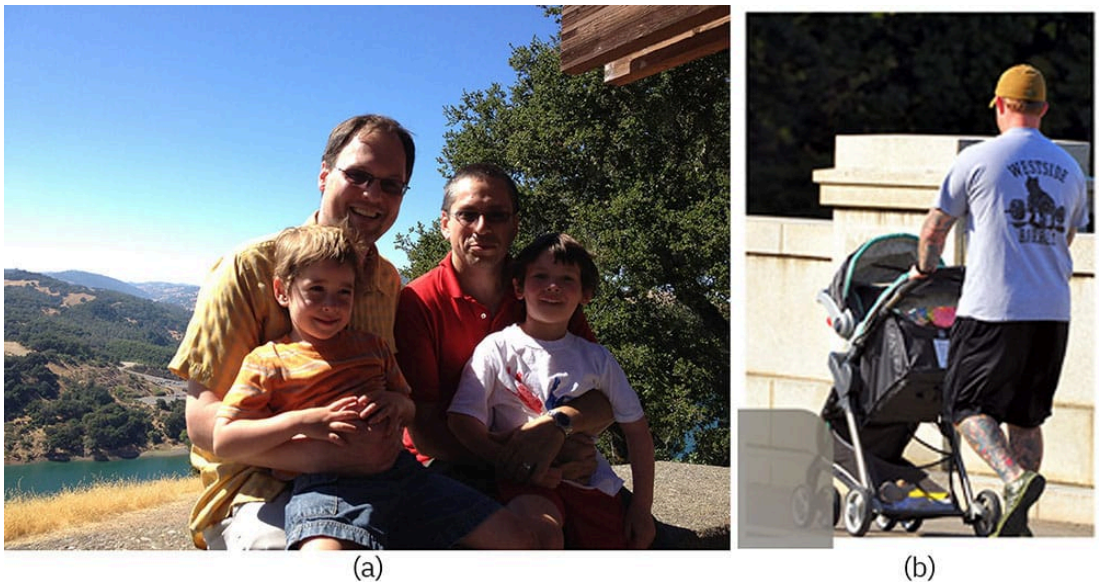


Figure 1.3: Modern U.S. families may be very different in makeup from what was historically typical. (Credit A: Paul Brody/flickr; B: Tony Alter/ Wikimedia Commons)

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.

Applying the Discipline: American Theorists and Practitioners

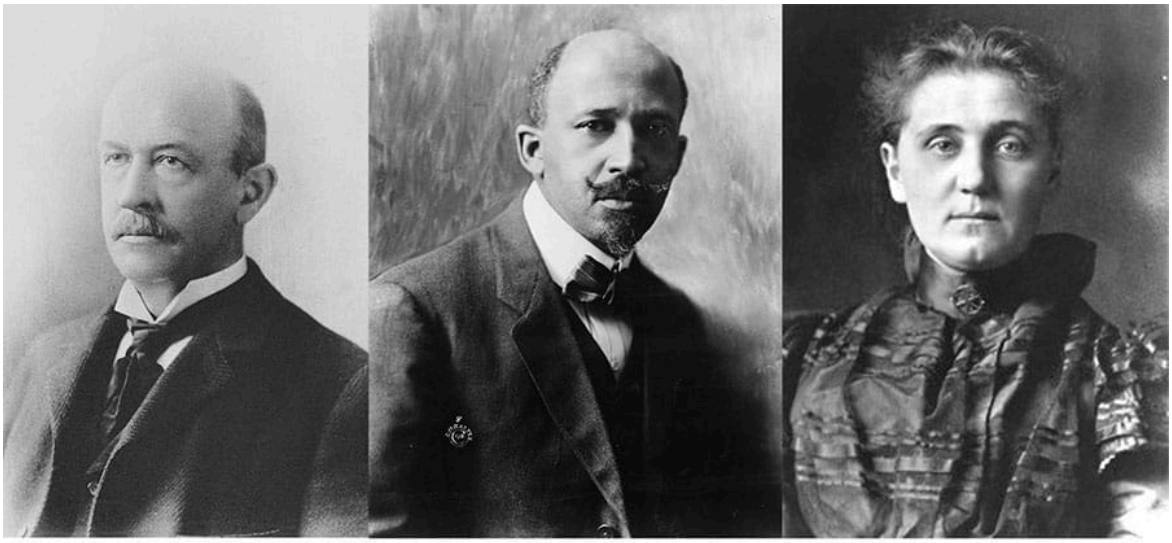


Figure 1.6: From left to right, William Sumner, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Jane Adams. (Credit A, B, and C: Wikimedia Commons.)

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.

Social Construction of Reality

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)

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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1.5: 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.

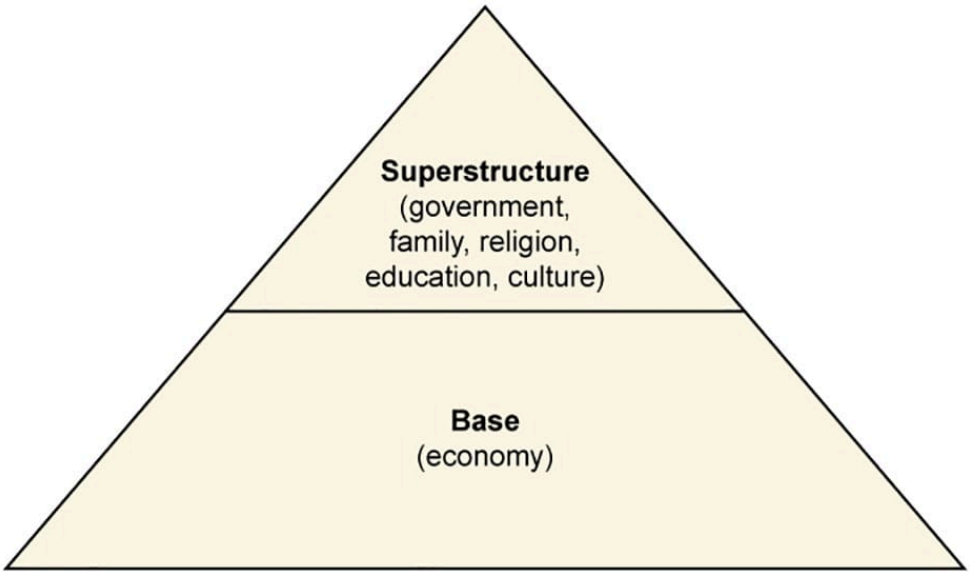


Figure 4.6: Karl Marx asserted that all elements of a society's structure depend on its economic structure.

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.”

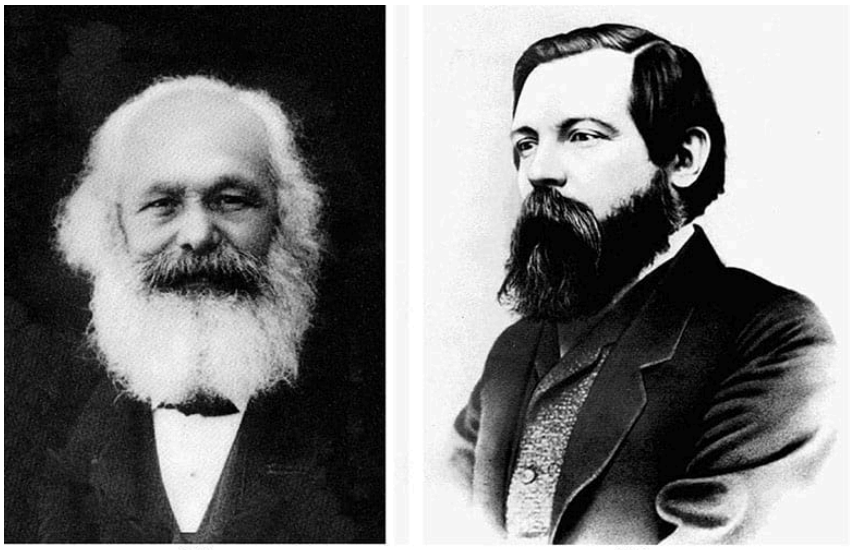


Figure 4.7: Karl Marx (left) and Friedrich Engels (right) analyzed differences in social power between “have” and “have-not” groups. (Credit: (a) Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) George Lester/Wikimedia Commons)

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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1.6: 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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1.7: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				
antipositivism	the view that social researchers should strive for subjectivity as they worked to represent social processes, cultural norms, and societal values				
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				
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				
false consciousness	a condition in which the beliefs, ideals, or ideology of a person are not in the person's own best interest				
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				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				
iron cage	a situation in which an individual is trapped by social institutions				
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				
mechanical solidarity	a type of social order maintained by the collective consciousness of a culture				
micro-level theories	the study of specific relationships between individuals or small groups				
organic solidarity	a type of social order based around an acceptance of economic and social differences				
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				
proletariat	the laborers in a society				
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				
rationalization	a belief that modern society should be built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition				
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 integration	how strongly a person is connected to his or her social group				
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				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				
habitualization	the idea that society is constructed by us and those before us, and it is followed like a habit				
Thomas theorem	how a subjective reality can drive events to develop in accordance with that reality, despite being originally unsupported by objective reality				
institutionalization	the act of implanting a convention or norm into society				
self-fulfilling prophecy	an idea that becomes true when acted upon				

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1.8: 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 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.

1.5 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: Section Quiz

1.1 What Is Sociology?

1.

Which of the following best describes sociology as a subject?

a. The study of individual behavior
b. The study of cultures
c. The study of society and social interaction
d. The study of economics

2.

C. Wright Mills once said that sociologists need to develop a sociological _____ to study how society affects individuals.

a. culture
b. imagination
c. method
d. tool

3.

A sociologist defines society as a group of people who reside in a defined area, share a culture, and who:

a. interact
b. work in the same industry
c. speak different languages
d. practice a recognized religion

4.

Seeing patterns means that a sociologist needs to be able to:

a. compare the behavior of individuals from different societies
b. compare one society to another
c. identify similarities in how social groups respond to social pressure
d. compare individuals to groups

1.2 The History of Sociology

5.

Which of the following was a topic of study in early sociology?

a. Astrology
b. Economics
c. Physics
d. History

6.

Which founder of sociology believed societies changed due to class struggle?

a. Emile Comte
b. Karl Marx

c. Plato
d. Herbert Spencer

7.

Weber believed humans could not be studied purely objectively because they were influenced by:

a. drugs
b. their culture
c. their genetic makeup
d. the researcher

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

8.

Which of these theories is most likely to look at the social world on a micro level?

a. Structural functionalism
b. Conflict theory
c. Positivism
d. Symbolic interactionism

9.

Who believed that the history of society was one of class struggle?

a. Emile Durkheim
b. Karl Marx
c. Erving Goffmann
d. George Herbert Mead

10.

Who coined the phrase symbolic interactionism?

a. Herbert Blumer
b. Max Weber
c. Lester F. Ward
d. W. I. Thomas

11.

A symbolic interactionist may compare social interactions to:

a. behaviors
b. conflicts
c. human organs
d. theatrical roles

12.

Which research technique would most likely be used by a symbolic interactionist?

a. Surveys
b. Participant observation
c. Quantitative data analysis
d. None of the above

1.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

13.

Organic solidarity is most likely to exist in which of the following types of societies?

a. Hunter-gatherer
b. Industrial
c. Agricultural
d. Feudal

14.

According to Marx, the ____ own the means of production in a society.

a. proletariat
b. vassals
c. bourgeoisie
d. anomie

15.

Which of the following best depicts Marx's concept of alienation from the process of one's labor?

a. A supermarket cashier always scans store coupons before company coupons because she was taught to do it that way.
b. A businessman feels that he deserves a raise, but is nervous to ask his manager for one; instead, he comforts himself with the idea that hard work is its own reward.
c. An associate professor is afraid that she won't be given tenure and starts spreading rumors about one of her associates to make herself look better.
d. A construction worker is laid off and takes a job at a fast food restaurant temporarily, although he has never had an interest in preparing food before.

16.

The Protestant work ethic is based on the concept of predestination, which states that _____.

a. performing good deeds in life is the only way to secure a spot in Heaven
b. salvation is only achievable through obedience to God
c. no person can be saved before he or she accepts Jesus Christ as his or her savior
d. God has already chosen those who will be saved and those who will be damned

17.

The concept of the iron cage was popularized by which of the following sociological thinkers?

a. Max Weber
b. Karl Marx
c. Émile Durkheim
d. Friedrich Engels

18.

Émile Durkheim's ideas about society can best be described as _____.

a. functionalist
b. conflict theorist
c. symbolic interactionist
d. rationalist

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

19.

Kenneth and Mamie Clark used sociological research to show that segregation was:

a. beneficial
b. harmful
c. illegal
d. of no importance

20.

What did the Clark's use in their experiment noted in question 15?

a. children and dogs
b. adults and dolls
c. children and dolls
d. adults and pets

21.

Studying sociology helps people analyze data because they learn:

a. interview techniques
b. to apply statistics
c. to generate theories
d. all of the above

22.

Berger describes sociologists as concerned with:

a. monumental moments in people's lives
b. common everyday life events
c. both a and b
d. none of the above

23.

Berger writes that sociology

a. is not an academic discipline
b. makes the strange familiar
c. makes the familiar strange
d. is not a science

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1.10: Short Answer

1.1 What Is Sociology?

1.

What do you think C. Wright Mills meant when he said that to be a sociologist, one had to develop a sociological imagination?

2.

Describe a situation in which a choice you made was influenced by societal pressures.

1.2 The History of Sociology

3.

What do you make of Karl Marx's contributions to sociology? What perceptions of Marx have you been exposed to in your society, and how do those perceptions influence your views?

4.

Do you tend to place more value on qualitative or quantitative research? Why? Does it matter what topic you are studying?

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

5.

Which theory do you think better explains how societies operate—structural functionalism or conflict theory? Why?

6.

Do you think the way people behave in social interactions is more like the behavior of animals or more like actors playing a role in a theatrical production? Why?

1.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

7.

Choose two of the three sociologists discussed here (Durkheim, Marx, Weber), and use their arguments to explain a current social event such as the Occupy movement. Do their theories hold up under modern scrutiny?

8.

Think of the ways workers are alienated from the product and process of their jobs. How can these concepts be applied to students and their educations?

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

9.

How do you think taking a sociology course might affect your social interactions?

10.

What sort of career are you interested in? How could studying sociology help you in this career?

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1.11: Further Research

1.1 What Is Sociology?

Sociology is a broad discipline. Different kinds of sociologists employ various methods for exploring the relationship between individuals and society. Check out more about sociology at this website..

1.2 The History of Sociology

Many sociologists helped shape the discipline. To learn more, check out this site featuring prominent sociologists and how they changed sociology.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

People often think of all conflict as violent, but many conflicts can be resolved nonviolently. To learn more about nonviolent methods of conflict resolution check out the Albert Einstein Institution.

1.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

One of the most influential pieces of writing in modern history was Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*. Visit this site to read the original document that spurred revolutions around the world.

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

Social communication is rapidly evolving due to ever improving technologies. Check out this website to learn more about how sociologists study the impact of these changes

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2: SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

2.1: Introduction
2.2: Approaches to Sociological Research
2.3: Research Methods
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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.

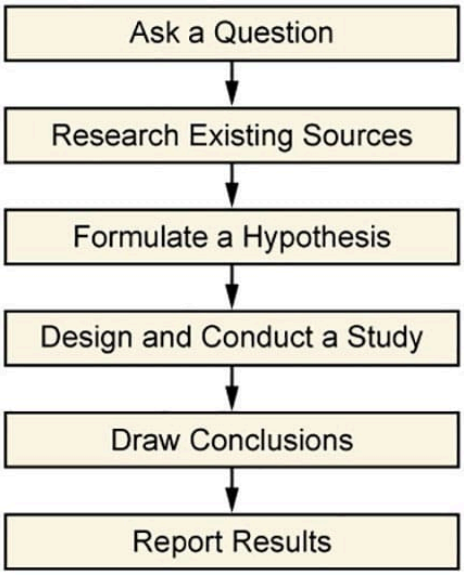


Figure 2.2: The Scientific Method. 6 steps of the scientific method are an essential tool in research.

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.

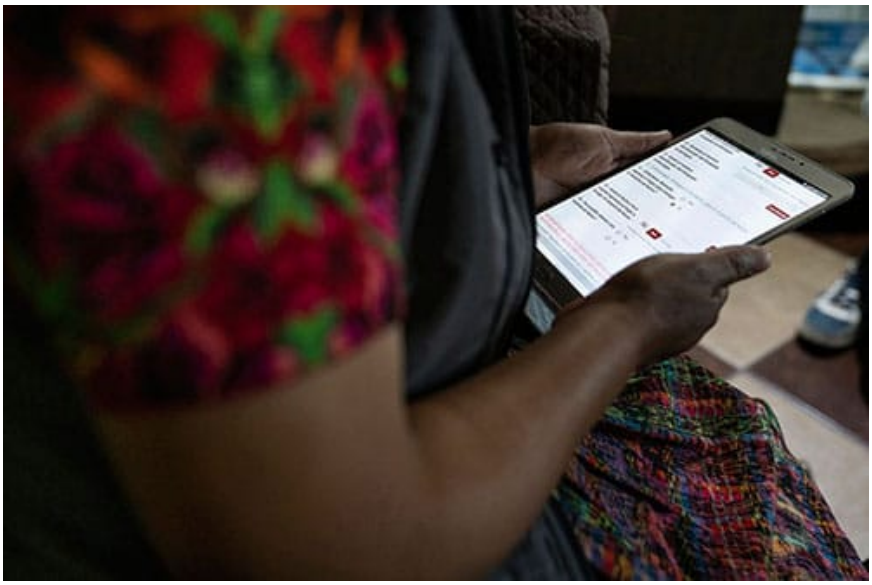


Figure 2.3: Questionnaires are a common research method. (Credit: CDC Global/flickr)

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.

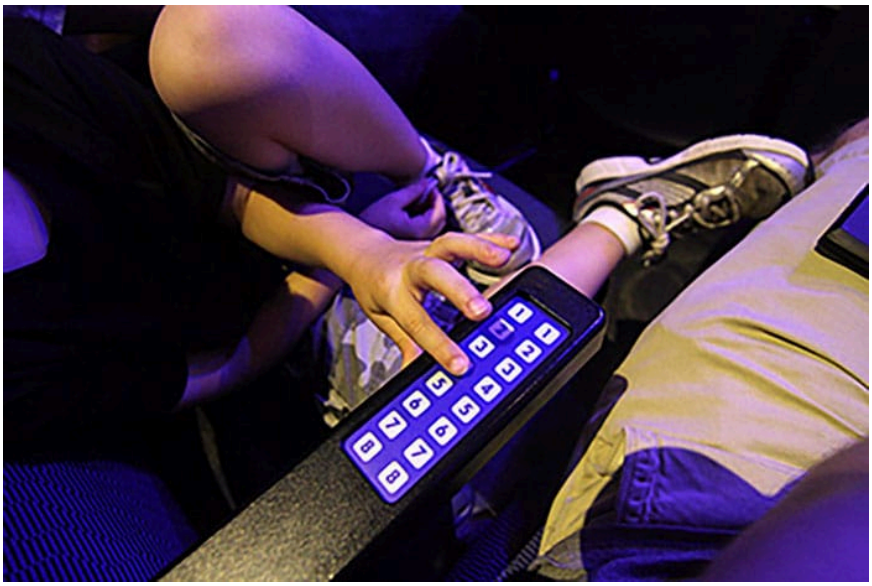


Figure 2.4: Real-time surveys are common in classrooms, live-audience events, and even popular media. Twitter polls have often replaced physical devices such as the one pictured. (Credit: Sam Howzit/flickr)

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

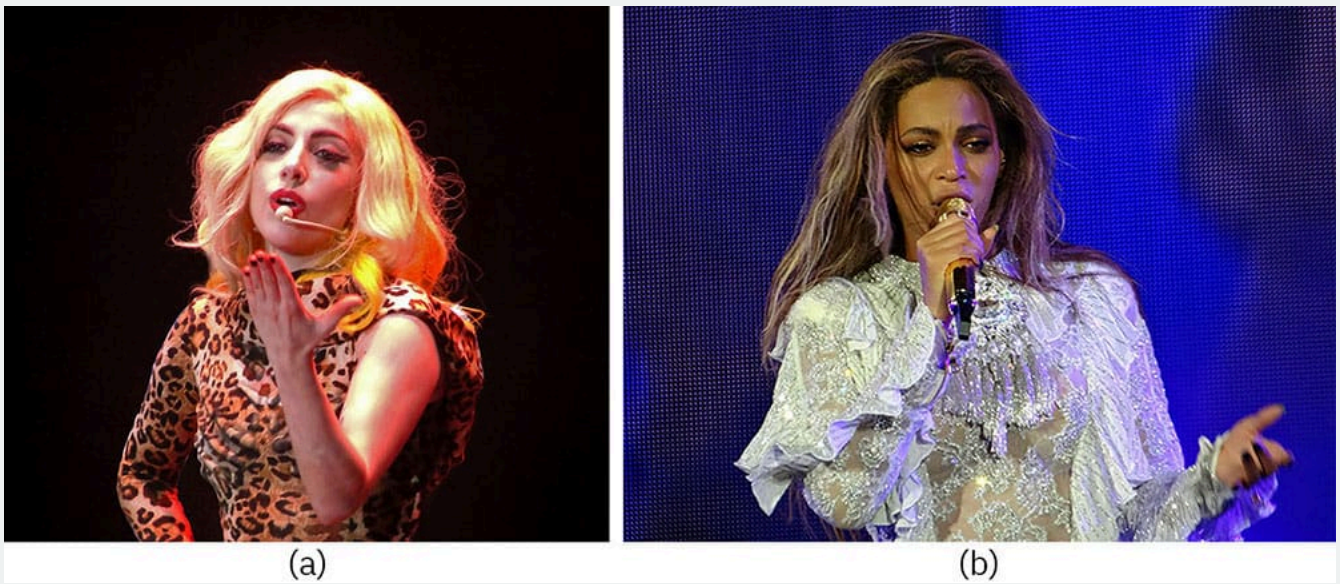


Figure 2.6: Researchers have used surveys and participant observations to accumulate data on Lady Gaga and Beyonce as multifaceted performers. (Credit a: John Robert Chartlon/flickr, b: Kristopher Harris/flickr.)

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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2.4: 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

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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

Method	Implementation	Advantages	Challenges
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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2.7: Section Quiz

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

1.

The 1st step of the scientific method:

a. Collect and analyze data
b. Summarize the articles
c. Ask a question about a topic
d. Create a hypothesis

2.

A measurement is considered _____ if it actually measures what it is intended to measure, according to the topic of the study.

a. reliable
b. sociological
c. valid
d. quantitative

3.

Sociological studies test relationships in which change in one _____ causes change in another.

a. test subject
b. behavior
c. variable
d. operational definition

4.

In a study, a group of ten-year-old boys are fed doughnuts every morning for a week and then weighed to see how much weight they gained. Which factor is the dependent variable?

a. The doughnuts
b. The boys
c. The duration of a week
d. The weight gained

5.

Which statement provides the best operational definition of “childhood obesity”?

a. Children who eat unhealthy foods and spend too much time watching television and playing video games
b. A distressing trend that can lead to health issues including type 2 diabetes and heart disease
c. Body weight at least 20 percent higher than a healthy weight for a child of that height
d. The tendency of children today to weigh more than children of earlier generations

2.2 Research Methods

6.

Which materials are considered secondary data?

a. Photos and letters given to you by another person

b. Books and articles written by other authors about their studies
c. Information that you have gathered and now have included in your results
d. Responses from participants whom you both surveyed and interviewed

7.

Why is choosing a random sample an effective way to select participants?

a. Participants do not know they are part of a study
b. The researcher has no control over who is in the study
c. It is larger than an ordinary sample
d. Everyone has the same chance of being part of the study

8.

What research method did John S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd mainly use in their *Middletown* study?

a. Secondary data
b. Survey
c. Participant observation
d. Experiment

9.

Which research approach is best suited to the scientific method?

a. Questionnaire
b. Case study
c. Ethnography
d. Secondary data analysis

10.

The main difference between ethnography and other types of participant observation is:

a. ethnography isn't based on hypothesis testing
b. ethnography subjects are unaware they're being studied
c. ethnographic studies always involve minority ethnic groups
d. ethnography focuses on how subjects view themselves in relationship to the community

11.

Which best describes the results of a case study?

a. It produces more reliable results than other methods because of its depth
b. Its results are not generally applicable
c. It relies solely on secondary data analysis
d. All of the above

12.

Using secondary data is considered an unobtrusive or _____ research method.

a. nonreactive
b. nonparticipatory
c. nonrestrictive
d. nonconfrontive

2.3 Ethical Concerns

13.

Which statement illustrates value neutrality?

a. Obesity in children is obviously a result of parental neglect and, therefore, schools should take a greater role to prevent it
b. In 2003, states like Arkansas adopted laws requiring elementary schools to remove soft drink vending machines from schools
c. Merely restricting children's access to junk food at school is not enough to prevent obesity
d. Physical activity and healthy eating are a fundamental part of a child's education

14.

Which person or organization defined the concept of value neutrality?

a. Institutional Review Board (IRB)
b. Peter Rossi
c. American Sociological Association (ASA)
d. Max Weber

15.

To study the effects of fast food on lifestyle, health, and culture, from which group would a researcher ethically be unable to accept funding?

a. A fast-food restaurant
b. A nonprofit health organization
c. A private hospital
d. A governmental agency like Health and Social Services

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2.8: Short Answer

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

1.

Write down the first three steps of the scientific method. Think of a broad topic that you are interested in and which would make a good sociological study—for example, ethnic diversity in a college, homecoming rituals, athletic scholarships, or teen driving. Now, take that topic through the first steps of the process. For each step, write a few sentences or a paragraph: 1) Develop a research question about the topic. 2) Do some research and write down the titles of some articles or books you'd want to read about the topic. 3) Formulate a hypothesis.

2.

Explain the correlation between accuracy, validity, and reliability in the research method.

2.2 Research Methods

3.

What type of data do surveys gather? For what topics would surveys be the best research method? What drawbacks might you expect to encounter when using a survey? To explore further, ask a research question and write a hypothesis. Then create a survey of about six questions relevant to the topic. Provide a rationale for each question. Now define your population and create a plan for recruiting a random sample and administering the survey.

4.

Imagine you are about to do field research in a specific place for a set time. Instead of thinking about the topic of study itself, consider how you, as the researcher, will have to prepare for the study. What personal, social, and physical sacrifices will you have to make? How will you manage your personal effects? What organizational equipment and systems will you need to collect the data?

5.

Create a brief research design about a topic in which you are passionately interested. Now write a letter to a philanthropic or grant organization requesting funding for your study. How can you describe the project in a convincing yet realistic and objective way? Explain how the results of your study will be a relevant contribution to the body of sociological work already in existence.

2.3 Ethical Concerns

6.

Why do you think the American Sociological Association (ASA) crafted such a detailed set of ethical principles? What type of study could put human participants at risk? Think of some examples of studies that might be harmful. Do you think that, in the name of sociology, some researchers might be tempted to cross boundaries that threaten human rights? Why?

7.

Would you willingly participate in a sociological study that could potentially put your health and safety at risk, but had the potential to help thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people? For example, would you participate in a study of a new drug that could cure diabetes or cancer, even if it meant great inconvenience and physical discomfort for you or possible permanent damage?

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2.9: Further Research

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

For a historical perspective on the scientific method in sociology, read “The Elements of Scientific Method in Sociology” by F. Stuart Chapin (1914) in the *American Journal of Sociology*.

2.2 Research Methods

For information on current real-world sociology experiments, visit the Everday Sociology Blog.

2.3 Ethical Concerns

Founded in 1905, the American Sociological Association is a nonprofit organization located in Washington, DC, with a membership of 14,000 researchers, faculty members, students, and practitioners of sociology. Its mission is “to articulate policy and implement programs likely to have the broadest possible impact for sociology now and in the future.” Learn more about this organization here.

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3: SOCIETY, CULTURE, AND THE MEDIA

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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: 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.

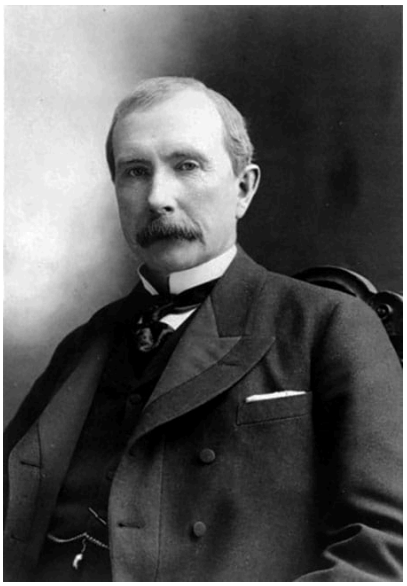


Figure 4.4: John D. Rockefeller, cofounder of the Standard Oil Company, came from an unremarkable family of salesmen and menial laborers. By his death at age 98, he was worth $1.4 billion. In industrial societies, business owners such as Rockefeller hold the majority of the power. (Credit: Wikimedia 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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3.3: 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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3.4: 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 13^{th} 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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3.5: 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).

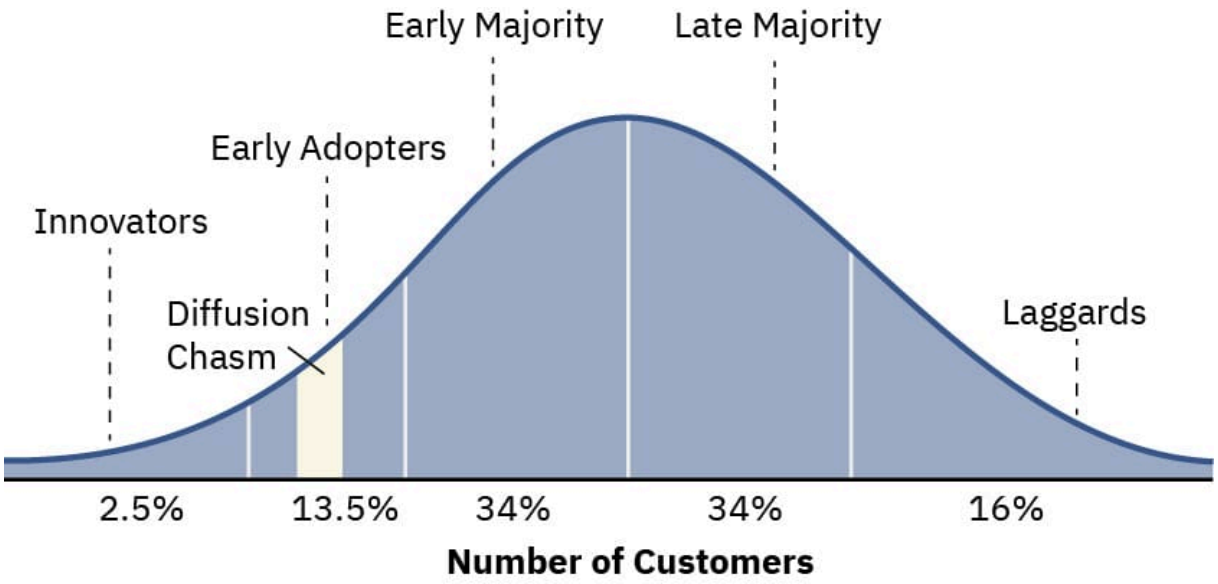


Figure 3.9: Technology Adoption Lifecycle — Sociologist Everett Rogers (1962) developed a model of the diffusion of innovations. As consumers gradually adopt a new innovation, the item grows toward 100 percent usage, or complete saturation within a society. This graph is frequently used in business, 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.

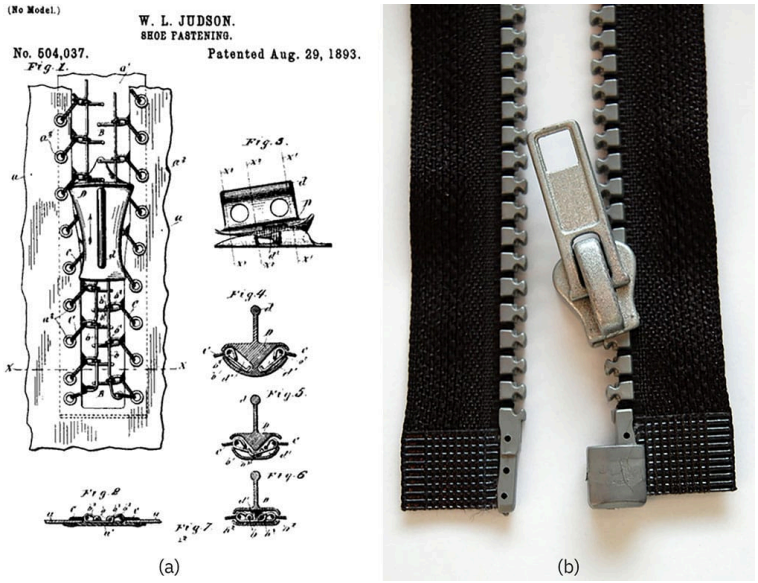


Figure 3.10: Officially patented in 1893 as the “clasp locker” (left), the zipper did not diffuse through society for many decades. Today, it is immediately recognizable around the world. (Credit: (a) US Patent Office/Wikimedia Commons; (b) Rabensteiner/Wikimedia Commons).

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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.

Functionalism and Culture

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 Theory and Culture

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 and Culture

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)

The Social Construction of Reality

A **social construction** is a mutual understanding and accepted reality created by members of a society rather than determined by biology or the natural world.

Is there anything that humans have created that holds no real value in the natural world, yet has a great deal of value assigned to it? If you are thinking of cash, you're right on the money (figure 1.1). Humans have determined that certain pieces of paper and metal objects are worth an agreed-upon value. One of the ways that we can tell money is a social construction is that it varies from culture to culture and over time. When you visit another country, the United States dollar bill has to be "exchanged" for money that has a different appearance and value.



Figure 1.1. Social constructions create meaning that is shared among members of society. Photograph by Jason Leung. License: Unsplash License.

Social constructions also relate to behavior and activities. For example, what food would you expect to see on the menu when

you go out for breakfast in the United States? What if the eating place were described as a “Mexican” restaurant? And what if you traveled to another country, like Korea? What is eaten for breakfast varies from culture to culture and even from person to person. And yet, in general, we have a socially constructed idea of what is typically breakfast food in the United States: eggs, bacon, cereal, toast, and fruit, but not vegetables, noodles, pinto beans, or hot dogs.

One of the ways that you can recognize that something is a socially constructed idea is that it differs from place to place and changes over time. In addition, whatever is part of the socially constructed idea (in this case, what typical breakfast foods are) becomes “the norm” or what is expected. While we might welcome trying some different foods for breakfast, they are not seen as the typical or expected American breakfast foods (figure 1.2).



Figure 1.2. A breakfast taco; eggs, bacon, strawberries, and a sweet potato rosti; and steamed buns represent a variety of breakfasts that are common around the world. “Breakfast Burrito” by JBrazito. License: CC BY-NC 2.0. “Sunday Brunch: Sweet Potato Rosti, Bacon, Fried Egg & Strawberries” by SaucyGlo. License: CC BY 2.0. “Chinese Breakfast” by Daniel Y. Go. License: CC BY-NC 2.0.

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: Technology Today

Learning Objectives

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

- Define technology and describe its evolution
- Explain technological inequality and issues related to unequal access to technology
- Describe the role of planned obsolescence in technological development



Figure 8.2: Throughout history, technology has been used to convey information. From petroglyphs near a Native American dwelling at Canyon de Chelly to warning signs outside of animal pens, our innovations have been used to provide the most effective delivery possible. (Credit: a: Anthony Quintano/flickr; b: tenioman/flickr)

It is easy to look at the latest virtual reality headset and think technology is a recent addition to our world. But from the steam engine to the most cutting-edge robotic surgery tools, technology has described the application of science to address the problems of daily life. We might roll our eyes at enormous and clunky computers of the 1970s that had far less storage than a free thumb drive. But chances are, twenty years from now our skinny laptops and pocket-filling phones will look just as archaic.

What Is Technology?

If someone asked your instructor what instructional technology they used, your instructor would likely assume the questioner was referring to courseware platforms, classroom response offerings, or presentation software. But if your instructor simply responded with, “pencil and paper,” they’d still be accurately describing technology. Modern paper and writing devices would have been considered fantastical creations in ancient times. And the fact that they endure, even as many other potential replacements have come into play, shows how effective those technologies are.

Just as the availability of digital technology shapes how we live today, the creation of stone tools changed how premodern humans lived and how well they ate. From the first calculator, invented in 2400 BCE Babylon in the form of an abacus, to the predecessor of the modern computer, created in 1882 by Charles Babbage, all of our technological innovations are advancements on previous iterations. And indeed, all aspects of our lives are influenced by technology. In agriculture, the introduction of machines that can till, thresh, plant, and harvest greatly reduced the need for manual labor, which in turn meant there were fewer rural jobs. This led to the urbanization of society, as well as lowered birth rates because there was less need for large families to work the farms. In the criminal justice system, the ability to ascertain innocence through DNA testing has saved the lives of people on death row. The examples are endless: technology plays a role in absolutely every aspect of our lives.

Technological Inequality

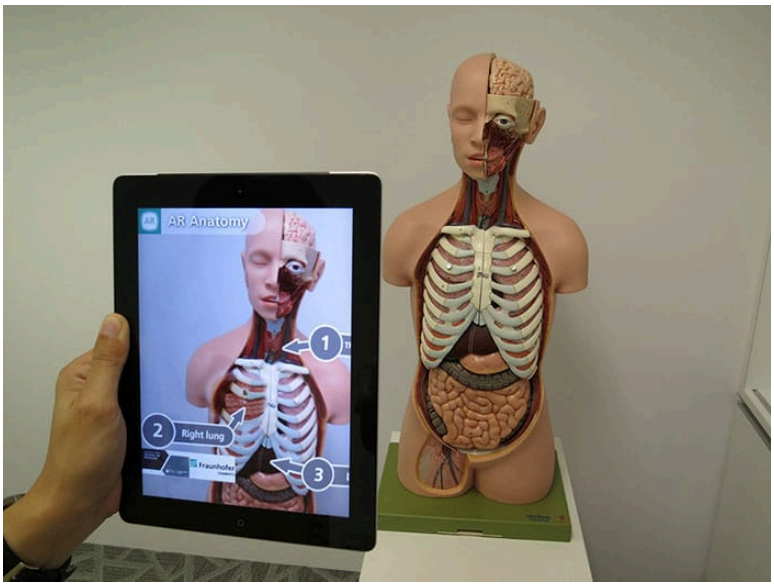


Figure 8.3: Augmented reality devices, robotics and 3D printing labs, and creatorspaces can significantly improve education. But due to their expense, they can also increase learning inequities.

As with any improvement to human society, not everyone has equal access. Technology, in particular, often creates changes that lead to ever greater inequalities. In short, the gap gets wider faster. This technological stratification has led to a new focus on ensuring better access for all.

There are two forms of technological stratification. The first is differential class-based access to technology in the form of the digital divide. This digital divide has led to the second form, a knowledge gap, which is, as it sounds, an ongoing and increasing gap in information for those who have less access to technology. Simply put, students in well-funded schools receive more exposure to technology than students in poorly funded schools. Those students with more exposure gain more proficiency, which makes them far more marketable in an increasingly technology-based job market and leaves our society divided into those with technological knowledge and those without. Even as we improve access, we have failed to address an increasingly evident gap in e-readiness—the ability to sort through, interpret, and process knowledge (Sciadas 2003).

Since the beginning of the millennium, social science researchers have tried to bring attention to the digital divide, the uneven access to technology among different races, classes, and geographic areas. The term became part of the common lexicon in 1996, when then Vice President Al Gore used it in a speech. This was the point when personal computer use shifted dramatically, from 300,000 users in 1991 to more than 10 million users by 1996 (Rappaport 2009). In part, the issue of the digital divide had to do with communities that received infrastructure upgrades that enabled high-speed Internet access, upgrades that largely went to affluent urban and suburban areas, leaving out large swaths of the country.

At the end of the twentieth century, technology access was also a big part of the school experience for those whose communities could afford it. Early in the millennium, poorer communities had little or no technology access, while well-off families had personal computers at home and wired classrooms in their schools. In the 2000s, however, the prices for low-end computers dropped considerably, and it appeared the digital divide was naturally ending. Research demonstrates that technology use and Internet access still vary a great deal by race, class, and age in the United States, though most studies agree that there is minimal difference in Internet use by adult men and adult women.

Data from the Pew Research Center (Perrin 2019) suggests the emergence of yet another divide. Larger percentages of groups such as Latinos and African Americans use their phones rather than traditional computers to connect to the Internet and undertake related activities. Roughly eight in ten White people reported owning computers, in contrast to roughly six in ten Black and Hispanic people owning them. White people were also more likely to have broadband (high-speed Internet) in their homes. But approximately one in four Black and Hispanic people reported being smartphone-only Internet users, a number that far outpaces White people's reliance on the devices. While it might seem that the Internet is the Internet, regardless of how you get there, there's a notable difference. Tasks like updating a résumé or filling out a job application are much harder on a cell phone than on a large-screen computer in the home. As a result, the digital divide might mean no access to computers or the Internet, but could mean access to the kind of online technology that allows for empowerment, not just entertainment (Washington 2011).

Another aspect of the digital divide is present in the type of community one lives in. Census data released in 2018 showed that in the study period of 2013 to 2017, 78 percent of U.S. households had Internet access, but that homes in rural and low-income areas were below that national average by 13 percent. The data was collected by county, and showed that "mostly urban" counties significantly outpaced "mostly rural" counties. "Completely rural," lower-income counties had the lowest rates of home Internet adoption, at about 60 percent (Martin 2019).

One potential outcome of reduced home Internet and computer access can be the relatively low representation of certain populations in computing courses, computing majors, and computing careers. Some school districts, often with the help of government grants or corporate sponsorships, aim to address this aspect of the digital divide by providing computers to those who need them, either at a low cost or at no charge. A number of organizations, such as Code.org, Black Girls Code, and Black Boys Code, work to overcome the disparity by offering computer science education programs and camps, collaborative instruction programs with local school districts, and (perhaps most impactful in the long term) teacher training programs. As a result, the number of Black and Hispanic students in courses like Advanced Placement Computer Science has increased dramatically in recent years, as has the number of college majors from the same populations.

As a whole, the digital divide brings some level of controversy. Some question why it still exists after having been identified more than twenty years ago. Others question whether or not it exists at all, and offer data to support the claim that it does not exist (American Press Institute 2015). However, most experts agree that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that the digital divide has persisted, particularly in education. While millions of students were confined to home and remote instruction, they were divided by their Internet access, their familiarity with computer hardware and software, and their ability to solve their own technology issues (PRB 2020). Even when governments and educational institutions implemented improvements to the access and technology situation, there remained the qualitative aspect of unplanned remote education: Many instructors and students are not as effective while communicating only through computer screens. When considering education, policymakers faced arduous decision-making processes and contentious debates as they tried the balance the issues of safety, educational quality, teacher safety, student mental health, and the overall changing landscape of the pandemic.

Constant Contact and Replaced Relationships

How often do you check your phone for new messages or alerts? If you're typical, it might be over 100 times a day. (The number is difficult to cite with confidence, because every few months, organizations or companies release new studies claiming to have updated statistics.) What happens to your phone when you are sleeping? In 2012, researchers reported that “44% of cell phone owners have slept with their phone next to their bed because they wanted to make sure they didn’t miss any calls, text messages, or other updates during the night, and 29% of cell owners describe their cell phone as ‘something they can’t imagine living without’” (Smith 2012). Just three years later, a frequently cited report by Bank of America indicated the number of phone-accompanied sleepers was at 71 percent (Kooser 2015). A more recent survey of 500 people found it to be 66 percent, but that survey only included adults (Abbott 2020). However, these surveys and the reaction to them might be a factor of selective memory: Prior to the rise of cell phones, many people had telephones in their rooms, often within arm's reach of their bed.

While people report that cell phones make it easier to stay in touch, simplify planning, and increase their productivity, those are not the only impacts of constant device usage in the United States. Smith also reports that “roughly one in five cell owners say that their phone has made it at least somewhat harder to forget about work at home or on the weekends; to give people their undivided attention; or to focus on a single task without being distracted” (Smith 2012). As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, even celebrities who have perhaps benefitted the most from increased communication and social media report stress and concern about their online presence and its related outcomes.

With so many people using social media both in the United States and abroad, it is no surprise that social media is a powerful force for social change or political expression. For example, McKenna Pope, a thirteen-year-old girl, used the Internet to successfully petition Hasbro to fight gender stereotypes by creating a gender-neutral Easy-Bake Oven instead of using only the traditional pink color (Kumar 2014). Movements such as MeToo and Black Lives Matter gained prominence partly through what is sometimes referred to as "hashtag activism." More recently, TikTok users who actively opposed Donald Trump's re-election registered for nearly all the seats at a major rally. When they did not attend, the arena was nearly empty, after the campaign had predicted it would be overflowing. Later, Trump supporters used the social media site Parler in their own rally planning and coordination.

Such consistent and impactful usage leads to unavoidable results: Newer communication methods are replacing older ones. Speaking by phone seems archaic and almost intrusive for some people, who greatly prefer non-voice messaging apps or texts. Media observers, etiquette commentators, and friends and family may lament people beginning and ending relationships by text message, but those methods have proven more comfortable, especially for young people.

What are the effects? There have not been studies on every type of relationship, but research into romantic relationships shows interesting results. First, consider the elements of a relationship. One is attachment, or the bond that people form with each other. Research has shown that constant communication via messaging significantly increases the level of attachment. That fact seems intuitive: people who continually check in on each other, report their whereabouts, and offer support or affirmation will build a stronger bond. The same study, however, found that the respondents rated the overall quality of the relationship as weaker or less satisfying when it was dominated by text messaging instead of voice conversation (Luo 2014).

Many of us have experienced another aspect of relationships: reliance or imbalance. Researchers have found that close friends who are heavily reliant on mobile devices and associated messaging may have more issues regarding overdependence on the relationship and differing expectations regarding communication. Friendships that do not rely on mobile devices may have far less frequent contact. Research found elements of guilt and pressure to respond (called entrapment) in mobile-dependent relationships, which led to overall dissatisfaction (Hall 2012).

Online Privacy, Security, and Control

As we increase our footprints on the web by going online more often to connect socially, share material, conduct business, and store information, we also increase our vulnerability to those with negative intent. Most Americans seem to accept that increased usage of online and related tools brings risks, but their perceptions of those risks are evolving. For example, people have different viewpoints on risks associated with individuals, companies, and the government. The Pew Research Center conducts frequent surveys on these topics. A recent publication indicated the following:

- 81 percent of people felt they had little control over the data collected by companies; 84 percent felt they had little control over data collected by the government.
- 62 percent felt that it was not possible to go through the day without having data collected about them by companies; 63% felt it wasn't possible to go through a day without data collection by the government.
- 79 percent were concerned about that data use by companies; 64 percent were concerned about data use by the government.

Other elements of the research demonstrate that older Americans felt more concern than younger ones, and that Black and Hispanic people were more likely than White people to believe the government was tracking them (Auxier 2019).

These attitudes may be revealed by practices or attitudes toward privacy efforts and safeguards. One person may be annoyed every time a privacy notice interrupts them, and they may simply sign the statement without thinking much about it. Another person may read every word of the agreement and carefully deliberate over whether to proceed.

Online privacy concerns also extend from individuals to their dependents. In accordance with the Child Online Privacy Protection Act, school districts must consider and control certain elements of privacy on behalf of students, meaning they cannot require or encourage students under age thirteen to provide personal information. Likewise, online platforms such as Instagram do not let children under the age of thirteen register for their sites. And where children are registered by their parents, sites like YouTube and, more recently, TikTok issue controls to prevent inappropriate portrayals by children or inappropriate behavior by other members. For example, YouTube often disables comments on videos produced by children (Moreno 2020). TikTok added privacy and protection methods in 2020, but in early 2021 was hit with allegations of violating child safety and privacy guidelines.

Although schools and companies are required to take steps to lower risks to children, parents and guardians are free to make their own choices on behalf of their children. Some parents avoid showing their children on social media; they do not post pictures, and ask family members to refrain from doing so (Levy, 2019). On the other end of the spectrum, some parents run social media accounts for their children. Sometimes referred to as "sharents," they may share entertaining videos, promote products through demos or try-ons, or post professionally produced photos on behalf of clothing companies or equipment makers. A child's (even a toddler's) role as an influencer can be financially lucrative, and companies making everything from helmets to dancewear have taken notice (Allchin 2012).

Net Neutrality

The issue of net neutrality, the principle that all Internet data should be treated equally by Internet service providers, is part of the national debate about Internet access and the digital divide. On one side of this debate is the belief that those who provide Internet service, like those who provide electricity and water, should be treated as common carriers, legally prohibited from discriminating based on the customer or nature of the goods. Supporters of net neutrality suggest that without such legal protections, the Internet could be divided into “fast” and “slow” lanes. A conflict perspective theorist might suggest that this discrimination would allow bigger corporations, such as Amazon, to pay Internet providers a premium for faster service, which

could lead to gaining an advantage that would drive small, local competitors out of business.

The other side of the debate holds the belief that designating Internet service providers as common carriers would constitute an unreasonable regulatory burden and limit the ability of telecommunication companies to operate profitably. A functional perspective theorist might point out that, without profits, companies would not invest in making improvements to their Internet service or expanding those services to underserved areas. The final decision rests with the Federal Communications Commission and the federal government, which must decide how to fairly regulate broadband providers without dividing the Internet into haves and have-nots.

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3.8: Media and Technology in Society

Learning Objectives

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

- Describe the evolution and current role of different media, like newspapers, television, and new media
- Describe the function of product advertising in media
- Demonstrate awareness of the social homogenization and social fragmentation that occur via modern society's use of technology and media



Figure 8.4: Facebook's VP of Engineering Regina Dugan gave a talk about innovations in the platform's technologies in which she shared potential innovations, including creating text directly from our thoughts. While the prospect of drafting messages or papers by thinking about them would certainly speed up our processes, opening our thoughts directly to a social media company might have larger implications. (Credit: Anthony Quintano/flickr)

Technology and the media are interwoven, and neither can be separated from contemporary society in most core and semi-peripheral nations. Media is a term that refers to all print, digital, and electronic means of communication. From the time the printing press was created (and even before), technology has influenced how and where information is shared. Today, it is impossible to discuss media and the ways societies communicate without addressing the fast-moving pace of technology change. Twenty years ago, if you wanted to share news of your baby's birth or a job promotion, you phoned or wrote letters. You might tell a handful of people, but you probably wouldn't call up several hundred, including your old high school chemistry teacher, to let them know. Now, you might join an online community of parents-to-be even before you announce your pregnancy via a staged Instagram picture. The circle of communication is wider than ever, and when we talk about how societies engage with technology, we must take media into account, and vice versa.

Technology creates media. The comic book you bought your daughter is a form of media, as is the movie you streamed for family night, the web site you used to order takeout, the billboard you passed on the way to pick up your food, and the newspaper you read while you were waiting for it. Without technology, media would not exist, but remember, technology is more than just the media we are exposed to.

Categorizing Technology

There is no one way of dividing technology into categories. Whereas once it might have been simple to classify innovations such as machine-based or drug-based or the like, the interconnected strands of technological development mean that advancement in

one area might be replicated in dozens of others. For simplicity's sake, we will look at how the U.S. Patent Office, which receives patent applications for nearly all major innovations worldwide, addresses patents. This regulatory body will patent three types of innovation. Utility patents are the first type. These are granted for the invention or discovery of any new and useful process, product, or machine, or for a significant improvement to existing technologies. The second type of patent is a design patent. Commonly conferred in architecture and industrial design, this means someone has invented a new and original design for a manufactured product. Plant patents, the final type, recognize the discovery of new plant types that can be asexually reproduced. While genetically modified food is the hot-button issue within this category, farmers have long been creating new hybrids and patenting them. A more modern example might be food giant Monsanto, which patents corn with built-in pesticide (U.S. Patent and Trademark Office 2011).

Anderson and Tushman (1990) suggest an evolutionary model of technological change, in which a breakthrough in one form of technology leads to a number of variations. Once those are assessed, a prototype emerges, and then a period of slight adjustments to the technology, interrupted by a breakthrough. For example, in terms of portable data storage, the first mainstream device was a floppy disk–a square, plastic object larger than a playing card, which in its final iteration held 1.4 megabytes of data (or less than a single high-resolution photo). Until the early 2000s, these were common formats, and students and professionals would regularly carry several of them. Floppy disks were improved and upgraded, then replaced by higher-capacity Zip and Jaz disks, which were then replaced by flash drives. This is essentially a generational model for categorizing technology, in which first-generation technology is a relatively unsophisticated jumping-off point that leads to an improved second generation, and so on.

Another type of evolution involves disruptive technology (or disruptive innovation), which is a product, service, or process that has a major effect on the operation of an entire industry, and/or may create new industries or new markets. In the example above, a disruptive technology might be the advent of cloud-based storage platforms like Google Drive and iCloud, which have significantly reduced the need for physical portable storage. Disruptive technology can create and destroy entire industries, sometimes in a rapid manner rather than in an evolutionary one. In one of the most famous examples, the advent of digital photography rendered film-based cameras obsolete; the change came quickly, and many companies could not adjust. In a similar manner, ride-sharing services have had a massive impact on the taxi and limousine industry. Emerging technologies such as blockchain, additive manufacturing (3D printing), and augmented reality are likely to have similar impacts. For example, if companies decide that it is more efficient to 3D print many products or components close to their destinations instead of shipping them from distant manufacturing plants and warehouses, the entire shipping industry may be affected.

The sociological impact of disruptive technology can be sudden. Digital photography, for example, resulted in the rapid decline of companies like Kodak, which had been stalwarts of the American economy and a major employer. Layoffs devastated cities like Rochester, New York. The advent of online music purchasing and subscription services resulted in the closure of thousands of record stores, both small businesses and large chains like Tower Records. Beyond the economic impact, these stores were often parts of the fabric of communities, places for fans to gather to explore and share music. Automation has likewise changed manufacturing and mining, resulting in severe job loss and drastic alterations in regions such as the Great Lakes, where many towns went from being part of the Manufacturing Belt to being part of the Rust Belt.

Sociology in the Real World: Violence in Media and Video Games: Does It Matter?



Figure 8.5: One of the most popular video games, Grand Theft Auto, has frequently been at the center of debate about gratuitous violence in the gaming world. (Credit: Meddy Garnet/flickr)

A glance through popular video game and movie titles geared toward children and teens shows the vast spectrum of violence that is displayed, condoned, and acted out.

As a way to guide parents in their programming choices, the motion picture industry put a rating system in place in the 1960s. But new media—video games in particular—proved to be uncharted territory. In 1994, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ERSB) set a ratings system for games that addressed issues of violence, sexuality, drug use, and the like. California took it a step further by making it illegal to sell video games to underage buyers. The case led to a heated debate about personal freedoms and child protection, and in 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the California law, stating it violated freedom of speech (ProCon 2012).

Children's play has often involved games of aggression—from cops and robbers to fake sword fights. Many articles report on the controversy surrounding the suggested link between violent video games and violent behavior. Is the link real? Psychologists Anderson and Bushman (2001) reviewed forty-plus years of research on the subject and, in 2003, determined that there are causal linkages between violent video game use and aggression. They found that children who had just played a violent video game demonstrated an immediate increase in hostile or aggressive thoughts, an increase in aggressive emotions, and physiological arousal that increased the chances of acting out aggressive behavior (Anderson 2003).

However, though the American Psychological Association and other researchers found an increase in aggressive tendencies based on video game play, several studies and conclusions indicated "scant evidence" that violent video games cause either physical violence or criminal behavior. Researchers have found correlations between those behaviors, essentially indicating that violent people may be more likely to play violent video games, but that still does not mean that video games cause violence.

Types of Media and Technology

Media and technology have evolved hand in hand, from early print to modern publications, from radio to television to film. New media emerge constantly, such as we see in the online world.

Newspaper

Early forms of print media, found in ancient Rome, were hand-copied onto boards and carried around to keep the citizenry informed. With the invention of the printing press, the way that people shared ideas changed, as information could be mass

produced and stored. For the first time, there was a way to spread knowledge and information more efficiently; many credit this development as leading to the Renaissance and ultimately the Age of Enlightenment. This is not to say that newspapers of old were more trustworthy than the *Weekly World News* and *National Enquirer* are today. Sensationalism abounded, as did censorship that forbade any subjects that would incite the populace.

The invention of the telegraph, in the mid-1800s, changed print media almost as much as the printing press. Suddenly information could be transmitted in minutes. As the nineteenth century became the twentieth, U.S. publishers such as Hearst redefined the world of print media and wielded an enormous amount of power to socially construct national and world events. Of course, even as the media empires of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer were growing, print media also allowed for the dissemination of countercultural or revolutionary materials. Internationally, Vladimir Lenin's *Irksa* (*The Spark*) newspaper was published in 1900 and played a role in Russia's growing communist movement (World Association of Newspapers 2004).

With the invention and widespread use of television in the mid-twentieth century, newspaper circulation steadily dropped off, and in the 21st century, circulation has dropped further as more people turn to internet news sites and other forms of new media to stay informed. According to the Pew Research Center, 2009 saw an unprecedented drop in newspaper circulation––down 10.6 percent from the year before (Pew 2010).

This shift away from newspapers as a source of information has profound effects on societies. When the news is given to a large diverse conglomerate of people, it must maintain some level of broad-based reporting and balance in order to appeal to a broad audience and keep them subscribing. As newspapers decline, news sources become more fractured, so each segment of the audience can choose specifically what it wants to hear and what it wants to avoid. Increasingly, newspapers are shifting online in an attempt to remain relevant. It is hard to tell what impact new media platforms will have on the way we receive and process information.

It is hard to tell what impact new media platforms will have on the way we receive and process information. The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (2013) reported that audiences for all the major news magazines declined in 2012, though digital ad revenue increased. The same report suggested that, while newspaper circulation is holding steady at around $10 billion after years of decline, it is digital pay plans that allow newspapers to keep their heads above water, and the digital ad revenue that is increasing for news magazines is not enough to compensate for print revenue loss in newspapers.

A 2014 report suggested that U.S. adults read a median of five books per year in 2013, which is about average. But are they reading traditional print or e-books? About 69 percent of people said they had read at least one printed book in the past year, versus 28 percent who said they'd read an e-book (DeSilver 2014). Is print more effective at conveying information? In recent study, Mangen, Walgermo, and Bronnick (2013) found that students who read on paper performed slightly better than those who read an e-book on an open-book reading comprehension exam of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. While a meta-analysis of research by Andrews (1992) seemed to confirm that people read more slowly and comprehend less when reading from screens, a meta-analysis of more recent research on this topic does not show anything definite (Noyes and Garland 2008).

Television and Radio



Figure 8.6: Television control rooms feature feeds from many other networks, so that producers and reporters can see different perspectives on the same events and be alerted to new developments around the world (Credit: Anthony Quintano/flickr).

Radio programming obviously preceded television, but both shaped people's lives in much the same way. In both cases, information (and entertainment) could be enjoyed at home, with a kind of immediacy and community that newspapers could not offer. For instance, many people in the United States might remember when they saw on television or heard on the radio that the Twin Towers in New York City had been attacked in 2001. Even though people were in their own homes, media allowed them to share these moments in real time. This same kind of separate-but-communal approach occurred with entertainment too. School-aged children and office workers gathered to discuss the previous night's installment of a serial television or radio show.

Right up through the 1970s, U.S. television was dominated by three major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) that competed for ratings and advertising dollars. The networks also exerted a lot of control over what people watched. Public television, in contrast, offered an educational nonprofit alternative to the sensationalization of news spurred by the network competition for viewers and advertising dollars. Those sources—PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), the BBC (British Broadcasting Company), and CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Company)—garnered a worldwide reputation for high-quality programming and a global perspective. Al Jazeera, the Arabic independent news station, has joined this group as a similar media force that broadcasts to people worldwide.

The impact of television on U.S. society is hard to overstate. By the late 1990s, 98 percent of U.S. homes had at least one television set, and the average person watched between two and a half and five hours of television daily. All this television has a powerful socializing effect, providing reference groups while reinforcing social norms, values, and beliefs.

Film

The film industry took off in the 1930s, when color and sound were first integrated into feature films. Like television, early films were unifying for society: as people gathered in theaters to watch new releases, they would laugh, cry, and be scared together. Movies also act as time capsules or cultural touchstones for society. From Westerns starring the tough-talking Clint Eastwood to the biopic of Facebook founder and Harvard dropout Mark Zuckerberg, movies illustrate society's dreams, fears, and experiences. While many consider Hollywood the epicenter of moviemaking, India's Bollywood actually produces more films per year, speaking to the cultural aspirations and norms of Indian society. The film industry, like other media formats, has gone through substantial change as a result of streaming services, online privacy, and the new competition for people's entertainment dollars. Because the mainstream movie industry has been so reliant on ticket sales at live theaters, the COVID-19 pandemic affected it more dramatically than most other media categories. Highly anticipated movies slated for 2020 and 2021 releases were delayed or shifted to streaming distribution, reducing revenue. And some companies made lasting decisions regarding their future offerings.

New Media and Online Environments

New media encompasses all interactive forms of information exchange. These include social networking sites, blogs, podcasts,

wikis, and virtual worlds. Many are not "new" in the sense that they were developed in the past few years (some may be older than you), but they are newer than the media mentioned above, and they rely on types of technologies that were not available until about thirty years ago. Many are ways disruptive to traditional media or to companies that rely on those other formats. Clearly, the list of new media grows almost daily, and you might feel we are missing some. In fact, the immediacy of new media coupled with the lack of oversight means we must be more careful than ever to ensure that we are making good decisions about the accuracy, ethics, and cultural responsiveness of these formats.

Sociology in the Real World: Planned Obsolescence: Technology That's Built to Crash



Figure 8.7: Many people are incredibly reliant on their devices, but in business contexts, a failing phone or computer can have impacts on customers and revenues. (Credit: Rawpixel Ltd/flickr)

Chances are your mobile phone company, as well as the makers of your laptop and your household appliances, are all counting on their products to fail. Not too quickly, of course, or consumers wouldn't stand for it—but frequently enough that you might find that it costs far more to fix a device than to replace it with a newer model. Or you find the phone company e-mails you saying that you're eligible for a free new phone, because yours is a whopping two years old. And appliance repair people say that while they might be fixing some machines that are twenty years old, they generally aren't fixing those that are seven years old; newer models are built to be thrown out. This strategy is called planned obsolescence, and it is the business practice of planning for a product to be obsolete or unusable from the time it is created.

To some extent, planned obsolescence is a natural extension of new and emerging technologies. After all, who is going to cling to an enormous and slow desktop computer from 2000 when a few hundred dollars can buy one that is significantly faster and better? But the practice is not always so benign. The classic example of planned obsolescence is the nylon stocking. Women's stockings—once an everyday staple of women's lives--get "runs" or "ladders" after only a few wearings. This requires the stockings to be discarded and new ones purchased. Not surprisingly, the garment industry did not invest heavily in finding a rip-proof fabric; it was in manufacturers' best interest that their product be regularly replaced.

Those who use Microsoft Windows might feel that like the women who purchased endless pairs of stockings, they are victims of planned obsolescence. Every time Windows releases a new operating system, there are typically not many innovations in it that consumers feel they must have. However, the software programs are upwardly compatible only. This means that while the new versions can read older files, the old version cannot read the newer ones. In short order, those who have not upgraded right away find themselves unable to open files sent by colleagues or friends, and they usually wind up upgrading as well.

Planned obsolescence is not always done ethically, and some companies can dictate the obsolescence after the user makes a purchase. Apple users took to social media to confirm that their older iPhones suddenly began losing power or were slowing down considerably. Many users bought new phones at high prices, and later learned that the slow downs were intended by the phone maker. Customers filed dozens of class action lawsuits, which are suits where a very large group of people can band together. Apple was found to have intentionally and improperly altered its phones through a software update in order to

hide battery problems. While it never admitted guilt, Apple's $500 million settlement paid benefits to iPhone 6 and iPhone 7 users who had been affected, and a later $113 agreement with state attorneys general included provisions to behave more ethically and transparently (CNBC 2020).

Product Advertising and the Attention Economy

Companies use advertising to sell to us, but the way they reach us is changing. Naomi Klein identified the destructive impact of corporate branding her 1999 text, *No Logo*, an antiglobalization treatise that focused on sweatshops, corporate power, and anticonsumerist social movements. In the post-millennial society, synergistic advertising practices ensure you are receiving the same message from a variety of sources and on a variety of platforms. For example, you may see billboards for Miller beer on your way to a stadium, sit down to watch a game preceded by a Miller commercial on the big screen, and watch a halftime ad in which people are shown holding up the trademark bottles. Chances are you can guess which brand of beer is for sale at the concession stand.

Advertising has changed, as technology and media have allowed consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues. From the invention of the remote control, which allows us to skip television advertising without leaving our seats, to recording devices that let us watch programs but skip the ads, conventional television advertising is on the wane. And print media is no different. Advertising revenue in newspapers and on television has fallen significantly, which shows that companies need new ways of getting their messages to consumers.

Brand ambassadorships can also be powerful tools for advertisers. For example, companies hire college students to be their on-campus representatives, and they may target for students engaged in high-profile activities like sports, fraternities, and music. (This practice is slightly different from sponsorships, and note that some students, particularly athletes, need to follow strict guidelines about accepting money or products.) The marketing team is betting that if we buy perfume because Beyoncé tells us to, we'll also choose our workout gear, clothing, or make-up brand if another student encourages that choice. Tens of thousands of brand ambassadors or brand evangelists work on college campuses, and such marketing approaches are seen as highly effective investments for companies. The numbers make it clear: Ambassador-referred customers provide sixteen percent higher value to companies than other customers, and over ninety percent of people indicate that people trust referrals from people they know (On-Campus Advertising, 2017).

Social media has made such influencer and ambassador marketing a near constant. Some formal ambassadors are sponsored by companies to show or use their products. In some cases, compensation arrives only in the form of the free products and whatever monetization the ambassador receives from the site, such as YouTube. Influencers are usually less formally engaged with companies than are ambassadors, relying mostly on site revenue to reward their efforts. Some influencers may overstate their popularity in order to get free products or services. For example, luxury hotels report that they are barraged by influencers (some with very few followers, and therefore questionable influence) who expect free stays in exchange for creating posts promoting the location (Locker 2019).

One ethical and perhaps relationship-oriented question is whether paid ambassadors should be required to disclose their relationship with a company, and how that works in online versus face-to-face interactions. In this case, online presence may be more "truthful" than in-person relationships. A video can formally include sponsorship information, and some ambassadors list partners or sponsors on their profiles. But in day-to-day, in-person conversations, it might be awkward for a classmate or colleague to mention that they are wearing a particular brand or using gear based on a financial relationship. In other words, the person sitting next to you with the great bag may be paid to carry it, and you may never know.

Homogenization and Fragmentation

Despite the variety of media at hand, the mainstream news and entertainment you enjoy are increasingly homogenized. Research by McManus (1995) suggests that different news outlets all tell the same stories, using the same sources, resulting in the same message, presented with only slight variations. So whether you are reading the *New York Times* or the CNN's web site, the coverage of national events like a major court case or political issue will likely be the same.

Simultaneously with this homogenization among the major news outlets, the opposite process is occurring in the newer media streams. With so many choices, people increasingly customize their news experience, minimizing their opportunity to encounter information that does not jive with their worldview (Prior 2005). For instance, those who are staunchly Republican can avoid centrist or liberal-leaning cable news shows and web sites that would show Democrats in a favorable light. They know to seek out

Fox News over MSNBC, just as Democrats know to do the opposite. Further, people who want to avoid politics completely can choose to visit web sites that deal only with entertainment or that will keep them up to date on sports scores. They have an easy way to avoid information they do not wish to hear. Americans seem to view this phenomenon with great concern, indicating that the impact of customized or personalized news delivers worse news. Yet, they still engage with the platforms that deliver news in that manner.

The fragmentation of the news has led to an increased amount of digital tribalism. Tribalism in this sense is the state or tendency to gather and reinforce ideas belonging to a group, and to do so out of a sense of strong loyalty. Digital tribalism, then, is the tendency to do so online, and also to forge new tribes purely based on online personas or ideologies. Instead of basing these groups on the classic bonds of ethnic, religious, or geographic ideologies, they are based on politics, emotions, lifestyles or lifestyle goals, or even brands (Taute & Sierra 2014). Digital tribes can lead people to a greater sense of belonging, and can also be heavily exploited for commercial or power-attaining interests.

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3.9: Global Implications of Media and Technology

Learning Objectives

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

- Explain the advantages and concerns of media globalization
- Explain the globalization of technology

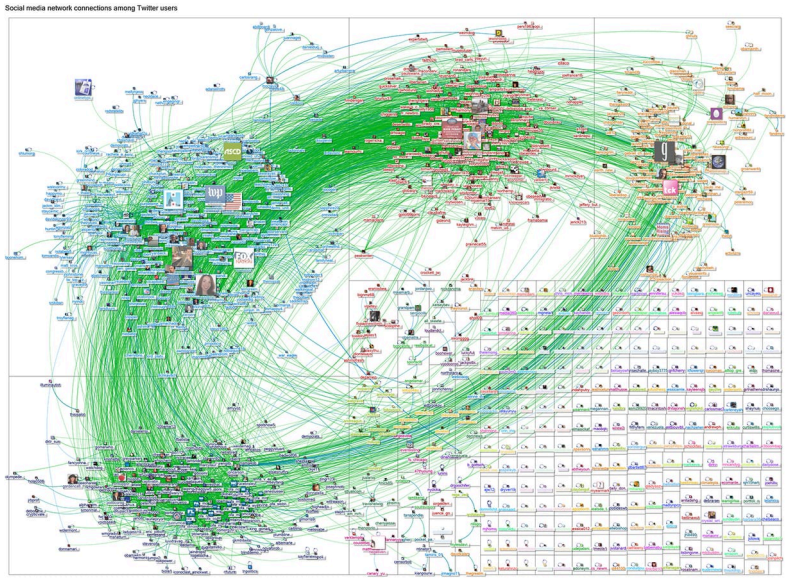


Figure 8.8: This graphic indicates the connections among people who tweeted or replied about the State of the Union address. Green lines indicate people who follow each other on the platform. (Credit Marc Smith/flickr)

Technology, and increasingly media, has always driven globalization. In a landmark book, Thomas Friedman (2005), identified several ways in which technology "flattened" the globe and contributed to our global economy. The first edition of *The World Is Flat*, written in 2005, posits that core economic concepts were changed by personal computing and high-speed Internet. Access to these two technological shifts has allowed core-nation corporations to recruit workers in call centers located in China or India. Using examples like a Midwestern U.S. woman who runs a business from her home via the call centers of Bangalore, India, Friedman warns that this new world order will exist whether core-nation businesses are ready or not, and that in order to keep its key economic role in the world, the United States will need to pay attention to how it prepares workers of the twenty-first century for this dynamic.

Of course not everyone agrees with Friedman's theory. Many economists pointed out that in reality innovation, economic activity, and population still gather in geographically attractive areas, and they continue to create economic peaks and valleys, which are by no means flattened out to mean equality for all. China's hugely innovative and powerful cities of Shanghai and Beijing are worlds away from the rural squalor of the country's poorest denizens.

It is worth noting that Friedman is an economist, not a sociologist. His work focuses on the economic gains and risks this new world order entails. In this section, we will look more closely at how media globalization and technological globalization play out in a sociological perspective. As the names suggest, media globalization is the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas, while technological globalization refers to the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology.

Media Globalization

Lyons (2005) suggests that multinational corporations are the primary vehicle of media globalization, and these corporations control global mass-media content and distribution (Compaine 2005). It is true, when looking at who controls which media

outlets, that there are fewer independent news sources as larger and larger conglomerates develop. In the early 2000s, the United States offered about 1,500 newspapers, 2,800 book publishers, plus 6,000 magazines and a whopping 10,000 radio outlets (Bagdikian 2004). By 2019, some of those numbers had changed: There were only 1,000 newspapers, but over 7,000 magazines (note that both newspapers and magazines count as such even if they publish largely online) (BBC 2019). The number of book publishers and radio outlets has generally remained static, which may seem surprising.

On the surface, there is endless opportunity to find diverse media outlets. But the numbers are misleading. Media consolidation is a process in which fewer and fewer owners control the majority of media outlets. This creates an oligopoly in which a few firms dominate the media marketplace. In 1983, a mere 50 corporations owned the bulk of mass-media outlets. Today in the United States just five companies control 90 percent of media outlets (McChesney 1999). Ranked by 2014 company revenue, Comcast is the biggest, followed by the Disney Corporation, Time Warner, CBS, and Viacom (Time.com 2014). What impact does this consolidation have on the type of information to which the U.S. public is exposed? Does media consolidation deprive the public of multiple viewpoints and limit its discourse to the information and opinions shared by a few sources? Why does it matter?

Monopolies matter because less competition typically means consumers are less well served since dissenting opinions or diverse viewpoints are less likely to be found. Media consolidation results in the following dysfunctions. First, consolidated media owes more to its stockholders than to the public. Publicly traded Fortune 500 companies must pay more attention to their profitability and to government regulators than to the public's right to know. The few companies that control most of the media, because they are owned by the power elite, represent the political and social interests of only a small minority. In an oligopoly there are fewer incentives to innovate, improve services, or decrease prices.

While some social scientists predicted that the increase in media forms would create a global village (McLuhan 1964), current research suggests that the public sphere accessing the global village will tend to be rich, Caucasoid, and English-speaking (Jan 2009). As shown by the spring 2011 uprisings throughout the Arab world, technology really does offer a window into the news of the world. For example, here in the United States we saw internet updates of Egyptian events in real time, with people tweeting, posting, and blogging on the ground in Tahrir Square.

Still, there is no question that the exchange of technology from core nations to peripheral and semi-peripheral ones leads to a number of complex issues. For instance, someone using a conflict theorist approach might focus on how much political ideology and cultural colonialism occurs with technological growth. In theory at least, technological innovations are ideology-free; a fiber optic cable is the same in a Muslim country as a secular one, a communist country or a capitalist one. But those who bring technology to less-developed nations—whether they are nongovernment organizations, businesses, or governments—usually have an agenda. A functionalist, in contrast, might focus on the ways technology creates new means to share information about successful crop-growing programs, or on the economic benefits of opening a new market for cell phone use. Either way, cultural and societal assumptions and norms are being delivered along with those high-speed wires.

Cultural and ideological bias are not the only risks of media globalization. In addition to the risk of cultural imperialism and the loss of local culture, other problems come with the benefits of a more interconnected globe. One risk is the potential for censoring by national governments that let in only the information and media they feel serve their message, as is occurring in China. In addition, core nations such as the United States risk the use of international media by criminals to circumvent local laws against socially deviant and dangerous behaviors such as gambling, child pornography, and the sex trade. Offshore or international web sites allow U.S. citizens (and others) to seek out whatever illegal or illicit information they want, from twenty-four hour online gambling sites that do not require proof of age, to sites that sell child pornography. These examples illustrate the societal risks of unfettered information flow.

Big Picture: Authority and the Internet: An Uncomfortable Friendship



Figure 8.9: What information is accessible to these patrons of an internet café in China? What is censored from their view? (Credit: Kai Hendry/flickr)

In the United States, the Internet is used to access illegal gambling and pornography sites, as well as to research stocks, crowd-source what car to buy, or keep in touch with childhood friends. Can we allow one or more of those activities, while restricting the rest? And who decides what needs restricting? In a country with democratic principles and an underlying belief in free-market capitalism, the answer is decided in the court system. But globally, the questions––and the governments' responses––are very different.

Other countries take a far more restrictive and directive approach to Internet regulation. China, which is a country with a tight rein on the dissemination of information, has long worked to suppress what it calls “harmful information,” including dissent concerning government politics, dialogue about China’s relationship with Hong Kong, or criticism of the government’s handling of events.

With sites like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube blocked in China, the nation’s Internet users turn to local media companies for their needs. Even so, the country exerts strong control by identifying and prosecuting some violators of the bans, and undertaking more far-reaching tactics.

The nation blocks the use of certain terms, such as “human rights,” and passes new laws that require people to register with their real names and make it more dangerous to criticize government actions.

In early 2021, Myanmar's military launched a coup against its government. Elected leader Ang San Suu Kyi was arrested, and other top officials were detained or pushed from power. (Suu Kyi had previously spent years under house arrest.) Immediately, citizens launched widespread and persistent protests against the coup. Myanmar's military took immediate steps to quell the protests, including firing at and killing dozens of protesters and storming colleges and hospitals. But first, the government banned Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp in an effort to reduce coordination among protesters and restrain news about the crackdown. The government also arrested reporters, including foreign nationals, who were accused of violating a public order law. Social media companies replied in what ways they could, such as deactivating the accounts of Myanmar's military so that they couldn't share their own messages.

Technological Globalization

Technological globalization is speeded in large part by technological diffusion, the spread of technology across borders. In the last two decades, there has been rapid improvement in the spread of technology to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations, and a 2008 World Bank report discusses both the benefits and ongoing challenges of this diffusion. In general, the report found that technological progress and economic growth rates were linked, and that the rise in technological progress has helped improve the

situations of many living in absolute poverty (World Bank 2008). The report recognizes that rural and low-tech products such as corn can benefit from new technological innovations, and that, conversely, technologies like mobile banking can aid those whose rural existence consists of low-tech market vending. In addition, technological advances in areas like mobile phones can lead to competition, lowered prices, and concurrent improvements in related areas such as mobile banking and information sharing.

However, the same patterns of social inequality that create a digital divide in the United States also create digital divides within peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. While the growth of technology use among countries has increased dramatically over the past several decades, the spread of technology within countries is significantly slower among peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. In these countries, far fewer people have the training and skills to take advantage of new technology, let alone access it. Technological access tends to be clustered around urban areas and leaves out vast swaths of peripheral-nation citizens. While the diffusion of information technologies has the potential to resolve many global social problems, it is often the population most in need that is most affected by the digital divide. For example, technology to purify water could save many lives, but the villages in peripheral nations most in need of water purification don't have access to the technology, the funds to purchase it, or the technological comfort level to introduce it as a solution.

Sociology in the Real World: The Mighty Cell Phone: How Mobile Phones Are Impacting Sub-Saharan Africa

Many of Africa's poorest countries suffer from a marked lack of infrastructure including poor roads, limited electricity, and minimal access to education and telephones. But while landline use has not changed appreciably during the past ten years, there's been a fivefold increase in mobile phone access; more than a third of people in Sub-Saharan Africa have the ability to access a mobile phone (Katine 2010). Even more can use a "village phone"—through a shared-phone program created by the Grameen Foundation. With access to mobile phone technology, a host of benefits become available that have the potential to change the dynamics in these poorest nations. Sometimes that change is as simple as being able to make a phone call to neighboring market towns. By finding out which markets have vendors interested in their goods, fishers and farmers can ensure they travel to the market that will serve them best and avoid a wasted trip. Others can use mobile phones and some of the emerging money-sending systems to securely send money to a family member or business partner elsewhere (Katine 2010).

These shared-phone programs are often funded by businesses like Germany's Vodafone or Britain's Masbabi, which hope to gain market share in the region. Phone giant Nokia points out that there are 4 billion mobile phone users worldwide—that's more than twice as many people as have bank accounts—meaning there is ripe opportunity to connect banking companies with people who need their services (ITU Telecom 2009). Not all access is corporate-based, however. Other programs are funded by business organizations that seek to help peripheral nations with tools for innovation and entrepreneurship.

But this wave of innovation and potential business comes with costs. There is, certainly, the risk of cultural imperialism, and the assumption that core nations (and core-nation multinationals) know what is best for those struggling in the world's poorest communities. Whether well intentioned or not, the vision of a continent of Africans successfully chatting on their iPhone may not be ideal. Like all aspects of global inequity, access to technology in Africa requires more than just foreign investment. There must be a concerted effort to ensure the benefits of technology get to where they are needed most.

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3.10: Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

Learning Objectives

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

- Discuss how we analyze media and technology through various sociological perspectives

It is difficult to conceive of any one theory or theoretical perspective that can explain the variety of ways in which people interact with technology and the media. Technology runs the gamut from the match you strike to light a candle all the way up to sophisticated nuclear power plants that might power the factory where that candle was made. Media could refer to the television you watch, the ads wrapping the bus you take to work or school, or the magazines you flip through in a dentist's waiting room, not to mention all the forms of new media, including Instagram, Facebook, blogs, YouTube, and the like. Are media and technology critical to the forward march of humanity? Are they pernicious capitalist tools that lead to the exploitation of workers worldwide? Are they the magic bullet the world has been waiting for to level the playing field and raise the world's poor out of extreme poverty? Choose any opinion and you will find studies and scholars who agree with you––and those who disagree.

Functionalism

Because functionalism focuses on how media and technology contribute to the smooth functioning of society, a good place to begin understanding this perspective is to write a list of functions you perceive media and technology to perform. Your list might include the ability to find information on the Internet, television's entertainment value, or how advertising and product placement contribute to social norms.

Commercial Function



Figure 8.10: TV commercials can carry significant cultural currency. For some, the ads during the Super Bowl are more water cooler-worthy than the game itself. (Credit: Dennis Yang/flickr)

As you might guess, with nearly every U.S. household possessing a television, and the 250 billion hours of television watched annually by people in the United States, companies that wish to connect with consumers find television an irresistible platform to promote their goods and services (Nielsen 2012). Television advertising is a highly functional way to meet a market demographic where it lives. Sponsors can use the sophisticated data gathered by network and cable television companies regarding their viewers and target their advertising accordingly. Whether you are watching cartoons on Nick Jr. or a cooking show on Telemundo, chances are advertisers have a plan to reach you.

And it certainly doesn't stop with television. Commercial advertising precedes movies in theaters and shows up on and inside public transportation, as well as on the sides of building and roadways. Major corporations such as Coca-Cola bring their advertising into public schools, by sponsoring sports fields or tournaments, as well as filling the halls and cafeterias of those schools with vending machines hawking their goods. With rising concerns about childhood obesity and attendant diseases, the era of soda machines in schools may be numbered. In fact, as part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act and Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Initiative, a ban on junk food in school began in July 2014.

Entertainment Function

An obvious manifest function of media is its entertainment value. Most people, when asked why they watch television or go to the movies, would answer that they enjoy it. And the numbers certainly illustrate that. While 2012 Nielsen research shows a slight reduction of U.S. homes with televisions, the reach of television is still vast. And the amount of time spent watching is equally large. Clearly, enjoyment is paramount. On the technology side, as well, there is a clear entertainment factor to the use of new innovations. From online gaming to chatting with friends on Facebook, technology offers new and more exciting ways for people to entertain themselves.

Social Norm Functions

Even while the media is selling us goods and entertaining us, it also serves to socialize us, helping us pass along norms, values, and beliefs to the next generation. In fact, we are socialized and resocialized by media throughout our whole lives. All forms of media teach us what is good and desirable, how we should speak, how we should behave, and how we should react to events. Media also provide us with cultural touchstones during events of national significance. How many of your older relatives can recall watching the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger* on television? How many of those reading this textbook followed the events of September 11 or Hurricane Katrina on television or the Internet?

Just as in Anderson and Bushman's (2011) evidence in the Violence in Media and Video Games: Does It Matter? feature, debate still exists over the extent and impact of media socialization. One recent study (Krahe et al. 2011) demonstrated that violent media content does have a desensitizing affect and is correlated with aggressive thoughts. Another group of scholars (Gentile, Mathieson, and Crick 2011) found that among children exposure to media violence led to an increase in both physical and relational aggression. Yet, a meta-analysis study covering four decades of research (Savage 2003) could not establish a definitive link between viewing violence and committing criminal violence.

It is clear from watching people emulate the styles of dress and talk that appear in media that media has a socializing influence. What is not clear, despite nearly fifty years of empirical research, is how much socializing influence the media has when compared to other agents of socialization, which include any social institution that passes along norms, values, and beliefs (such as peers, family, religious institutions, and the like).

Life-Changing Functions

Like media, many forms of technology do indeed entertain us, provide a venue for commercialization, and socialize us. For example, some studies suggest the rising obesity rate is correlated with the decrease in physical activity caused by an increase in use of some forms of technology, a latent function of the prevalence of media in society (Kautiainen et al. 2011). Without a doubt, a manifest function of technology is to change our lives, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. Think of how the digital age has improved the ways we communicate. Have you ever used Skype or another webcast to talk to a friend or family member far away? Or maybe you have organized a fund drive, raising thousands of dollars, all from your desk chair.

Of course, the downside to this ongoing information flow is the near impossibility of disconnecting from technology that leads to an expectation of constant convenient access to information and people. Such a fast-paced dynamic is not always to our benefit. Some sociologists assert that this level of media exposure leads to narcotizing dysfunction, a result in which people are too overwhelmed with media input to really care about the issue, so their involvement becomes defined by awareness instead of by action (Lazerfeld and Merton 1948).

Conflict Perspective

In contrast to theories in the functional perspective, the conflict perspective focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality—social processes that tend to disrupt society rather than contribute to its smooth operation. When we take a conflict

perspective, one major focus is the differential access to media and technology embodied in the digital divide. Conflict theorists also look at who controls the media, and how media promotes the norms of upper-middle-class White people in the United States while minimizing the presence of the working class, especially people of color.

Control of Media and Technology

Powerful individuals and social institutions have a great deal of influence over which forms of technology are released, when and where they are released, and what kind of media is available for our consumption, which is a form of gatekeeping. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) define gatekeeping as the sorting process by which thousands of possible messages are shaped into a mass media-appropriate form and reduced to a manageable amount. In other words, the people in charge of the media decide what the public is exposed to, which, as C. Wright Mills (1956) famously noted, is the heart of media's power. Take a moment to think of the way "new media" evolve and replace traditional forms of hegemonic media. With hegemonic media, a culturally diverse society can be dominated by one race, gender, or class that manipulates the media to impose its worldview as a societal norm. New media weakens the gatekeeper role in information distribution. Popular sites such as YouTube and Facebook not only allow more people to freely share information but also engage in a form of self-policing. Users are encouraged to report inappropriate behavior that moderators will then address.

In addition, some conflict theorists suggest that the way U.S. media are generated results in an unbalanced political arena. Those with the most money can buy the most media exposure, run smear campaigns against their competitors, and maximize their visual presence. Almost a year before the 2012 U.S. presidential election, the candidates––Barack Obama for the Democrats and numerous Republican contenders––had raised more than $186 million (Carmi et al. 2012). Some would say that the *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Committee* is a major contributing factor to our unbalanced political arena. In *Citizens United*, the Supreme Court affirmed the right of outside groups, including Super Political Action Committees (SuperPACs) with undisclosed donor lists, to spend unlimited amounts of money on political ads as long as they don't coordinate with the candidate's campaign or specifically advocate for a candidate. What do you think a conflict perspective theorist would suggest about the potential for the non-rich to be heard in politics, especially when SuperPACs ensure that the richest groups have the most say?

Technological Social Control and Digital Surveillance

Social scientists take the idea of the surveillance society so seriously that there is an entire journal devoted to its study, *Surveillance and Society*. The panoptic surveillance envisioned by Jeremy Bentham, depicted in the form of an all-powerful, all-seeing government by George Orwell in *1984*, and later analyzed by Michel Foucault (1975) is increasingly realized in the form of technology used to monitor our every move. This surveillance was imagined as a form of constant monitoring in which the observation posts are decentralized and the observed is never communicated with directly. Today, digital security cameras capture our movements, observers can track us through our cell phones, and police forces around the world use facial-recognition software.

Feminist Perspective



Figure 8.11: Many people argue that women's portrayal in the media remains misleadingly narrow. But the advent of influencer culture may provide more agency to women, who can control their own portrayal. (Credit: Nenad Stojkovic/flickr)

Take a look at popular television shows, advertising campaigns, and online game sites. In most, women are portrayed in a particular set of parameters and tend to have a uniform look that society recognizes as attractive. Most are thin, White or light-skinned, beautiful, and young. Why does this matter? Feminist perspective theorists believe this idealized image is crucial in creating and reinforcing stereotypes. For example, Fox and Bailenson (2009) found that online female avatars conforming to gender stereotypes enhance negative attitudes toward women, and Brasted (2010) found that media (advertising in particular) promotes gender stereotypes. As early as 1990, *Ms.* magazine instituted a policy to publish without any commercial advertising.

The gender gap in tech-related fields (science, technology, engineering, and math) is no secret. A 2011 U.S. Department of Commerce Report suggested that gender stereotyping is one reason for this gap which acknowledges the bias toward men as keepers of technological knowledge (US Department of Commerce 2011). But gender stereotypes go far beyond the use of technology. Press coverage in the media reinforces stereotypes that subordinate women; it gives airtime to looks over skills, and coverage disparages women who defy accepted norms.

Recent research in new media has offered a mixed picture of its potential to equalize the status of men and women in the arenas of technology and public discourse. A European agency, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (2010), issued an opinion report suggesting that while there is the potential for new media forms to perpetuate gender stereotypes and the gender gap in technology and media access, at the same time new media could offer alternative forums for feminist groups and the exchange of feminist ideas. Still, the committee warned against the relatively unregulated environment of new media and the potential for antifeminist activities, from pornography to human trafficking, to flourish there.

Increasingly prominent in the discussion of new media and feminism is cyberfeminism, the application to, and promotion of, feminism online. Research on cyberfeminism runs the gamut from the liberating use of blogs by women living in Iraq during the second Gulf War (Peirce 2011) to an investigation of the Suicide Girls web site (Magnet 2007).

Symbolic Interactionism

Technology itself may act as a symbol for many. The kind of computer you own, the kind of car you drive, your ability to afford the latest Apple product—these serve as a social indicator of wealth and status. Neo-Luddites are people who see technology as symbolizing the coldness and alienation of modern life. But for technophiles, technology symbolizes the potential for a brighter future. For those adopting an ideological middle ground, technology might symbolize status (in the form of a massive flat-screen television) or failure (ownership of a basic old mobile phone with no bells or whistles).

Social Construction of Reality

Meanwhile, media create and spread symbols that become the basis for our shared understanding of society. Theorists working in the interactionist perspective focus on this social construction of reality, an ongoing process in which people subjectively create and understand reality. Media constructs our reality in a number of ways. For some, the people they watch on a screen can become a primary group, meaning the small informal groups of people who are closest to them. For many others, media becomes a reference group: a group that influences an individual and to which an individual compares himself or herself, and by which we judge our successes and failures. We might do very well without the latest smartphone, until we see characters using it on our favorite television show or our classmates whipping it out between classes.

While media may indeed be the medium to spread the message of rich White men, Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, and Sasson (1992) point out that some forms of media discourse allow competing constructions of reality to appear. For example, advertisers find new and creative ways to sell us products we don't need and probably wouldn't want without their prompting, but some networking sites such as Freecycle offer a commercial-free way of requesting and trading items that would otherwise be discarded. The web is also full of blogs chronicling lives lived "off the grid," or without participation in the commercial economy.

Social Networking and Social Construction

While Tumblr and Facebook encourage us to check in and provide details of our day through online social networks, corporations can just as easily promote their products on these sites. Even supposedly crowd-sourced sites like Yelp (which aggregates local reviews) are not immune to corporate shenanigans. That is, we think we are reading objective observations when in reality we may be buying into one more form of advertising.

Facebook, which started as a free social network for college students, is increasingly a monetized business, selling you goods and services in subtle ways. But chances are you don't think of Facebook as one big online advertisement. What started out as a symbol of coolness and insider status, unavailable to parents and corporate shills, now promotes consumerism in the form of games and fandom. For example, think of all the money spent to upgrade popular Facebook games like Candy Crush. And notice that whenever you become a "fan," you likely receive product updates and special deals that promote online and real-world consumerism. It is unlikely that millions of people want to be "friends" with Pampers. But if it means a weekly coupon, they will, in essence, rent out space on their Facebook pages for Pampers to appear. Thus, we develop both new ways to spend money and brand loyalties that will last even after Facebook is considered outdated and obsolete.

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3.11: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
agricultural societies	societies that rely on farming as a way of life				
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				
feudal societies	societies that operate on a strict hierarchical system of power based around land ownership and protection				
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				
horticultural societies	societies based around the cultivation of plants				
high culture	the cultural patterns of a society's elite				
hunter-gatherer societies	societies that depend on hunting wild animals and gathering uncultivated plants for survival				
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				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				
pastoral societies	societies based around the domestication of animals				
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				
social construction	a mutual understanding and accepted reality created by members of a society rather than determined by biology or the natural world.				
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				
cyberfeminism	the application to and promotion of feminism online				
design patents	patents that are granted when someone has invented a new and original design for a manufactured product				
digital divide	the uneven access to technology around race, class, and geographic lines				
e-readiness	the ability to sort through, interpret, and process digital knowledge				
evolutionary model of technological change	a breakthrough in one form of technology that leads to a number of variations, from which a prototype emerges, followed by a period of slight adjustments to the technology, interrupted by a breakthrough				
gatekeeping	the sorting process by which thousands of possible messages are shaped into a mass media-appropriate form and reduced to a manageable amount				
knowledge gap	the gap in information that builds as groups grow up without access to technology				
media	all print, digital, and electronic means of communication				
media consolidation	a process by which fewer and fewer owners control the majority of media outlets				
media globalization	the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas				
neo-Luddites	those who see technology as a symbol of the coldness of modern life				
net neutrality	the principle that all Internet data should be treated equally by internet service providers				
new media	all interactive forms of information exchange				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
oligopoly	a situation in which a few firms dominate a marketplace				
panoptic surveillance	a form of constant monitoring in which the observation posts are decentralized and the observed is never communicated with directly				
planned obsolescence	the act of a technology company planning for a product to be obsolete or unable from the time it's created				
plant patents	patents that recognize the discovery of new plant types that can be asexually reproduced				
technological diffusion	the spread of technology across borders				
technological globalization	the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology				
technology	the application of science to solve problems in daily life				
technophiles	those who see technology as symbolizing the potential for a brighter future				
utility patents	patents that are granted for the invention or discovery of any new and useful process, product, or machine				

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3.12: Section Summary

3.2 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.

3.3 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.

3.4 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.

3.5 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).

3.6 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.

3.7 Technology Today

Technology is the application of science to address the problems of daily life. The fast pace of technological advancement means the advancements are continuous, but that not everyone has equal access. The gap created by this unequal access has been termed the digital divide. The knowledge gap refers to an effect of the digital divide: the lack of knowledge or information that

keeps those who were not exposed to technology from gaining marketable skills

3.8 Media and Technology in Society

Media and technology have been interwoven from the earliest days of human communication. The printing press, the telegraph, and the Internet are all examples of their intersection. Mass media have allowed for more shared social experiences, but new media now create a seemingly endless amount of airtime for any and every voice that wants to be heard. Advertising has also changed with technology. New media allow consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues and cause companies to be more innovative and intrusive as they try to gain our attention.

3.9 Global Implications of Media and Technology

Technology drives globalization, but what that means can be hard to decipher. While some economists see technological advances leading to a more level playing field where anyone anywhere can be a global contender, the reality is that opportunity still clusters in geographically advantaged areas. Still, technological diffusion has led to the spread of more and more technology across borders into peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. However, true technological global equality is a long way off.

3.10 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

There are myriad theories about how society, technology, and media will progress. Functionalism sees the contribution that technology and media provide to the stability of society, from facilitating leisure time to increasing productivity. Conflict theorists are more concerned with how technology reinforces inequalities among communities, both within and among countries. They also look at how media typically give voice to the most powerful, and how new media might offer tools to help those who are disenfranchised. Symbolic interactionists see the symbolic uses of technology as signs of everything from a sterile futuristic world to a successful professional life.

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3.13: Section Quiz

3.2 Types of Societies

1. Which of the following fictional societies is an example of a pastoral society?

a. The Deswan people, who live in small tribes and base their economy on the production and trade of textiles
b. The Rositian Clan, a small community of farmers who have lived on their family's land for centuries
c. The Hunti, a wandering group of nomads who specialize in breeding and training horses
d. The Amaganda, an extended family of warriors who serve a single noble family

2. Which of the following occupations is a person of power most likely to have in an information society?

a. Software engineer
b. Coal miner
c. Children's book author
d. Sharecropper

3. Which of the following societies were the first to have permanent residents?

a. Industrial
b. Hunter-gatherer
c. Horticultural
d. Feudal

3.3 What Is Culture?

4. The terms _____ and _____ are often used interchangeably, but have nuances that differentiate them.

a. imperialism and relativism
b. culture and society
c. society and ethnocentrism
d. ethnocentrism and Xenocentrism

5. The American flag is a material object that denotes the U.S. However, many associate ideas with the flag, like bravery and freedom. In this example, what are bravery and freedom?

a. Symbols
b. Language
c. Material culture
d. Nonmaterial culture

6. The belief that one's culture is inferior to another culture is called:

a. ethnocentrism
b. nationalism
c. xenocentrism
d. imperialism

7. The irrational fear or hatred of another culture is called:

a. ethnocentrism
b. xenophobia
c. xenophile
d. ethnophobia

8. Rodney and Elise are U.S. students studying abroad in Italy. When they are introduced to their host families, the families kiss

them on both cheeks. When Rodney's host brother introduces himself and kisses Rodney on both cheeks, Rodney pulls back in surprise. Where he is from, unless they are romantically involved, men do not kiss one another. This is an example of:

a. culture shock
b. imperialism
c. ethnocentrism
d. xenocentrism

9. Most cultures have been found to identify laughter as a sign of humor, joy, or pleasure. Laughter is an examples of:

a. relativism
b. ethnocentrism
c. xenocentrism
d. universalism

3.4 Elements of Culture

10. A nation's flag is:

a. A symbol
b. A value
c. A culture
d. A folkway

11. The existence of social norms, both formal and informal, is one of the main things that inform _____, otherwise known as encouraging social conformity.

a. values
b. sanctions
c. social control
d. mores

12. The biggest difference between mores and folkways is that

a. mores are linked to morality, whereas folkways are tied to commonplace behaviors
b. mores are absolute, whereas folkways are temporary
c. mores refer to material culture, whereas folkways refer to nonmaterial culture
d. mores refer to nonmaterial culture, whereas folkways refer to material culture

13. The notion that people cannot feel or experience something that they do not have a word for can be explained by:

a. linguistics
b. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
c. Ethnographic imagery
d. bilingualism

14. Cultural sanctions can also be viewed as ways that society:

a. Establishes leaders
b. Determines language
c. Regulates behavior
d. Determines laws

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

15. An example of high culture is _____, whereas an example of popular culture would be _____.

a. Dostoevsky style in film; "American Idol" winners
b. medical marijuana; film noir

c. country music; pop music
d. political theory; sociological theory

16. The Ku Klux Klan is an example of what part of culture?

a. Counterculture
b. Subculture
c. Multiculturalism
d. pop culture

17. Modern-day hipsters are an example of:

a. ethnocentricity
b. counterculture
c. subculture
d. high culture

18. Your eighty-three-year-old grandmother has been using a computer for some time now. As a way to keep in touch, you frequently send emails of a few lines to let her know about your day. She calls after every email to respond point by point, but she has never emailed a response back. This can be viewed as an example of:

a. cultural lag
b. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
c. Ethnographic imagery
d. bilingualism

19. Some jobs today advertise in multinational markets and permit telecommuting in lieu of working from a primary location. This broadening of the job market and the way that jobs are performed can be attributed to:

a. cultural lag
b. diffusion
c. discovery
d. globalization

20. The major difference between invention and discovery is:

a. Invention is based on technology, whereas discovery is usually based on culture
b. Discovery involves finding items that already exists, but invention puts things together in a new way
c. Invention refers to material culture, whereas discovery can be material or theoretic, like laws of physics
d. Invention is typically used to refer to prehistoric objects, whereas discovery refers to local culture

21. McDonald's restaurants are found in almost every country around the world. What is this an example of?

a. globalization
b. diffusion
c. culture lag
d. xenocentrism

3.6 Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

22. A sociologist conducts research into the ways that Hispanic American students are historically underprivileged in the U.S. education system. What theoretical approach is the sociologist Using?

a. Symbolic interactionism
b. Functionalism
c. Conflict theory
d. Ethnocentrism

23. Members of a counterculture movement believed that the economic disparity between the highest and the mid to lower economic classes is growing at an exponentially alarming rate. A sociologist who studies that movement by examining the

interactions between its members would most likely use what theoretical approach?

a. Symbolic interactionism
b. Functionalism
c. Conflict theory
d. Ethnocentrism

24. What theoretical perspective views society as having a system of interdependent inherently connected parts?

a. Sociobiology
b. Functionalism
c. Conflict theory
d. Ethnocentrism

25. The "American Dream"—the notion that anybody can be successful and rich if they work hard enough—is most commonly associated with which sociological theory?

a. Sociobiology
b. Functionalism
c. Conflict theory
d. Ethnocentrism

3.7 Technology Today

26. Jerome is able to use the Internet to select reliable sources for his research paper, but Charlie just copies large pieces of web pages and pastes them into his paper. Jerome has _____ while Charlie does not.

a. a functional perspective
b. the knowledge gap
c. e-readiness
d. a digital divide

27. The _____ can be directly attributed to the digital divide, because differential ability to access the internet leads directly to a differential ability to use the knowledge found on the Internet.

a. digital divide
b. knowledge gap
c. feminist perspective
d. e-gap

28. The fact that your cell phone is using outdated technology within a year or two of purchase is an example of _____.

a. the conflict perspective
b. conspicuous consumption
c. media
d. planned obsolescence

29. The history of technology began _____.

a. in the early stages of human societies
b. with the invention of the computer
c. during the Renaissance
d. during the nineteenth century

Short Answer

30. Can you think of people in your own life who support or defy the premise that access to technology leads to greater opportunities? How have you noticed technology use and opportunity to be linked, or does your experience contradict this idea?
31. Should the U.S. government be responsible for providing all citizens with access to the Internet? Or is gaining Internet access an individual responsibility?

32. How have digital media changed social interactions? Do you believe it has deepened or weakened human connections? Defend your answer.
33. Conduct sociological research. Google yourself. How much information about you is available to the public? How many and what types of companies offer private information about you for a fee? Compile the data and statistics you find. Write a paragraph or two about the social issues and behaviors you notice.

3.8 Media and Technology in Society

34. When it comes to technology, media, and society, which of the following is true?

a. Media can influence technology, but not society.
b. Technology created media, but society has nothing to do with these.
c. Technology, media, and society are bound and cannot be separated.
d. Society influences media but is not connected to technology.

35. If the U.S. Patent Office were to issue a patent for a new type of tomato that tastes like a jellybean, it would be issuing a _____ patent?

a. utility patent
b. plant patent
c. design patent
d. The U.S. Patent Office does not issue a patent for plants.

36. Which of the following is the primary component of the evolutionary model of technological change?

a. Technology should not be subject to patenting.
b. Technology and the media evolve together.
c. Technology can be traced back to the early stages of human society.
d. A breakthrough in one form of technology leads to a number of variations, and technological developments.

37. Which of the following is *not* a form of new media?

a. The cable television program *Yellowstone*
b. Wikipedia
c. Snapchat
d. A cooking blog written by Rachael Ray

38. Research regarding video game violence suggests that _____.

a. boys who play violent video games become more aggressive, but girls do not
b. girls who play violent video games become more aggressive, but boys do not
c. violent video games have no connection to aggressive behavior
d. violent video games lead to an increase in aggressive thought and behavior

39. Comic books, Wikipedia, MTV, and a commercial for Coca-Cola are all examples of:

a. media
b. symbolic interaction perspective
c. e-readiness
d. the digital divide

3.9 Global Implications of Media and Technology

40. When Japanese scientists develop a new vaccine for swine flu and offer that technology to U.S. pharmaceutical companies, _____ has taken place.

a. media globalization
b. technological diffusion
c. monetizing

d. planned obsolescence

41. In the mid-90s, the U.S. government grew concerned that Microsoft was a _____, exercising disproportionate control over the available choices and prices of computers.

a. monopoly
b. conglomerate
c. oligopoly
d. technological globalization

42. The movie *Babel* featured an international cast and was filmed on location in various nations. When it screened in theaters worldwide, it introduced a number of ideas and philosophies about cross-cultural connections. This might be an example of:

a. technology
b. conglomerating
c. symbolic interaction
d. media globalization

43. Which of the following is *not* a risk of media globalization?

a. The creation of cultural and ideological biases
b. The creation of local monopolies
c. The risk of cultural imperialism
d. The loss of local culture

44. The government of _____ blocks citizens' access to popular new media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

a. China
b. India
c. Afghanistan
d. Australia

3.10 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

45. A parent secretly monitoring the babysitter through the use of GPS, site blocker, and nanny cam is a good example of:

a. the social construction of reality
b. technophilia
c. a neo-Luddite
d. panoptic surveillance

46. The use of Facebook to create an online persona by only posting images that match your ideal self exemplifies the_____ that can occur in forms of new media.

a. social construction of reality
b. cyberfeminism
c. market segmentation
d. referencing

47. _____ tend to be more pro-technology, while _____ view technology as a symbol of the coldness of modern life.

a. Luddites; technophiles
b. technophiles; Luddites
c. cyberfeminists; technophiles
d. liberal feminists; conflict theorists

48. When it comes to media and technology, a functionalist would focus on:

a. the symbols created and reproduced by the media
b. the association of technology and technological skill with men

c. the way that various forms of media socialize users
d. the digital divide between the technological haves and have-nots

49. When all media sources report a simplified version of the environmental impact of hydraulic fracturing, with no effort to convey the hard science and complicated statistical data behind the story, _____ is probably occurring.

a. gatekeeping
b. the digital divide
c. technophilia
d. market segmentation

Short Answer

50. Consider a current social trend that you have witnessed, perhaps situated around family, education, transportation, or finances. For example, many veterans of the Armed Forces, after completing tours of duty in the Middle East, are returning to college rather than entering jobs as previous generations did. Choose a sociological approach—functionalism, conflict theory, or symbolic interactionism—to describe, explain, and analyze the social issue you choose. Afterward, determine why you chose the approach you did. Does it suit your own way of thinking? Or does it offer the most relevant method of illuminating the social issue?

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3.14: Short Answer

3.2 Types of Societies

1. In which type or types of societies do the benefits seem to outweigh the costs? Explain your answer, and cite social and economic reasons.
2. Is Gerhard Lenski right in classifying societies based on technological advances? What other criteria might be appropriate, based on what you have read?

3.3 What Is Culture?

3. Examine the difference between material and nonmaterial culture in your world. Identify ten objects that are part of your regular cultural experience. For each, then identify what aspects of nonmaterial culture (values, beliefs, norms, language, and practices) that these objects represent. What has this exercise revealed to you about your culture?
4. Do you believe that feelings of ethnocentricity or xenocentric attitudes and practices are prevalent in U.S. culture? Why do you believe this? What issues or events might influence your ideas about these concepts?

3.4 Elements of Culture

5. What do you think of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis? Do you agree or disagree with it? Cite examples or research to support your point of view.
6. How would the elimination of a social "norm" influence your culture? Describe the positive and negative effects.

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

7. Identify several examples of popular culture and describe how they form societal culture. How prevalent is the effect of these examples in your everyday life?
8. Consider some of the specific issues or concerns of your generation. Are any ideas or concepts countercultural? What subcultures have emerged from your generation? How have the issues of your generation expressed themselves culturally? How has your generation made its mark on society's collective culture?
9. What are some examples of cultural lag that are present in your life? What influence does technology have on culture? Explain.

3.8 Media and Technology in Society

10. Where and how do you get your news? Do you watch network television? Read the newspaper? Go online? How about your parents or grandparents? Do you think it matters where you seek out information? Why, or why not?
11. Do you believe new media allows for the kind of unifying moments that television and radio programming used to? If so, give an example.
12. Where are you most likely to notice advertisements? What causes them to catch your attention?

3.9 Global Implications of Media and Technology

13. Do you believe that technology has indeed flattened the world in terms of providing opportunity? Why, or why not? Give examples to support your reason.
14. Where do you get your news? Is it owned by a large conglomerate (you can do a web search and find out!)? Does it matter to you who owns your local news outlets? Why, or why not?
15. Who do you think is most likely to bring innovation and technology (like cell phone businesses) to Sub-Saharan Africa: nonprofit organizations, governments, or businesses? Why?

3.10 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

16. Contrast a functionalist viewpoint of digital surveillance with a conflict perspective viewpoint.
17. In what ways has the Internet affected how you view reality? Explain using a symbolic interactionist perspective.
18. Describe how a cyberfeminist might address the fact that powerful female politicians are often demonized in traditional media.
19. The issue of airplane-pilot exhaustion is an issue of growing media concern. Select a theoretical perspective, and describe

how it would explain this.
20. Would you characterize yourself as a technophile or a Luddite? Explain, and use examples.

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3.15: Further Research

3.2 Types of Societies

The Maasai are a modern pastoral society with an economy largely structured around herds of cattle. Read more about the Maasai people and see pictures of their daily lives here .

3.3 What Is Culture?

Ethnocentrism is a problem in many arenas. In the workplace, it can be hurtful and detrimental to an entire organization and especially to those who face mistreatment or feel unwelcome. People who exhibit ethnocentrism in the workplace are not only putting their careers at risk, but missing opportunities to flourish and advance with colleagues and customers of different backgrounds. In other words, curbing ethnocentrism is an important personal and societal goal, and it's important for careers. This guide from an executive leadership academy discusses ways that multicultural teams can create more success if the people and company undertake the correct practices.

3.4 Elements of Culture

The science-fiction novel, *Babel-17*, by Samuel R. Delaney was based upon the principles of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Read an excerpt from *Babel-17* here.

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

Many people believe that the time of the counterculture is over. Like many aspects of culture, it could come back at any time. In this interview, Princeton professor German Labrador and director of exhibitions at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona discuss the past, present, and potential future of counterculture.

3.8 Media and Technology in Society

To get a sense of the timeline of technology. Check out this website with a technology timeline.

To learn more about new media, check out the New Media Institute

To understand how independent media coverage differs from major corporate affiliated news outlets, review material from the Democracy Now! website.

3.9 Global Implications of Media and Technology

Check out more in this article about the global digital divide. openstax.org/l/Global_Digital_Divide

3.10 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

To learn more about cyberfeminism, check out the interdisciplinary artist collective, subRosa.

To explore the implications of panoptic surveillance, review some surveillance studies at the free, open source Surveillance and Society site.

Read an example of socialist media from *Jacobin* magazine.

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4: SOCIALIZATION AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

4.1: Introduction

4.2: Theories of Self-Development

4.3: Why Socialization Matters

4.4: Agents of Socialization

4.5: Socialization Across the Life Course

4.6: Social Interactions

4.7: Key Terms

4.8: Section Summary

4.9: Section Quiz

4.10: Short Answer

4.11: Further Research

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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: Social Interactions

Learning Objectives

- Describe what is meant by dramaturgy and by impression management.
- Distinguish between role and status.
- Provide one example of role conflict or role strain.
- Explain why new patterns of socialization might help address certain social ills in American society.

If socialization results from our social interaction with others, it is also true that we learn how to interact from our socialization. We have seen many examples of this process in this and previous chapters. Among other things, we learn how far apart to stand when talking to someone else, we learn to enjoy kissing, we learn how to stand and behave in an elevator, and we learn to shake hands when greeting someone.

Dramaturgy and Impression Management

From a sociological standpoint, much of our social interaction can be understood by likening it to a performance in a play.

Example 1:

As with so many things, Shakespeare said it best when he wrote,

> All the world's a stage,
>
> And all the men and women merely players.
>
> They have their exits and their entrances;
>
> And one man in his time plays many parts. (As You Like It, act 2, scene 7)

From this perspective, each individual has many parts or roles to play in society, and many of these roles specify how we should interact in any given situation. These roles exist before we are born, and they continue long after we die. The culture of society is thus similar to the script of a play. Just as actors in a play learn what lines to say, where to stand on the stage, how to position their bodies, and so many other things, so do we learn as members of society the roles that specify how we should interact.

This fundamental metaphor was developed and popularized by sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) in what he called a **dramaturgical approach**. By this he meant that we can understand social interaction as if it were a theatrical performance. People who interact are actors on a stage, the things they say and do are equivalent to the parts actors play, and the people who observe their interaction are equivalent to the audience at a play.

Beyond these aspects of his theatrical analogy, Goffman also stressed that the *presentation of self* guides social interaction just as it guides behavior in a play. Actors in a play, he wrote, aim to act properly, which at a minimum means they need to say their lines correctly and in other ways carry out their parts as they were written. They try to convey the impression of their character the playwright had in mind when the play was written and the director has in mind when the play is presented.

Such **impression management**, Goffman wrote, also guides social interaction in everyday life. When people interact, they routinely try to convey a positive impression of themselves to the people with whom they interact. Our behavior in a job interview differs dramatically (pun intended) from our behavior at a party. The key dimension of social interaction, then, involves trying to manage the impressions we convey to the people with whom we interact. We usually do our best, consciously or unconsciously, to manage the impressions we convey to others and so to evoke from them reactions that will please us.



Figure 4.6.1: Social interaction involves impression management. How a student behaves with a professor is probably very different from how the same student behaves when out on the town with friends. © Thinkstock

Goffman wrote about other aspects of social interaction that affect our efforts to manage these impressions. Again using his dramaturgical metaphor, he said that some interaction occurs in the "frontstage," or front region, while other interaction occurs in the "backstage," or back region. In a play, of course, the **frontstage** is what the audience sees and is obviously the location in which the actors are performing their lines. **Backstage**, they can do whatever they want, and the audience will have no idea of what they are doing (as long as they are quiet). Much of our everyday interaction is on the frontstage, where an audience can see everything we do and hear everything we say. But we also spend a lot of time on the backstage, by ourselves, when we can do and say things in private (such as singing in the shower) that we would not dare do or say in public.

How we dress is also a form of impression management. You are the same person regardless of what clothes you wear, but if you dress for a job interview as you would dress for a party (to use our earlier example), the person interviewing you would get an impression you might not want to be conveying. If you showed up for a medical visit and your physician were wearing a bathing suit, wouldn't you feel just a bit uneasy?

People convey impressions not only through how they act and dress but also through how they arrange the appearance of the settings in which they interact. Consider the medical visit just mentioned. A physician tries to convey an impression of a serious, knowledgeable professional not only by how she or he dresses but also by how the waiting room looks. Usually the room is well furnished with clean, comfortable chairs and such magazines as *People*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*. What impression would be conveyed if the physician's office looked shabby and even had a bad odor? What if it had *Playboy* in it? How long would you stay in that office?

Life is filled with impression management. Compare the decor of your favorite fast-food restaurant with that of a very expensive restaurant with which you might be familiar. Compare the appearance, dress, and demeanor of the servers and other personnel in the two establishments. The expensive restaurant is trying to convey an image that the food will be wonderful and that the time you spend there will be memorable and well worth the money. The fast-food restaurant is trying to convey just the opposite impression. In fact, if it looked too fancy, you would probably think it was too expensive.

Some people go to great efforts to manage the impressions they convey. You have probably done so in a job interview or on a date. In New York City, the capital of book publishing, editors of large publishing companies and "superagents" for authors are very conscious of the impressions they convey, because much of the publishing industry depends on gossip, impressions, and the development of rapport. Editors and agents often dine together in one of a few very expensive "power" restaurants, where their presence is certain to be noted. Publishers or senior editors who dine at these restaurants will eat only with celebrity authors, other senior editors or publishers, or important agents. Such agents rarely dine with junior editors, who are only "allowed" to eat with junior agents. To eat with someone "beneath" your standing would convey the wrong impression (Arnold, 1998).

As these examples indicate, social reality is to a large extent socially constructed. It is what we make of it, and the individuals who interact help construct the reality of the situation in which they interact. Sociologists refer to this process as the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Although we usually come into a situation with shared understandings of what

is about to happen, as the interaction proceeds the actors continue to define the situation and thus to construct its reality. This view lies at the heart of the symbolic interactionist perspective discussed in Chapter 1.

Roles and Statuses

The related concepts of role and status help us further understand social interaction. **Status** has many meanings in the dictionary and also within sociology, but for now we will define it as the position that someone occupies in society. This position is often a job title, but many other types of positions exist: parent, sibling, relative, friend, and so forth. Any one individual often occupies several different statuses at the same time, and someone can simultaneously be a banker, Girl Scout troop leader, mother, school board member, volunteer at a homeless shelter, and wife. This someone would be very busy! We call all the positions an individual occupies that person's status set.



Figure 4.6.2: Any individual occupies several statuses and thus has several roles. Many employees are also parents and must often juggle the expectations their employers have of them with the needs of their children. © Thinkstock

Sociologists often speak of three kinds of statuses. The first type is **ascribed status**, which is the status that someone is born with and has no control over. There are relatively few ascribed statuses; the most common ones are our biological sex, race, and parents' social class and religious affiliation. The second kind of status is called **achieved status**, which, as the name implies, is a status you achieve, at some point after birth, sometimes through your own efforts and sometimes because good or bad luck befalls you. All the statuses in the example of the woman in the previous paragraph would be achieved statuses. The third type of status is called a **master status**. This is a status that is so important that it overrides other statuses you may hold. A physical disability often becomes a master status, because if you are confined to a wheelchair, to take one type of disability, this confinement becomes more important than the other statuses you have. For similar reasons, gender, race, and sexual orientation may also be considered master statuses, as these statuses often subject women, people of color, and gays and lesbians, respectively, to discrimination and other problems, no matter what other statuses they may have.

Whatever its type, every status is accompanied by a **role**, which is the behavior expected of someone—and in fact *everyone*—with a certain status. You and most other people reading this book are students. Despite all the other differences among you, you have at least this one status in common. As such, there is a role expected of you as a student (at least by your professors): this role includes coming to class regularly, doing all the reading assigned from this textbook, and studying the best you can for exams.

Because roles are the behavior expected of people in various statuses, they help us interact because we are familiar with the roles in the first place. Suppose you are shopping in a department store. Your status is a shopper, and the role expected of you as a shopper—and of all shoppers—involves looking quietly at various items in the store, taking the ones you want to purchase to a checkout line, and paying for them. The person who takes your money is occupying another status in the store that we call a cashier. The role expected of that cashier—and of all cashiers not only in that store but in every other store—is to accept your payment in a businesslike way and put your items in a bag.

This is all very automatic, and we often perform our roles without thinking about them. That is why social interaction is possible: if

we always had to think about our roles before we performed them, social interaction would be slow, tedious, and fraught with error. (Analogously, if actors in a play always had to read the script before performing their lines, as an understudy sometimes does, the play would be slow and stilted.) It is when people violate their roles that the importance of roles is thrown into sharp relief. Suppose you were shopping in that department store just mentioned, and while you were in the checkout line the cashier asked you how your sex life has been! Now, you might expect such an intimate question from a very close friend, because discussions of intimate matters are part of the roles close friends play, but you would definitely *not* expect it from a cashier you do not know.

As this example suggests, the social construction of reality rests on shared assumptions, including our understanding of the roles expected of people in a given encounter, that are easily violated if one has the nerve to do so. If they are violated, social order might well break down, as you would quickly find if you dared to ask your cashier how her or his sex life has been, or if two people sitting in the front of a large lecture hall started kissing each other passionately. Sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1967). argued that unexpected events like these underscore how fragile social order is and remind us that people are constantly constructing the social reality of the situations in which they find themselves. To illustrate his point, he had his students perform a series of experiments, including acting like a stranger in their parents' home. Not surprisingly, their parents quickly became flustered and wondered what college was doing to their daughters and sons!

Roles and Personalities

As we have just seen, roles help us interact and help make social order possible. But they even can shape our personalities. The idea here is that if we assume a new role, the expectations of that role can change how we interact with others and the way we even think about ourselves. In short, roles can change our personalities.



Figure 4.6.3: Roles can shape personalities. When individuals become police officers, the nature of their job can prompt them to act and think in a more authoritarian manner. © Thinkstock

A telling example of this effect comes from the story of a criminal justice professor from Florida named George Kirkham. In his classes, Kirkham would be critical of the harshness with which police treated suspects and other citizens. One day, some police officers in one of his classes said Kirkham could not begin to understand what it was like being a police officer, and they challenged him to become one. He took up the challenge by gaining admission to a police academy and going through the regular training program for all recruits. Kirkham (1984) later recounted what happened on his first few days on the job. In one episode, he and his veteran partner went into a bar where an intoxicated patron had been causing trouble. Kirkham politely asked the patron to go with him outside. Evidently surprised by this new police officer's politeness, the man instead swung at Kirkham and landed a blow. Kirkham could not believe this happened and was forced to subdue his assailant. In another episode, Kirkham and his partner were checking out the drivers of a double-parked car. An ugly crowd soon gathered and began making threats. Alarmed, Kirkham opened up his car's trunk and pulled out a shotgun to keep the crowd away. In recounting this episode, Kirkham wrote that as a professor he quickly would have condemned the police officer he had now become. In a few short days, he had turned from a polite, kind professor into a gruff, angry police officer. His role had changed and, along with it, his personality.

Role Problems

Roles can help our interactions run smoothly and automatically and, for better or worse, shape our personalities, but they can also cause various kinds of problems. One such problem is **role conflict**, which occurs when the roles of our many statuses conflict with each other. For example, say you are a student and also a parent. Your 3-year-old child gets sick. You now have a conflict between your role as a parent and your role as a student. To perform your role as a parent, you should stay home with your sick child. To perform your role as a student, you should go to your classes and take the big exam that had been scheduled weeks ago. What do you do?

Obviously, you cannot perform both roles at the same time. To resolve role conflict, we ordinarily have to choose between one role or the other, which is often a difficult choice to make. In this example, if you take care of your child, you miss your classes and exam; if you go to your classes, you have to leave your child at home alone, an unacceptable and illegal option. Another way to resolve role conflict is to find some alternative that would meet the needs of your conflicting roles. In our sick child example, you might be able to find someone to watch your child until you can get back from classes. It is certainly desirable to find such alternatives, but, unfortunately, they are not always forthcoming. If role conflict becomes too frequent and severe, a final option is to leave one of your statuses altogether. In our example, if you find it too difficult to juggle your roles as parent and student, you could stop being a parent—hardly likely!—or, more likely, take time off from school until your child is older. Most of us in these circumstances would try our best to avoid having to do this.

Another role-related problem is called **role strain**. Here you have one status, and a role associated with it, that is causing problems because of all the demands coming to you from people in other statuses with which your own status is involved. Suppose you were a high school principal. In your one role as a principal, you come into contact with people in several different statuses: teachers, students, custodial and support staff, the superintendent, school board members, the community as a whole, and the news media. These statuses may make competing demands on you in your one role as a principal. If your high school has a dress code, for example, the students may want you to abolish it, the teachers and superintendent may want you to keep it, and maybe the school board would agree with the students. As you try to please all of these competing factions, you certainly might experience some role strain!

A third type of role problem occurs when we occupy a status whose role demands a certain type of personality that differs from the one we actually have. Can you imagine a police officer who was afraid of guns? An athlete who was not competitive? Although most people avoid this type of role problem by not taking on a role to which their personality is ill suited, such problems occur nonetheless. For example, some people who dislike children and do not have the patience to be good parents end up being parents anyway.

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4.7: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				
impression management	process by which people consciously or unconsciously try to manage the impressions people form of them either through their behavior, appearance, or communication.				
dramaturgical approach	understanding social interaction as if it were a theatrical performance				
front stage	the setting where people perform their social roles in front of others and manage the impressions they want to give				
backstage	the setting where people are away from an audience and want to relax, prepare, or behave in ways they would not publicly				
status	the responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to his or her rank and role in society				
roles	patterns of behavior that are representative of a person’s social status				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
role strain	stress that occurs when too much is required of a single role				
role conflict	a situation when one or more of an individual's roles clash				

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4.8: 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: Section Quiz

4.2 Theories of Self-Development

1.

Socialization, as a sociological term, describes:

a. how people interact during social situations
b. how people learn societal norms, beliefs, and values
c. a person's internal mental state when in a group setting
d. the difference between introverts and extroverts

2.

Harlow's study on rhesus monkeys showed that:

a. rhesus monkeys raised by other primate species are poorly socialized
b. monkeys can be adequately socialized by imitating humans
c. food is more important than social comfort
d. social comfort is more important than food

3.

What occurs in Lawrence Kohlberg's conventional level?

a. Children develop the ability to have abstract thoughts.
b. Morality is developed by pain and pleasure.
c. Children begin to consider what society considers moral and immoral.
d. Parental beliefs have no influence on children's morality.

4.

What did Carol Gilligan believe earlier researchers into morality had overlooked?

a. The justice perspective
b. Sympathetic reactions to moral situations
c. The perspective of females
d. How social environment affects how morality develops

5.

What is one way to distinguish between psychology and sociology?

a. Psychology focuses on the mind, while sociology focuses on society.
b. Psychologists are interested in mental health, while sociologists are interested in societal functions.
c. Psychologists look inward to understand behavior while sociologists look outward.
d. All of the above

6.

How did nearly complete isolation as a child affect Danielle's verbal abilities?

a. She could not communicate at all.
b. She never learned words, but she did learn signs.
c. She could not understand much, but she could use gestures.
d. She could understand and use basic language like "yes" and "no."

4.3 Why Socialization Matters

7.

Why do sociologists need to be careful when drawing conclusions from twin studies?

a. The results do not apply to singletons.
b. The twins were often raised in different ways.
c. The twins may turn out to actually be fraternal.
d. The sample sizes are often small.

8.

From a sociological perspective, which factor does not greatly influence a person's socialization?

a. Gender
b. Class
c. Blood type
d. Race

9.

Chris Langan's story illustrates that:

a. children raised in one-parent households tend to have higher IQs.
b. intelligence is more important than socialization.
c. socialization can be more important than intelligence.
d. neither socialization nor intelligence affects college admissions.

4.4 Agents of Socialization

10.

Why are wealthy parents more likely than poor parents to socialize their children toward creativity and problem solving?

a. Wealthy parents are socializing their children toward the skills of white-collar employment.
b. Wealthy parents are not concerned about their children rebelling against their rules.
c. Wealthy parents never engage in repetitive tasks.
d. Wealthy parents are more concerned with money than with a good education.

11.

How do schools prepare children to one day enter the workforce?

a. With a standardized curriculum
b. Through the hidden curriculum
c. By socializing them in teamwork
d. All of the above

12.

Which one of the following is *not* a way people are socialized by religion?

a. People learn the material culture of their religion.
b. Life stages and roles are connected to religious celebration.
c. An individual's personal internal experience of a divine being leads to their faith.
d. Places of worship provide a space for shared group experiences.

13.

Which of the following is a manifest function of schools?

a. Understanding when to speak up and when to be silent
b. Learning to read and write
c. Following a schedule
d. Knowing locker room etiquette

14.

Which of the following is typically the earliest agent of socialization?

a. School
b. Family
c. Mass media
d. Workplace

4.5 Socialization Across the Life Course

15.

Which of the following is *not* an age-related transition point when Americans must be socialized to new roles?

a. Infancy
b. School age
c. Adulthood
d. Senior citizen

16.

Which of the following is true regarding U.S. socialization of recent high school graduates?

a. They are expected to take a year “off” before college.
b. They are required to serve in the military for one year.
c. They are expected to enter college, trade school, or the workforce shortly after graduation.
d. They are required to move away from their parents.

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4.10: Short Answer

4.2 Theories of Self-Development

1. Think of a current issue or pattern that a sociologist might study. What types of questions would the sociologist ask, and what research methods might he employ? Now consider the questions and methods a psychologist might use to study the same issue. Comment on their different approaches.
2. Explain why it's important to conduct research using both male and female participants. What sociological topics might show gender differences? Provide some examples to illustrate your ideas.

4.3 Why Socialization Matters

3. Why are twin studies an important way to learn about the relative effects of genetics and socialization on children? What questions about human development do you believe twin studies are best for answering? For what types of questions would twin studies not be as helpful?
4. Why do you think that people like Chris Langan continue to have difficulty even after they are helped through societal systems? What is it they've missed that prevents them from functioning successfully in the social world?

4.4 Agents of Socialization

6. Do you think it is important that parents discuss gender roles with their young children, or is gender a topic better left for later? How do parents consider gender norms when buying their children books, movies, and toys? How do you believe they *should* consider it?
7. Based on your observations, when are adolescents more likely to listen to their parents or to their peer groups when making decisions? What types of dilemmas lend themselves toward one social agent over another?

4.5 Socialization Across the Life Course

8. Consider a person who is joining a sorority or fraternity, attending college or boarding school, or even a child beginning kindergarten. How is the process the student goes through a form of socialization? What new cultural behaviors must the student adapt to?
9. Do you think resocialization requires a total institution? Why, or why not? Can you think of any other ways someone could be resocialized?

4.6 Social Interactions

10. Describe a recent example of how you tried to manage the impression you were conveying in a social interaction.

11. Describe a recent example of a role problem that you experienced and what you did, if anything, to reduce this problem.

12. If you were in charge of our society, what socialization practice would you most try to change to help improve our society? Explain your answer.

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4.11: Further Research

4.2 Theories of Self-Development

Lawrence Kohlberg was most famous for his research using moral dilemmas. He presented dilemmas to boys and asked them how they would judge the situations. Visit this site to read about Kohlberg's most famous moral dilemma, known as the Heinz dilemma..

4.3 Why Socialization Matters

Check out this article about other sets of twins who grew up apart and discovered each other later in life.

4.4 Agents of Socialization

Glassdoor.com provides reviews of companies and also articles on finding the correct fit. Take a look at what Glassdoor.com's blog has to say on these topics and explore some companies you might like in order to learn about their corporate culture and worker experience.

4.5 Socialization Across the Life Course

Homelessness is an endemic problem among veterans. Many soldiers leave the military or return from war and have difficulty resocializing into civilian life. Learn more about this problem at the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans' website.

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5: GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

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5.1: Introduction

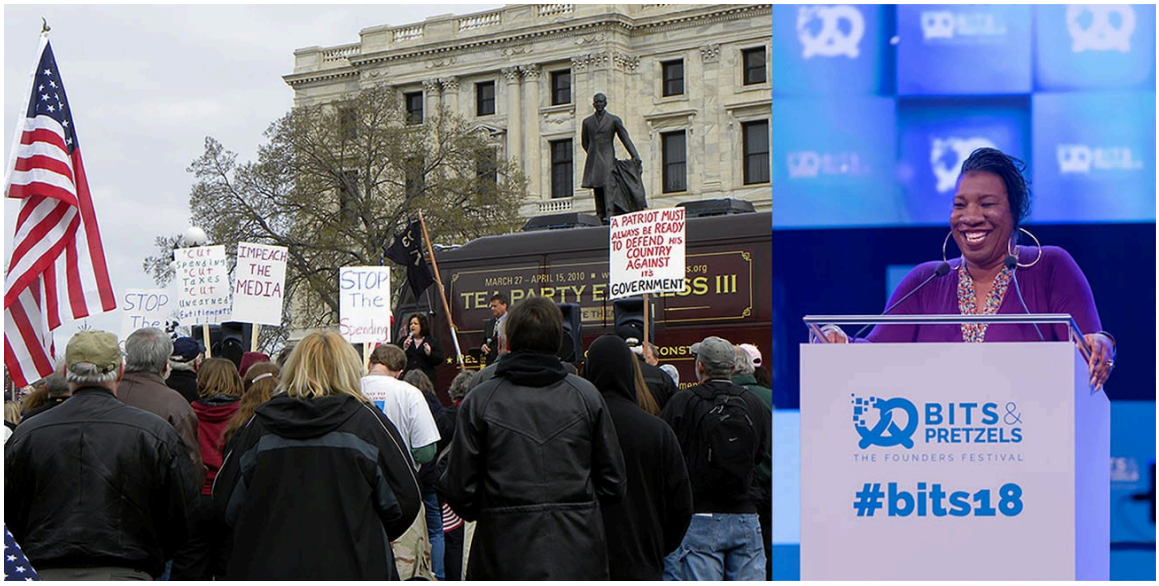


Figure 6.1: The national tour of the Tea Party Express visited Minnesota and held a rally outside the state capitol building. Tarana Burke, who originated the term “me too” in the context of supporting or acknowledging sexual harassment or assault victims, has spoken frequently on the evolution and issues 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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5.2: 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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5.3: 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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5.4: 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

	Normative or Voluntary	Coercive	Utilitarian
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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5.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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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5.6: Section Summary

5.1 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.

5.2 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.

5.3 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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5.7: Section Quiz

5.2 Types of Groups

1.

What does a Functionalist consider when studying a phenomenon like the Tea Party movement?

a. The minute functions that every person at the protests plays in the whole
b. The internal conflicts that play out within such a diverse and leaderless group
c. How the movement contributes to the stability of society by offering the discontented a safe, controlled outlet for dissension
d. The factions and divisions that form within the movement

2.

What is the largest difference between the Functionalist and Conflict perspectives and the Interactionist perspective?

a. The former two consider long-term repercussions of the group or situation, while the latter focuses on the present.
b. The first two are the more common sociological perspective, while the latter is a newer sociological model.
c. The first two focus on hierarchical roles within an organization, while the last takes a more holistic view.
d. The first two perspectives address large-scale issues facing groups, while the last examines more detailed aspects.

3.

What role do secondary groups play in society?

a. They are transactional, task-based, and short-term, filling practical needs.
b. They provide a social network that allows people to compare themselves to others.
c. The members give and receive emotional support.
d. They allow individuals to challenge their beliefs and prejudices.

4.

When a high school student gets teased by her basketball team for receiving an academic award, she is dealing with competing _____.

a. primary groups
b. out-groups
c. reference groups
d. secondary groups

5.

Which of the following is *not* an example of an in-group?

a. The Ku Klux Klan
b. A fraternity
c. A synagogue
d. A high school

6.

What is a group whose values, norms, and beliefs come to serve as a standard for one's own behavior?

a. Secondary group
b. Formal organization
c. Reference group

d. Primary group

7.

A parent who is worrying over her teenager's dangerous and self-destructive behavior and low self-esteem may wish to look at her child's:

a. reference group
b. in-group
c. out-group
d. All of the above

5.3 Group Size and Structure

8.

Two people who have just had a baby have turned from a _____ to a _____.

a. primary group; secondary group
b. dyad; triad
c. couple; family
d. de facto group; nuclear family

9.

Who is more likely to be an expressive leader?

a. The sales manager of a fast-growing cosmetics company
b. A high school teacher at a reform school
c. The director of a summer camp for chronically ill children
d. A manager at a fast-food restaurant

10.

Which of the following is *not* an appropriate group for democratic leadership?

a. A fire station
b. A college classroom
c. A high school prom committee
d. A homeless shelter

11.

In Asch's study on conformity, what contributed to the ability of subjects to resist conforming?

a. A very small group of witnesses
b. The presence of an ally
c. The ability to keep one's answer private
d. All of the above

12.

Which type of group leadership has a communication pattern that flows from the top down?

a. Authoritarian
b. Democratic
c. Laissez-faire
d. Expressive

5.4 Formal Organizations

13.

Which is *not* an example of a normative organization?

a. A book club
b. A church youth group
c. A People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) protest group
d. A study hall

14.

Which of these is an example of a total institution?

a. Jail
b. High school
c. Political party
d. A gym

15.

Why do people join utilitarian organizations?

a. Because they feel an affinity with others there
b. Because they receive a tangible benefit from joining
c. Because they have no choice
d. Because they feel pressured to do so

16.

Which of the following is *not* a characteristic of bureaucracies?

a. Coercion to join
b. Hierarchy of authority
c. Explicit rules
d. Division of labor

17.

What are some of the intended positive aspects of bureaucracies?

a. Increased productivity
b. Increased efficiency
c. Equal treatment for all
d. All of the above

18.

What is an advantage of the McDonaldization of society?

a. There is more variety of goods.
b. There is less theft.
c. There is more worldwide availability of goods.
d. There is more opportunity for businesses.

19.

What is a disadvantage of the McDonaldization of society?

a. There is less variety of goods.
b. There is an increased need for employees with postgraduate degrees.
c. There is less competition so prices are higher.
d. There are fewer jobs so unemployment increases.

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5.8: Short Answer

5.2 Types of Groups

1.

How has technology changed your primary groups and secondary groups? Do you have more (and separate) primary groups due to online connectivity? Do you believe that someone, like Levy, can have a true primary group made up of people she has never met? Why, or why not?

2.

Compare and contrast two different political groups or organizations, such as the MeToo and Tea Party movements. How do the groups differ in terms of leadership, membership, and activities? How do the group's goals influence participants? Are any of them in-groups (and have they created out-groups)? Explain your answer.

3.

The concept of hate crimes has been linked to in-groups and out-groups. Can you think of an example where people have been excluded or tormented due to this kind of group dynamic?

5.3 Group Size and Structure

4.

Think of a scenario where an authoritarian leadership style would be beneficial. Explain. What are the reasons it would work well? What are the risks?

5.

Describe a time you were led by a leader using, in your opinion, a leadership style that didn't suit the situation. When and where was it? What could she or he have done better?

6.

Imagine you are in Asch's study. Would you find it difficult to give the correct answer in that scenario? Why or why not? How would you change the study now to improve it?

7.

What kind of leader do you tend to be? Do you embrace different leadership styles and functions as the situation changes? Give an example of a time you were in a position of leadership and what function and style you expressed.

5.4 Formal Organizations

8.

What do you think about the recent spotlight on fast food restaurants? Do you think they contribute to society's ills? Do you believe they provide a needed service? Have you ever worked a job like this? What did you learn?

9.

Do you consider today's large companies like General Motors, Amazon, or Facebook to be bureaucracies? Why, or why not? Which of the main characteristics of bureaucracies do you see in them? Which are absent?

10.

Where do you prefer to shop, eat out, or grab a cup of coffee? Large chains like Walmart or smaller retailers? Starbucks or a local restaurant? What do you base your decisions on? Does this section change how you think about these choices? Why, or why not?

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5.9: Further Research

5.2 Types of Groups

For more information about cyberbullying causes and statistics, check out this website on cyberbullying research.

5.3 Group Size and Structure

What is your leadership style? This leadership style quiz helps you find out.

5.4 Formal Organizations

As mentioned above, the concept of McDonaldization is a growing one. Check out this article discussing the phenomenon of McDonaldization further.

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6: DEVIANCE, CRIME, AND SOCIAL CONTROL

6.1: Introduction

6.2: Deviance and Control

6.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime

6.4: Crime and the Law

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6.1: 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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6.2: 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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6.3: 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 (FBI 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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6.4: 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).

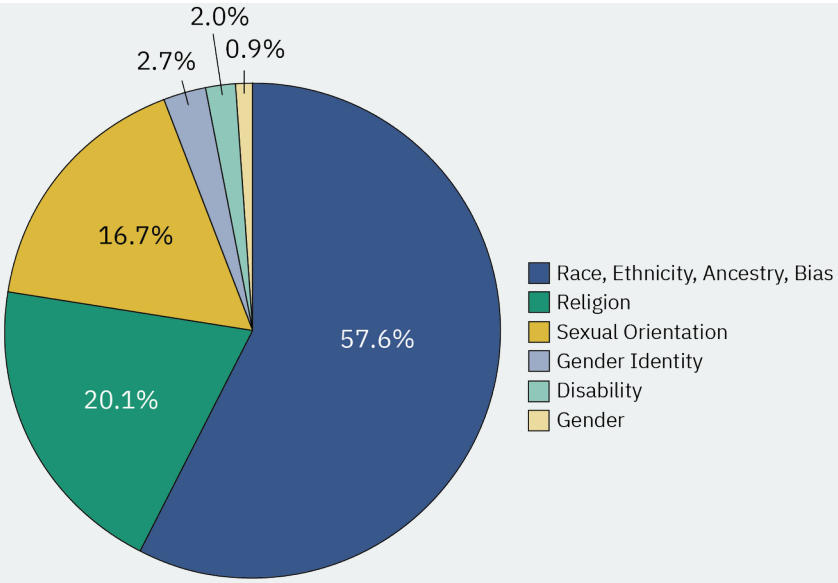


Figure 7.9: Bias Motivation Categories for Victims of Single-bias Incidents in 2019. The FBI Hate Crimes report identified 8,552 victims of hate crimes in 2019. This represents less than five percent of the number of people who claimed to be victims of hate crimes when surveyed. (Graph courtesy of FBI 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.



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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6.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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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6.6: Section Summary

6.2 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.

6.3 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.

6.4 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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6.7: Section Quiz

6.2 Deviance and Control

1.

Which of the following best describes how deviance is defined?

a. Deviance is defined by federal, state, and local laws.
b. Deviance's definition is determined by one's religion.
c. Deviance occurs whenever someone else is harmed by an action.
d. Deviance is socially defined.

2.

During the civil rights movement, Rosa Parks and other Black protestors spoke out against segregation by refusing to sit at the back of the bus. This is an example of _____.

a. An act of social control
b. An act of deviance
c. A social norm
d. Criminal mores

3.

A student has a habit of talking on their cell phone during class. One day, the professor stops the lecture and asks the student to respect others in the class by turning off the phone. In this situation, the professor used _____ to maintain social control.

a. Informal negative sanctions
b. Informal positive sanctions
c. Formal negative sanctions
d. Formal positive sanctions

4.

Societies practice social control to maintain _____.

a. formal sanctions
b. social order
c. cultural deviance
d. sanction labeling

5.

One day, you decide to wear pajamas to the grocery store. While you shop, you notice people giving you strange looks and whispering to others. In this case, the grocery store patrons are demonstrating _____.

a. deviance
b. formal sanctions
c. informal sanctions
d. positive sanctions

6.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime

6.

A student wakes up late and realizes their sociology exam starts in five minutes. They jump into their car and speed down the

road, where they are pulled over by a police officer. The student explains that they are running late, and the officer lets them off with a warning. The student's actions are an example of _____.

a. primary deviance
b. positive deviance
c. secondary deviance
d. master deviance

7.

According to C. Wright Mills, which of the following people is most likely to be a member of the power elite?

a. A war veteran
b. A senator
c. A professor
d. A mechanic

8.

According to social disorganization theory, crime is most likely to occur where?

a. A community where neighbors don't know each other very well
b. A neighborhood with mostly elderly citizens
c. A city with a large minority population
d. A college campus with students who are very competitive

9.

According to the concept of the power elite, why would a celebrity commit a crime?

a. Because his parents committed similar crimes
b. Because his fame protects him from retribution
c. Because his fame disconnects him from society
d. Because he is challenging socially accepted norms

10.

A convicted sexual offender is released on parole and arrested two weeks later for repeated sexual crimes. How would labeling theory explain this?

a. The offender has been labeled deviant by society and has accepted a new master status.
b. The offender has returned to their old neighborhood and so reestablished their former habits.
c. The offender has lost the social bonds they made in prison and feels disconnected from society.
d. The offender is poor and responding to the different cultural values that exist in their community.

11.

_____ deviance is a violation of norms that _____result in a person being labeled a deviant.

a. Secondary; does not
b. Negative; does
c. Primary; does not
d. Primary; may or may not

6.4 Crime and the Law

12.

Which of the following is an example of corporate crime?

a. Embezzlement
b. Larceny
c. Assault
d. Burglary

13.

Spousal abuse is an example of a _____.

a. street crime
b. corporate crime
c. violent crime
d. nonviolent crime

14.

Which of the following situations best describes crime trends in the United States?

a. Rates of violent and nonviolent crimes are decreasing.
b. Rates of violent crimes are decreasing, but there are more nonviolent crimes now than ever before.
c. Crime rates have skyrocketed since the 1970s due to lax corrections laws.
d. Rates of street crime have gone up, but corporate crime has gone down.

15.

What is a disadvantage of the *National Crime Victimization Survey* (NCVS)?

a. The NCVS doesn't include demographic data, such as age or gender.
b. The NCVS may be unable to reach important groups, such as those without phones.
c. The NCVS doesn't address the relationship between the criminal and the victim.
d. The NCVS only includes information collected by police officers.

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6.8: Short Answer

6.2 Deviance and Control

1.

If given the choice, would you purchase an unusual car such as a hearse for everyday use? How would your friends, family, or significant other react? Since deviance is culturally defined, most of the decisions we make are dependent on the reactions of others. Is there anything the people in your life encourage you to do that you don't? Why don't you?

2.

Think of a recent time when you used informal negative sanctions. To what act of deviance were you responding? How did your actions affect the deviant person or persons? How did your reaction help maintain social control?

6.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime

3.

Pick a famous politician, business leader, or celebrity who has been arrested recently. What crime did they allegedly commit? Who was the victim? Explain their actions from the point of view of one of the major sociological paradigms. What factors best explain how this person might be punished if convicted of the crime?

4.

If we assume that the power elite's status is always passed down from generation to generation, how would Edwin Sutherland explain these patterns of power through differential association theory? What crimes do these elite few get away with?

6.4 Crime and the Law

5.

Recall the crime statistics presented in this section. Do they surprise you? Are these statistics represented accurately in the media? Why, or why not?

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6.9: Further Research

6.2 Deviance and Control

Although we rarely think of it in this way, deviance can have a positive effect on society. Check out the Positive Deviance Initiative, a program initiated by Tufts University to promote social movements around the world that strive to improve people's lives.

6.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime

The Skull and Bones Society made news in 2004 when it was revealed that then-President George W. Bush and his Democratic challenger, John Kerry, had both been members at Yale University. In the years since, conspiracy theorists have linked the secret society to numerous world events, arguing that many of the nation's most powerful people are former Bonesmen. Although such ideas may raise a lot of skepticism, many influential people of the past century have been Skull and Bones Society members, and the society is sometimes described as a college version of the power elite later in life.

6.4 Crime and the Law

Is the U.S. criminal justice system confusing? You're not alone. Check out this handy flowchart from the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

How is crime data collected in the United States? Read about the methods of data collection and take the National Crime Victimization Survey.

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7: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND GLOBAL INEQUALITY

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7.1: 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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7.2: 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).

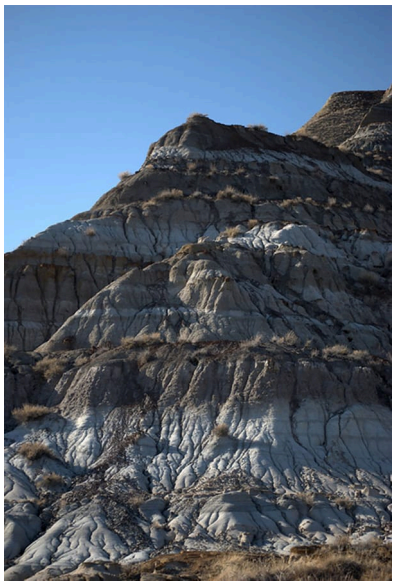


Figure 9.3: Strata in rock illustrate social stratification. People are sorted, or layered, into social categories. Many factors determine a person's social standing, such as wealth, income, education, family background, and power. (Credit: Just a Prairie Boy/flickr)

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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7.3: 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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7.4: 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



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



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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7.5: 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.



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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7.6: Global Stratification and Classification

Learning Objectives

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

- Describe global stratification
- Differentiate the development history of various classification systems
- Use terminology from Wallerstein's world systems approach
- Explain the World Bank's classification of economies

Just as the United States' wealth is increasingly concentrated among its richest citizens, global inequality concentrates resources within certain nations and among certain people.

Measuring the financial resource of the world's richest people is generally easier than measuring the resources of people living in poverty (Matthews 2019), but researchers and advocates have created some tools to evaluate and understand economic conditions and outcomes.

One straightforward method is to compare the ratio of income of the richest 10 percent to the income of the poorest 10 percent. (The same method is sometime used with the richest 20 percent and the poorest 20 percent.) This method does not always provide a full picture of income inequality (it literally leaves out the middle), but it can certain provide insight.

The Human Development Index expresses the capabilities of people's potential achievement. The index is calculated using data regarding people's lifespan, education, and income. By using both financial and non-financial factors, it paints a deeper picture of the lives and issues in a region. For example, a nation with high income but low education will still have difficulty in overall opportunity. This approach was developed by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq, who produced the first annual Human Development report, which captures and illustrates development issues and changes each year.

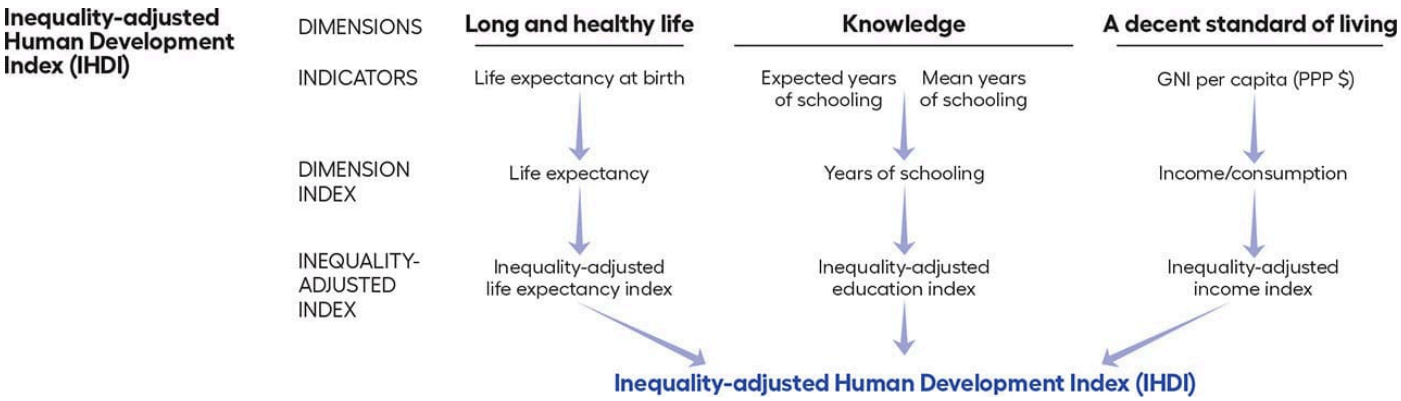


Figure 10.2: The Human Development Index and its derivative, and extensions like the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), were developed to center people—not just finances—as the core determinants of a nation's or region's discussions about economic opportunities, support, and policies. The index considers three main dimension (categories)—which are health, knowledge, and standard of living (income)—to calculate an individual value for each dimension, which is then averaged to produce the final value. (Under decent standard of living, GNI stands for gross national income, and PPP stands for purchasing power parity, both of which are key indicators of income and relative wealth.) (Credit: United Nations Development Programme)

Another measure of inequality is Gini Coefficient, named after the Italian sociologist and statistician Corrado Gini. (Be sure not to confuse this with GNI, which is the gross national income.) It is is calculated using a number of financial indicators, and is expressed as either a decimal or a percentage. A country in which every resident has the same income would have a Gini coefficient of 0 (or 0 percent). A country in which one resident earned all the income, while everyone else earned nothing, would have an income Gini coefficient of 1 (or 100 percent). Thus, the higher the number (the closer to that one person having all the income or wealth), the more inequality there is.

Other gauges are a bit more direct: To indicate the level of poverty within a nation or region, researchers calculate the percentage

of the population living beneath various poverty thresholds. A common measure is to consider the percentage of a nation's population living on less than $1.90 per day, which is commonly known as the International Poverty Line. (Note that United States dollars are often used as a global standard in these types of measurement.) The table in the next sub-section uses this method.

These are just a few of the ways that sociologists, economists, governments, and others try to understand levels of income inequality and poverty. Changes in these indicators would alert policymakers that something is affecting the population. No changes might tell people that, for example, a new financial assistance program for the poor is not working.

With these analytical elements in mind, let's consider how the three major sociological perspectives might contribute to our understanding of global inequality.

The functionalist perspective is a macroanalytical view that focuses on the way that all aspects of society are integral to the continued health and viability of the whole. A functionalist might focus on why we have global inequality and what social purposes it serves. This view might assert, for example, that we have global inequality because some nations are better than others at adapting to new technologies and profiting from a globalized economy, and that when core nation companies locate in peripheral nations, they expand the local economy and benefit the workers.

Conflict theory focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality. A conflict theorist would likely address the systematic inequality created when core nations exploit the resources of peripheral nations. For example, how many U.S. companies take advantage of overseas workers who lack the constitutional protection and guaranteed minimum wages that exist in the United States? Doing so allows them to maximize profits, but at what cost?

The symbolic interaction perspective studies the day-to-day impact of global inequality, the meanings individuals attach to global stratification, and the subjective nature of poverty. Someone applying this view to global inequality would probably focus on understanding the difference between what someone living in a core nation defines as poverty (relative poverty, defined as being unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in your country) and what someone living in a peripheral nation defines as poverty (extreme poverty, defined as being barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities, such as food).

Global Stratification

While stratification in the United States refers to the unequal distribution of resources among individuals, global stratification refers to this unequal distribution among nations. There are two dimensions to this stratification: gaps between nations and gaps within nations. When it comes to global inequality, both economic inequality and social inequality may concentrate the burden of poverty among certain segments of the earth's population (Myrdal 1970).

As mentioned earlier, one way to evaluate stratification is to consider how many people are living in poverty, and particularly extreme poverty, which is often defined as needing to survive on less than $1.90 per day. Fortunately, until the COVID-19 pandemic impacted economies in 2020, the extreme poverty rate had been on a 20-year decline. In 2015, 10.1 percent of the world's population was living in extreme poverty; in 2017, that number had dropped an entire percentage point to 9.2 percent. While a positive, that 9.2 percent is equivalent to 689 million people living on less than $1.90 a day. The same year, 24.1 percent of the world lived on less than $3.20 per day and 43.6 percent on less than $5.50 per day in 2017 (World Bank 2020). The table below makes the differences in poverty very clear.

Table 10.1: The differences among countries is clear when considering their extreme poverty rates. For the most part, the selected countries show disparities even within countries from the same regions. All data is from 2018. (World Bank 2020)

Country	Percentage of people living on less than $1.90	Percentage of people living on less than $3.90	Percentage of people living on less than $5.50
Colombia	4.1	10.9	27.8
Costa Rica	1.4	3.6	10.9
Georgia	4.5	15.7	42.9
Kyrgyzstan	0.9	15.5	61.3
Sierra Leone	40.1	74.4	92.1

Country	Percentage of people living on less than $1.90	Percentage of people living on less than $3.90	Percentage of people living on less than $5.50
Angola	51.8	73.2	89.3
Lithuania	0.7	1.0	3.8
Ukraine	0.0	0.4	4.0
Vietnam	1.9	7.0	23.6
Indonesia	3.6	9.6	53.2

Most of us are accustomed to thinking of global stratification as economic inequality. For example, we can compare the United States' average worker's wage to America's average wage. Social inequality, however, is just as harmful as economic discrepancies. Prejudice and discrimination—whether against a certain race, ethnicity, religion, or the like—can create and aggravate conditions of economic equality, both within and between nations. Think about the inequity that existed for decades within the nation of South Africa. Apartheid, one of the most extreme cases of institutionalized and legal racism, created a social inequality that earned it the world's condemnation.

Gender inequity is another global concern. Consider the controversy surrounding female genital mutilation. Nations that practice this female circumcision procedure defend it as a longstanding cultural tradition in certain tribes and argue that the West shouldn't interfere. Western nations, however, decry the practice and are working to stop it.

Inequalities based on sexual orientation and gender identity exist around the globe. According to Amnesty International, a number of crimes are committed against individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles or sexual orientations (however those are culturally defined). From culturally sanctioned rape to state-sanctioned executions, the abuses are serious. These legalized and culturally accepted forms of prejudice and discrimination exist everywhere—from the United States to Somalia to Tibet—restricting the freedom of individuals and often putting their lives at risk (Amnesty International 2012).

Global Classification

A major concern when discussing global inequality is how to avoid an ethnocentric bias implying that less-developed nations want to be like those who've attained post-industrial global power. Terms such as developing (nonindustrialized) and developed (industrialized) imply that unindustrialized countries are somehow inferior, and must improve to participate successfully in the global economy, a label indicating that all aspects of the economy cross national borders. We must take care how we delineate different countries. Over time, terminology has shifted to make way for a more inclusive view of the world.

Global classification methods are not only important in understanding economic differences among countries, but also in providing ways to classify countries and identify trends in other areas. The classifications discussed below will be used in other chapters, such as the chapter on health and medicine.

Cold War Terminology

Cold War terminology was developed during the Cold War era (1945–1980). Familiar and still used by many, it classifies countries into first world, second world, and third world nations based on their respective economic development and standards of living. When this nomenclature was developed, capitalistic democracies such as the United States and Japan were considered part of the first world. The poorest, most undeveloped countries were referred to as the third world and included most of sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The second world was the in-between category: nations not as limited in development as the third world, but not as well off as the first world, having moderate economies and standard of living, such as China or Cuba. Later, sociologist Manual Castells (1998) added the term fourth world to refer to stigmatized minority groups that were denied a political voice all over the globe (indigenous minority populations, prisoners, and the homeless, for example).

Also during the Cold War, global inequality was described in terms of economic development. Along with developing and developed nations, the terms less-developed nation and underdeveloped nation were used. This was the era when the idea of *noblesse oblige* (first-world responsibility) took root, suggesting that the so-termed developed nations should provide foreign aid to the less-developed and underdeveloped nations in order to raise their standard of living.

Immanuel Wallerstein: World Systems Approach

Immanuel Wallerstein's (1979) world systems approach uses an economic basis to understand global inequality. Wallerstein conceived of the global economy as a complex system that supports an economic hierarchy that placed some nations in positions of power with numerous resources and other nations in a state of economic subordination. Those that were in a state of subordination faced significant obstacles to mobilization.

Core nations are dominant capitalist countries, highly industrialized, technological, and urbanized. For example, Wallerstein contends that the United States is an economic powerhouse that can support or deny support to important economic legislation with far-reaching implications, thus exerting control over every aspect of the global economy and exploiting both semi-peripheral and peripheral nations. We can look at free trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as an example of how a core nation is able to leverage its power to gain the most advantageous position in the matter of global trade.

Peripheral nations have very little industrialization; what they do have often represents the outdated castoffs of core nations or the factories and means of production owned by core nations. They typically have unstable governments, inadequate social programs, and are economically dependent on core nations for jobs and aid. There are abundant examples of countries in this category, such as Vietnam and Cuba. We can be sure the workers in a Cuban cigar factory, for example, which are owned or leased by global core nation companies, are not enjoying the same privileges and rights as U.S. workers.

Semi-peripheral nations are in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but nevertheless acting as a major source for raw material and an expanding middle-class marketplace for core nations, while also exploiting peripheral nations. Mexico is an example, providing abundant cheap agricultural labor to the U.S., and supplying goods to the United States market at a rate dictated by the U.S. without the constitutional protections offered to United States workers.

World Bank Economic Classification by Income

While the World Bank is often criticized, both for its policies and its method of calculating data, it is still a common source for global economic data. Along with tracking the economy, the World Bank tracks demographics and environmental health to provide a complete picture of whether a nation is high income, middle income, or low income.

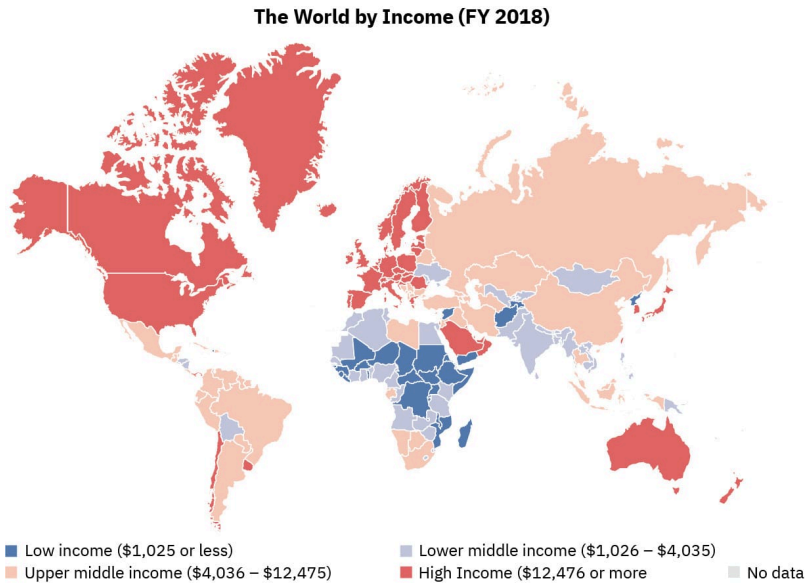


Figure 10.3: This world map shows advanced, transitioning, less, and least developed countries. Note that the data in this map is one year older than the data presented in the text below. (Credit: Sbw01f, data obtained from the CIA World Factbook/Wikimedia Commons)

High-Income Nations

The World Bank defines high-income nations as having a gross national income of at least $12,536 per capita. in 2019 (World Bank 2021). (Note that the classifications will always lag by a couple of years so that analysts can evaluate the true income of the nations.) Examples include Belgium, Canada, Japan, Oman, Puerto Rico, and the United States.

High-income countries face two major issues: capital flight and deindustrialization. Capital flight refers to the movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, as when General Motors automotive company closed U.S. factories in Michigan and opened factories in Mexico.

Deindustrialization, a related issue, occurs as a consequence of capital flight, as no new companies open to replace jobs lost to foreign nations. As expected, global companies move their industrial processes to the places where they can get the most production with the least cost, including the building of infrastructure, training of workers, shipping of goods, and, of course, paying employee wages. This means that as emerging economies create their own industrial zones, global companies see the opportunity for existing infrastructure and much lower costs. Those opportunities lead to businesses closing the factories that provide jobs to the middle class within core nations and moving their industrial production to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations.

Big Picture: Capital Flight, Outsourcing, and Jobs in the United States



Figure 10.4: Factories and stores in places like the Detroit metro area have been closed and abandoned as companies go out of business. (Credit: Joe Nuxoll/flickr)

Capital flight describes jobs and infrastructure moving from one nation to another. Look at the U.S. automobile industry. In the early twentieth century, the cars driven in the United States were made here, employing thousands of workers in Detroit and in the companies that produced everything that made building cars possible. However, once the fuel crisis of the 1970s hit and people in the United States increasingly looked to imported cars with better gas mileage, U.S. auto manufacturing began to decline. During the 2007–2009 recession, the U.S. government provided emergency funding (usually called a "bail out") for the three main auto companies, which is evidence of those companies' vulnerability. At the same time, Japanese-owned Toyota and Honda and South Korean Kia maintained stable sales levels.

Capital flight also occurs when services (as opposed to manufacturing) are relocated. Chances are if you have called the tech support line for your cell phone or Internet provider, you've spoken to someone halfway across the globe. This professional might tell you her name is Susan or Joan, but her accent makes it clear that her real name might be Parvati or Indira. It might be the middle of the night in that country, yet these service providers pick up the line saying, "Good morning," as though they are in the next town over. They know everything about your phone or your modem, often using a remote server to log in to your home computer to accomplish what is needed. These are the workers of the twenty-first century. They are not on factory floors or in traditional sweatshops; they are educated, speak at least two languages, and usually have significant technology skills. They are skilled workers, but they are paid a fraction of what similar workers are paid in the United States. For U.S. and multinational companies, the equation makes sense. India and other semi-peripheral countries have emerging infrastructures and education systems to fill their needs, without core nation costs.

As services are relocated, so are jobs. In the United States, unemployment is high. Many college-educated people are unable to find work, and those with only a high school diploma are in even worse shape. We have, as a country, outsourced ourselves out of jobs, and not just menial jobs, but white-collar work as well. But before we complain too bitterly, we must look at the

culture of consumerism that we embrace. A flat screen television that might have cost $1,000 a few years ago is now $250. That cost savings has to come from somewhere. When consumers seek the lowest possible price, shop at big box stores for the biggest discount they can get, and generally ignore other factors in exchange for low cost, they are building the market for outsourcing. And as the demand is built, the market will ensure it is met, even at the expense of the people who wanted it in the first place.



Figure 10.5: Outsourcing was initially a practice for manufacturing and related work. But as more technically skilled people become more available in other countries, customer service and other services are being moved out of the United States as well? (Credit: Carlos Ebert/ flickr)

Middle-Income Nations

The World Bank divides middle-income economies into two categories. Lower middle income areas are those with a GNI per capita of more than $1,036 but less than $4,045. Upper middle income areas are those with A GNI per capita between $4,046 and $12,535. Democratic Republic of Congo, Tunisia, Philippines, El Salvador, and Nepal are are examples of lower-middle-income countries. And Argentina, Mexico, China, Iran, Turkey, and Namibia are examples of upper-middle-income nations (World Bank 2021).

Perhaps the most pressing issue for middle-income nations is the problem of debt accumulation. As the name suggests, debt accumulation is the buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals. As the uncertainties of the global economy make repaying these debts, or even paying the interest on them, more challenging, nations can find themselves in trouble. Once global markets have reduced the value of a country's goods, it can be very difficult to ever manage the debt burden. Such issues have plagued middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as East Asian and Pacific nations (Dogruel and Dogruel 2007).

Low-Income Nations

The World Bank defines low-income countries as nations whose per capita GNI was $1,035 per capita or less in 2019. For example, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Yemen are considered low-income countries. Low-income economies are primarily found in Asia and Africa (World Bank 2021), where most of the world's population lives. There are two major challenges that these countries face: women are disproportionately affected by poverty (in a trend toward a global feminization of poverty) and much of the population lives in absolute poverty.

Nations' classifications often change as their economies evolve and, sometimes, when their political positions change. Nepal, Indonesia, and Romania all moved up to a higher status based on improved economies. While Sudan, Algeria, and Sri Lanka moved down a level. A few years ago, Myanmar was a low-income nation, but now it has moved into the middle-income area. With Myanmar's 2021 coup, the massive citizen response, and the military's killing of protesters, its economy may go through a downturn again, returning it to the low-income nation status.

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7.7: Global Wealth and Poverty

Learning Objectives

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

- Differentiate relative, extreme, and subjective poverty
- Describe the economic situation of some of the world's most impoverished areas
- Explain the cyclical impact of the consequences of poverty



Figure 10.6: This young girl was begging for food in the street in Vietnam, holding a younger child as she was doing so. (Credit: Augapfel/flickr)

What does it mean to be poor? Does it mean being a single mother with two kids in New York City, waiting for the next paycheck in order to buy groceries? Does it mean living with almost no furniture in your apartment because your income doesn't allow for extras like beds or chairs? Or does it mean having to live with the distended bellies of the chronically malnourished throughout the peripheral nations of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia? Poverty has a thousand faces and a thousand gradations; there is no single definition that pulls together every part of the spectrum. You might feel you are poor if you can't afford cable television or buy your own car. Every time you see a fellow student with a new laptop and smartphone you might feel that you, with your ten-year-old desktop computer, are barely keeping up. However, someone else might look at the clothes you wear and the calories you consume and consider you rich.

Types of Poverty

Social scientists define global poverty in different ways and take into account the complexities and the issues of relativism described above. Relative poverty is a state of living where people can afford necessities but are unable to meet their society's average standard of living. People often disparage "keeping up with the Joneses"—the idea that you must keep up with the neighbors' standard of living to not feel deprived. But it is true that you might feel "poor" if you are living without a car to drive to and from work, without any money for a safety net should a family member fall ill, and without any "extras" beyond just making ends meet.

Contrary to relative poverty, people who live in extreme poverty lack even the basic necessities, which typically include adequate food, clean water, safe housing, and access to healthcare. Extreme poverty occurs when someone lives on less than 1.90 U.S dollars per day.

In prior years, the World Bank—the primary organization analyzing these trends--focused heavily on the number of people under

that extreme poverty level of $1.90 per day. (The previous term was "absolute poverty.") In 2018, the World Bank added two more measures to consider: people living on less than $3.20 and people living on less than $5.50. As the number of people in that extreme category continues to decline, these two new categories will be important to recognize the population that lives above the $1.90 line, but still remains vulnerable to extreme poverty. Someone who begins to earn enough to live on more than $1.90 is still in severe poverty and should be considered as such (Schoch 2020).

If you were forced to live on $1.90 a day, or even $5.50, how would you do it? What would you deem worthy of spending money on, and what could you do without? How would you manage the necessities—and how would you make up the gap between what you need to live and what you can afford?



Figure 10.7: Slums in many countries illustrate absolute poverty all too well. (Credit: Ninara/flickr)

Subjective poverty describes poverty that is composed of many dimensions; it is subjectively present when your actual income does not meet your expectations and perceptions. With the concept of subjective poverty, the poor themselves have a greater say in recognizing when it is present. In short, subjective poverty has more to do with how a person or a family defines themselves. This means that a family subsisting on a few dollars a day in Nepal might think of themselves as doing well, within their perception of normal. However, a westerner traveling to Nepal might visit the same family and see extreme need.

Big Picture: The Underground Economy Around the World

What do the driver of an unlicensed hack cab in New York, a piecework seamstress working from her home in Mumbai, and a street tortilla vendor in Mexico City have in common? They are all members of the underground economy, a loosely defined unregulated market unhindered by taxes, government permits, or human protections. Official statistics before the worldwide recession posit that the underground economy accounted for over 50 percent of nonagricultural work in Latin America; the figure went as high as 80 percent in parts of Asia and Africa (Chen 2001). A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* discusses the challenges, parameters, and surprising benefits of this informal marketplace. The wages earned in most underground economy jobs, especially in peripheral nations, are a pittance––a few rupees for a handmade bracelet at a market, or maybe 250 rupees ($5 U.S.) for a day's worth of fruit and vegetable sales (Barta 2009). But these tiny sums mark the difference between survival and extinction for the world's poor.

The underground economy has never been viewed very positively by global economists. After all, its members don't pay taxes, don't take out loans to grow their businesses, and rarely earn enough to put money back into the economy in the form of consumer spending. But according to the International Labor Organization (an agency of the United Nations), some 52 million people worldwide will lose their jobs due to the ongoing worldwide recession. And while those in core nations know that high unemployment rates and limited government safety nets can be frightening, their situation is nothing compared to the loss of a job for those barely eking out an existence. Once that job disappears, the chance of staying afloat is very slim.

Within the context of this recession, some see the underground economy as a key player in keeping people alive. Indeed, an economist at the World Bank credits jobs created by the informal economy as a primary reason why peripheral nations are not in worse shape during this recession. Women in particular benefit from the informal sector. The majority of economically active women in peripheral nations are engaged in the informal sector, which is somewhat buffered from the economic downturn. The flip side, of course, is that it is equally buffered from the possibility of economic growth.

Even in the United States, the informal economy exists, although not on the same scale as in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. It might include under-the-table nannies, gardeners, and housecleaners, as well as unlicensed street vendors and taxi drivers. There are also those who run informal businesses, like daycares or salons, from their houses. Analysts estimate that this type of labor may make up 10 percent of the overall U.S. economy, a number that will likely grow as companies reduce head counts, leaving more workers to seek other options. In the end, the article suggests that, whether selling medicinal wines in Thailand or woven bracelets in India, the workers of the underground economy at least have what most people want most of all: a chance to stay afloat (Barta 2009).

Who Are the Impoverished?

Who are the impoverished? Who is living in absolute poverty? The truth that most of us would guess is that the richest countries are often those with the least people. Compare the United States, which possesses a relatively small slice of the population pie and owns by far the largest slice of the wealth pie, with India. These disparities have the expected consequence. The poorest people in the world are women and those in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. For women, the rate of poverty is particularly worsened by the pressure on their time. In general, time is one of the few luxuries the very poor have, but study after study has shown that women in poverty, who are responsible for all family comforts as well as any earnings they can make, have less of it. The result is that women are suffering more in terms of overall wellbeing (Buvinic 1997). It is harder for females to get credit to expand businesses, to take the time to learn a new skill, or to spend extra hours improving their craft so as to be able to earn at a higher rate.

Global Feminization of Poverty

In almost all societies, women have higher rates of poverty than men. More women and girls live in poor conditions, receive inadequate healthcare, bear the brunt of malnutrition and inadequate drinking water, and so on. This situation goes back decades, and led University of Michigan sociologist Diana Pearce to coin the term "feminization of poverty" in 1978. Throughout the 1990s, data indicated that while overall poverty rates were rising, especially in peripheral nations, the rates of impoverishment increased for women nearly 20 percent more than for men (Mogadham 2005). More recently, as extreme poverty rates continue to fall, women still make up a disproportionate amount of the world's poor. Gender differences are sometimes difficult to discern in international poverty data, but researchers have undertaken efforts to define the makeup of those affected by poverty. Of people aged 25-34, the world has 122 women living in poverty for every 100 men living in poverty. The world's elderly below the poverty line are also more likely to be women (World Bank 2018).

Why is this happening? While myriad variables affect women's poverty, research specializing in this issue identifies three causes (Mogadham 2005):

1. The expansion in the number of female-headed households
2. The persistence and consequences of intra-household inequalities and biases against women
3. The implementation of neoliberal economic policies around the world

While women are living longer and healthier lives today compared to ten years ago, around the world many women are denied basic rights, particularly in the workplace. In peripheral nations, they accumulate fewer assets, farm less land, make less money, and face restricted civil rights and liberties. Women can stimulate the economic growth of peripheral nations, but they are often undereducated and lack access to credit needed to start small businesses. When women are able to attain higher levels of education, they account for significant economic growth within their nations (OECD 2012).

A wide range of organizations undertake programs or provide support in order to improve opportunity, safety, education, equality, and financial outcomes for women. Some of these efforts involve diplomacy, such as one government (or a coalition) working to secure greater rights and improve circumstances of women in other countries. Key areas of focus are reducing institutional and cultural discrimination, ending domestic violence, providing women more agency in decision making, and increasing education for children (Scott 2012). Other programs focus on more immediate needs and opportunities. Microcredit and women's collective

savings accounts are ways to provide financial resources for women and families to make important investments, such as building a well at their home to improve health and reduce time spent obtaining clean water. Other uses may involve starting a business, paying a debt, or buying an important appliance or equipment. Unfortunately, these microfinance programs don't have a track record of alleviating poverty, and in some cases they can lead to negative outcomes such as trapping women in a cycle of debt, or increasing domestic violence. Collective savings programs—where local people pool their resources and extend credit within their group—have shown some more positive outcomes (Aizenman 2016 and Niner 2018). The UN has emphasized that microfinance and cultural empowerment would both be more successful if they were used in concert with each other (Scott 2012).

Africa

The majority of the poorest countries in the world are in Africa. That is not to say there is not diversity within the countries of that continent; countries like South Africa and Egypt have much lower rates of poverty than Angola and Ethiopia, for instance. Overall, African income levels have been dropping relative to the rest of the world, meaning that Africa as a whole is getting relatively poorer. Making the problem worse, 2014 saw an outbreak of the *Ebola* virus in western Africa, leading to a public health crisis and an economic downturn due to loss of workers and tourist dollars.

Why is Africa in such dire straits? Much of the continent's poverty can be traced to the availability of land, especially arable land (land that can be farmed). Centuries of struggle over land ownership have meant that much useable land has been ruined or left unfarmed, while many countries with inadequate rainfall have never set up an infrastructure to irrigate. Many of Africa's natural resources were long ago taken by colonial forces, leaving little agricultural and mineral wealth on the continent.

Further, African poverty is worsened by civil wars and inadequate governance that are the result of a continent re-imagined with artificial colonial borders and leaders. Consider the example of Rwanda. There, two ethnic groups cohabitated with their own system of hierarchy and management until Belgians took control of the country in 1915 and rigidly confined members of the population into two unequal ethnic groups. While, historically, members of the Tutsi group held positions of power, the involvement of Belgians led to the Hutu seizing power during a 1960s revolt. This ultimately led to a repressive government and genocide against Tutsis that left hundreds of thousands of Rwandans dead or living in diaspora (U.S. Department of State 2011c). The painful rebirth of a self-ruled Africa has meant many countries bear ongoing scars as they try to see their way towards the future (World Poverty 2012a). In 2020, armed conflicts were underway in regions of nations including the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia, the Kamwina Nsapo rebellion in Democratic Republic of Congo, the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and neighboring countries, and several more. While most of the ongoing conflicts are considered minor, they are both dangerous and disruptive to the people living in those regions, and several have included ethnic cleansing, mass kidnapping, extensive sexual violence, and use of child soldiers.

Asia



Figure 10.8: For children who have homes in slums like this one in Phnom Phen, Cambodia, survival and safety are often the primary and immediate concerns. Longer-term goals, such as education and social mobility, may not be available options. (Credit: ND Strupler)

While the majority of the world's poorest countries are in Africa, the majority of the world's poorest people are in Asia. As in Africa, Asia finds itself with disparity in the distribution of poverty, with Japan and South Korea holding much more wealth than India and Cambodia. In fact, most poverty is concentrated in South Asia. One of the most pressing causes of poverty in Asia is simply the pressure that the size of the population puts on its resources. Unlike Africa, many people living in poverty reside in urban areas, often in crowded, unhygenic conditions with limited access to water and resources. Estimates indicate that Asia has 60 percent of the world's people who live in slums (WorldVision 2019). Those who find work often do so in garment factories or other manufacturing facilities, where pay is very low and the demands are incredibly high. (See the feature below on sweatshop labor.) Children are sent to work in these conditions as well.

Asia is also frequently impacted by natural disasters. Countries like India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines experience frequent typhoons (hurricanes) and flooding. For those living in insecure structures —often constructed from various leftover materials and not subject to any type of building codes—such events can leave entire swaths of the population homeless and vulnerable to disease or injury (WorldVision 2019).

MENA

The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) includes oil-rich countries in the Gulf, such as Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait, but also countries that are relatively resource-poor in relationship to their populations, such as Morocco and Yemen. These countries are predominately Islamic. For the last quarter-century, economic growth was slower in MENA than in other developing economies, and almost a quarter of the 300 million people who make up the population live on less than $2.00 a day (World Bank 2013).

The International Labour Organization tracks the way income inequality influences social unrest. The two regions with the highest risk of social unrest are Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East-North Africa region (International Labour Organization 2012). Increasing unemployment and high socioeconomic inequality in MENA were major factors in the Arab Spring, which—beginning in 2010—toppled dictatorships throughout the Middle East in favor of democratically elected government. Unemployment and income inequalities are still being blamed on immigrants, foreign nationals, and ethnic/religious minorities.

Sociology in the Real World: Sweatshops and Student Protests: Who's Making Your Team Spirit?



Figure 10.9: These protesters seek to bring attention to the issue of sweatshop labor in producing clothing. (Credit: Jo Guldi/flickr)

Most of us don't pay too much attention to where our favorite products are made. And certainly when you're shopping for a college sweatshirt or ball cap to wear to a school football game, you probably don't turn over the label, check who produced the item, and then research whether or not the company has fair labor practices. But for the members of USAS—United Students Against Sweatshops—that's exactly what they do. The organization, which was founded in 1997, has waged countless battles against both apparel makers and other multinational corporations that do not meet what USAS considers fair working conditions and wages. USAS also focuses on ensuring safe and non-exploitative conditions as well as improved pay and benefits for campus workers, including dining hall staff, security guards, and adjuncts (USAS 2021).

How do clothes get made, and why are garment workers among the most commonly mistreated? In many cases, large apparel companies—including Nike, Lululemon, H&M, Urban Outfitters (owner of Anthropologie and Free People), Zara, and most other major brands—outsource their manufacturing to factories around the world. The apparel companies negotiate prices and schedules with the local manufacturers, and often push for the lowest possible manufacturing cost and the fastest schedule. In order to keep up with demand and manufacture the clothing at the required cost, the factories may pay their employees less, force them to work longer hours, and may maintain unsafe conditions. All of those tactics are associated with sweatshop practices (Chan 2019). In response to action from organizations like USAS, many apparel companies have undertaken steps to ensure that the factories they use are treating workers properly, but in reality, it is very difficult to know for sure. Often, the brands work through subcontractors and subsidiaries, and may not know exactly which factories are producing their products.

Members of USAS helped form the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), which monitors working conditions for a wide array of companies and their affiliated factories. WRC conducts regular reviews of worldwide manufacturing facilities and publishes the results. The WRC also studies and reports on overall economic conditions and their effect on employment. For example, in 2020, as the global economy went through a rapid downturn, apparel companies demanded lower prices while they also reduced their orders, which put workers at risk of exploitation or job loss (Karim 2020).

Consequences of Poverty



Figure 10.10: For this child, who is being assessed for malnutrition at a clinic in Kenya, risks associated with poverty and lack of food were exacerbated by a massive drought that hit the region. (Credit: DFID - UK Department for International Development/flickr)

Not surprisingly, the consequences of poverty are often also causes. The poor often experience inadequate healthcare, limited education, and the inaccessibility of birth control. But those born into these conditions are incredibly challenged in their efforts to break out since these consequences of poverty are also causes of poverty, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.

According to sociologists Neckerman and Torche (2007) in their analysis of global inequality studies, the consequences of poverty are many. Neckerman and Torche have divided them into three areas. The first, termed “the sedimentation of global inequality,” relates to the fact that once poverty becomes entrenched in an area, it is typically very difficult to reverse. As mentioned above, poverty exists in a cycle where the consequences and causes are intertwined. The second consequence of poverty is its effect on physical and mental health. Poor people face physical health challenges, including malnutrition and high infant mortality rates. Mental health is also detrimentally affected by the emotional stresses of poverty, with relative deprivation carrying the most robust effect. Again, as with the ongoing inequality, the effects of poverty on mental and physical health become more entrenched as time goes on. Neckerman and Torche’s third consequence of poverty is the prevalence of crime. Cross-nationally, crime rates are higher, particularly for violent crime, in countries with higher levels of income inequality (Fajnzylber 2002).

Slavery

While most of us are accustomed to thinking of slavery in terms of the antebellum South, modern day slavery goes hand-in-hand with global inequality. In short, slavery refers to any situation in which people are sold, treated as property, or forced to work for little or no pay. Just as in the pre-Civil War United States, these humans are at the mercy of their employers. Chattel slavery, the form of slavery once practiced in the American South, occurs when one person owns another as property. Child slavery, which may include child prostitution, is a form of chattel slavery. In debt bondage, or bonded labor, the poor pledge themselves as servants in exchange for the cost of basic necessities like transportation, room, and board. In this scenario, people are paid less than they are charged for room and board. When travel is required, they can arrive in debt for their travel expenses and be unable to work their way free, since their wages do not allow them to ever get ahead.

The global watchdog group Anti-Slavery International recognizes other forms of slavery: human trafficking (in which people are moved away from their communities and forced to work against their will), child domestic work and child labor, and certain forms of servile marriage, in which women are little more than enslaved people (Anti-Slavery International 2012).

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7.8: Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

Learning Objectives

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

- Describe the modernization and dependency theory perspectives on global stratification

As with any social issue, global or otherwise, scholars have developed a variety of theories to study global stratification. The two most widely applied perspectives are modernization theory and dependency theory.

Modernization Theory

According to modernization theory, low-income countries are affected by their lack of industrialization and can improve their global economic standing through (Armer and Katsillis 2010):

1. an adjustment of cultural values and attitudes to work
2. industrialization and other forms of economic growth

Critics point out the inherent ethnocentric bias of this theory. It supposes all countries have the same resources and are capable of following the same path. In addition, it assumes that the goal of all countries is to be as "developed" as possible. There is no room within this theory for the possibility that industrialization and technology are not the best goals.

There is, of course, some basis for this assumption. Data show that core nations tend to have lower maternal and child mortality rates, longer life spans, and less absolute poverty. It is also true that in the poorest countries, millions of people die from the lack of clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, which are benefits most of us take for granted. At the same time, the issue is more complex than the numbers might suggest. Cultural equality, history, community, and local traditions are all at risk as modernization pushes into peripheral countries. The challenge, then, is to allow the benefits of modernization while maintaining a cultural sensitivity to what already exists.

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory was created in part as a response to the Western-centric mindset of modernization theory. It states that global inequality is primarily caused by core nations (or high-income nations) exploiting semi-peripheral and peripheral nations (or middle-income and low-income nations), which creates a cycle of dependence (Hendricks 2010). As long as peripheral nations are dependent on core nations for economic stimulus and access to a larger piece of the global economy, they will never achieve stable and consistent economic growth. Further, the theory states that since core nations, as well as the World Bank, choose which countries to make loans to, and for what they will loan funds, they are creating highly segmented labor markets that are built to benefit the dominant market countries.

At first glance, it seems this theory ignores the formerly low-income nations that are now considered middle-income nations and are on their way to becoming high-income nations and major players in the global economy, such as China. But some dependency theorists would state that it is in the best interests of core nations to ensure the long-term usefulness of their peripheral and semi-peripheral partners. Following that theory, sociologists have found that entities are more likely to outsource a significant portion of a company's work if they are the dominant player in the equation; in other words, companies want to see their partner countries healthy enough to provide work, but not so healthy as to establish a threat (Caniels and Roeleveld 2009).

Sociological Research: Factory Girls

We've examined functionalist and conflict theorist perspectives on global inequality, as well as modernization and dependency theories. How might a symbolic interactionist approach this topic?

The book *Factory Girls: From Village to City in Changing China*, by Leslie T. Chang, provides this opportunity. Chang follows two young women (Min and Chunming) employed at a handbag plant. They help manufacture coveted purses and bags for the global market. As part of the growing population of young people who are leaving behind the homesteads and farms of rural China, these female factory workers are ready to enter the urban fray and pursue an ambitious income.

Although Chang's study is based in a town many have never heard of (Dongguan), this city produces one-third of all shoes on the planet (Nike and Reebok are major manufacturers here) and 30 percent of the world's computer disk drives, in addition to an abundance of apparel (Chang 2008).

But Chang's focus is centered less on this global phenomenon on a large scale, than on how it affects these two women. As a symbolic interactionist would do, Chang examines the daily lives and interactions of Min and Chunming—their workplace friendships, family relationships, gadgets and goods—in this evolving global space where young women can leave tradition behind and fashion their own futures. Their story is one that all people, not just scholars, can learn from as we contemplate sociological issues like global economies, cultural traditions and innovations, and opportunities for women in the workforce.

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7.9: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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.				
capital flight	the movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, via jobs and resources				
chattel slavery	a form of slavery in which one person owns another				
core nations	dominant capitalist countries				
debt accumulation	the buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals				
debt bondage	the act of people pledging themselves as servants in exchange for money for passage, and are subsequently paid too little to regain their freedom				
deindustrialization	the loss of industrial production, usually to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations where the costs are lower				
dependency theory	a theory which states that global inequity is due to the exploitation of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by core nations				
extreme poverty	the state where one is barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities				
first world	a term from the Cold War era that is used to describe industrialized capitalist democracies				
fourth world	a term that describes stigmatized minority groups who have no voice or representation on the world stage				
GINI coefficient	a measure of income inequality between countries using a 100-point scale, in which 1 represents complete equality and 100 represents the highest possible inequality				
global feminization of poverty	a pattern that occurs when women bear a disproportionate percentage of the burden of poverty				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
global inequality	the concentration of resources in core nations and in the hands of a wealthy minority				
global stratification	the unequal distribution of resources between countries				
gross national income (GNI)	the income of a nation calculated based on goods and services produced, plus income earned by citizens and corporations headquartered in that country				
modernization theory	a theory that low-income countries can improve their global economic standing by industrialization of infrastructure and a shift in cultural attitudes towards work				
peripheral nations	nations on the fringes of the global economy, dominated by core nations, with very little industrialization				
relative poverty	the state of poverty where one is unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in the country				
second world	a term from the Cold War era that describes nations with moderate economies and standards of living				
semi-peripheral nations	in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but acting as a major source of raw materials and an expanding middle class marketplace				
subjective poverty	a state of poverty composed of many dimensions, subjectively present when one's actual income does not meet one's expectations				
third world	a term from the Cold War era that refers to poor, unindustrialized countries				
underground economy	an unregulated economy of labor and goods that operates outside of governance, regulatory systems, or human protections				

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7.10: Section Summary

7.2 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.

7.3 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.

7.4 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.

7.5 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.

7.6 Global Stratification and Classification

Stratification refers to the gaps in resources both between nations and within nations. While economic equality is of great concern, so is social equality, like the discrimination stemming from race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and/or sexual orientation. While global inequality is nothing new, several factors make it more relevant than ever, like the global marketplace and the pace of information sharing. Researchers try to understand global inequality by classifying it according to factors such as how industrialized a nation is, whether a country serves as a means of production or as an owner, and what income a nation produces.

7.7 Global Wealth and Poverty

When looking at the world's poor, we first have to define the difference between relative poverty, absolute poverty, and subjective poverty. While those in relative poverty might not have enough to live at their country's standard of living, those in absolute poverty do not have, or barely have, basic necessities such as food. Subjective poverty has more to do with one's perception of one's situation. North America and Europe are home to fewer of the world's poor than Africa, which has most poor countries, or Asia, which has the most people living in poverty. Poverty has numerous negative consequences, from increased crime rates to a detrimental impact on physical and mental health.

7.8 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

Modernization theory and dependency theory are two of the most common lenses sociologists use when looking at the issues of global inequality. Modernization theory posits that countries go through evolutionary stages and that industrialization and improved technology are the keys to forward movement. Dependency theory, on the other hand, sees modernization theory as Eurocentric and patronizing. With this theory, global inequality is the result of core nations creating a cycle of dependence by exploiting resources and labor in peripheral and semi-peripheral countries.

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7.11: Section Quiz

7.2 What Is Social Stratification?

1. What factor makes caste systems closed?

a. They are run by secretive governments.
b. People cannot change their social standing.
c. Most have been outlawed.
d. They exist only in rural areas.

2. Which of these systems allows for the most social mobility?

a. Caste
b. Monarchy
c. Meritocracy
d. Class

3. Which person best illustrates opportunities for upward social mobility in the United States?

a. First-shift factory worker
b. First-generation college student
c. Firstborn son who inherits the family business
d. First-time interviewee who is hired for a job

4. Which statement illustrates low status consistency?

a. A suburban family lives in a modest ranch home and enjoys a nice vacation each summer.
b. A single mother receives food stamps and struggles to find adequate employment.
c. A college dropout launches an online company that earns millions in its first year.
d. A celebrity actor owns homes in three countries.

5. Based on meritocracy, a physician's assistant would:

a. receive the same pay as all the other physician's assistants
b. be considered a member of the upper class
c. most likely marry a professional at the same level
d. earn a pay raise for doing excellent work

7.3 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

6. In the United States, most people define themselves as:

a. middle class
b. upper class
c. lower class
d. no specific class

7. The behaviors, customs, and norms associated with a class are known as:

a. class traits
b. power
c. prestige
d. underclass

8. Which of the following scenarios is an example of intragenerational mobility?

a. A janitor belongs to the same social class as his grandmother did.
b. An executive belongs to a different class than her parents.
c. An editor shares the same social class as his cousin.
d. A lawyer belongs to a different class than her sister.

9. Occupational prestige means that jobs are:

a. all equal in status
b. not equally valued
c. assigned to a person for life
d. not part of a person's self-identity

7.4 Global Stratification and Inequality

10. How do traditional models of global stratification breakdown different categories of countries?

a. They analyze the degree of industrialization.
b. They evaluate cultural norms and social goals.
c. They measure social mobility between classes.
d. They use measures to assess the economic power each nation.

11. Which event created a significant divide between Western Europe/America and the rest of the world?

a. The Industrial Revolution
b. The American Revolution
c. The Reformation
d. World War I

12. The GNI PPP figure represents:

a. a country's total accumulated wealth
b. annual government spending
c. the average annual income of a country's citizens
d. a country's debt

9.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

13. The basic premise of the Davis-Moore thesis is that the unequal distribution of rewards in social stratification:

a. is an outdated mode of societal organization
b. is an artificial reflection of society
c. serves a purpose in society
d. cannot be justified

14. Unlike Davis and Moore, Melvin Tumin believed that, because of social stratification, some qualified people were _____ higher-level job positions.

a. denied the opportunity to obtain
b. encouraged to train for
c. often fired from
d. forced into

15. Which statement represents stratification from the perspective of symbolic interactionism?

a. Men often earn more than women, even working the same job.
b. After work, Pat, a janitor, feels more comfortable eating in a truck stop than a French restaurant.
c. Doctors earn more money because their job is more highly valued.
d. Teachers continue to struggle to keep benefits such as health insurance.

16. When Karl Marx said workers experience alienation, he meant that workers:

a. must labor alone, without companionship
b. do not feel connected to their work or to one another
c. move from one geographical location to another
d. have to put forth self-effort to get ahead

17. Conflict theorists view capitalists as those who:

a. are ambitious
b. fund social services
c. spend money wisely
d. get rich while workers stay poor

7.6 Global Stratification and Classification

18. A sociologist who focuses on the way that multinational corporations headquartered in core nations exploit the local workers in their peripheral nation factories is using a _____ perspective to understand the global economy.

a. functional
b. conflict theory
c. feminist
d. symbolic interactionist

19. A _____ perspective theorist might find it particularly noteworthy that wealthy corporations improve the quality of life in peripheral nations by providing workers with jobs, pumping money into the local economy, and improving transportation infrastructure.

a. functional
b. conflict
c. feminist
d. symbolic interactionist

20. A sociologist working from a symbolic interaction perspective would:

a. study how inequality is created and reproduced
b. study how corporations can improve the lives of their low-income workers
c. try to understand how companies provide an advantage to high-income nations compared to low-income nations
d. want to interview women working in factories to understand how they manage the expectations of their supervisors, make ends meet, and support their households on a day-to-day basis

21. France might be classified as which kind of nation?

a. Global
b. Core
c. Semi-peripheral
d. Peripheral

22. In the past, the United States manufactured clothes. Many clothing corporations have shut down their U.S. factories and relocated to China. This is an example of:

a. conflict theory
b. automation
c. global inequality
d. capital flight

7.7 Global Wealth and Poverty

23. Slavery in the pre-Civil War U.S. South most closely resembled

a. chattel slavery
b. debt bondage
c. relative poverty
d. peonage

24. Maya is a twelve-year-old girl living in Thailand. She is homeless, and often does not know where she will sleep or when she will eat. We might say that Maya lives in _____ poverty.

a. subjective
b. absolute
c. relative
d. global

25. Mike, a college student, rents a studio apartment. He cannot afford a television and lives on cheap groceries like dried beans and ramen noodles. Since he does not have a regular job, he does not own a car. Mike is living in:

a. global poverty
b. extreme poverty
c. subjective poverty
d. relative poverty

26. Faith has a full-time job and two children. She has enough money for the basics and can pay her rent each month, but she feels that, with her education and experience, her income should be enough for her family to live much better than they do. Faith is experiencing:

a. global poverty
b. subjective poverty
c. extreme poverty
d. relative poverty

27. In a U.S. town, a mining company owns all the stores and most of the houses. It sells goods to the workers at inflated prices, offers house rentals for twice what a mortgage would be, and makes sure to always pay the workers less than needed to cover food and rent. Once the workers are in debt, they have no choice but to continue working for the company, since their skills will not transfer to a new position. This situation most closely resembles:

a. child slavery
b. chattel slavery
c. debt slavery
d. servile marriage

7.8 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

28. One flaw in dependency theory is the unwillingness to recognize _____.

a. that previously low-income nations such as China have successfully developed their economies and can no longer be classified as dependent on core nations
b. that previously high-income nations such as China have been economically overpowered by low-income nations entering the global marketplace
c. that countries such as China are growing more dependent on core nations
d. that countries such as China do not necessarily want to be more like core nations

29. One flaw in modernization theory is the unwillingness to recognize _____.

a. that semi-peripheral nations are incapable of industrializing
b. that peripheral nations prevent semi-peripheral nations from entering the global market
c. its inherent ethnocentric bias
d. the importance of semi-peripheral nations industrializing

30. If a sociologist says that nations evolve toward more advanced technology and more complex industry as their citizens learn

cultural values that celebrate hard work and success, she is using _____ theory to study the global economy.

a. modernization theory
b. dependency theory
c. modern dependency theory
d. evolutionary dependency theory

31. If a sociologist points out that core nations dominate the global economy, in part by creating global interest rates and international tariffs that will inevitably favor high-income nations over low-income nations, he is a:

a. functionalist
b. dependency theorist
c. modernization theorist
d. symbolic interactionist

32. Dependency theorists explain global inequality and global stratification by focusing on the way that:

a. core nations and peripheral nations exploit semi-peripheral nations
b. semi-peripheral nations exploit core nations
c. peripheral nations exploit core nations
d. core nations exploit peripheral nations

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7.12: Short Answer

7.2 What Is Social Stratification?

1. Track the social stratification of your family tree. Did the social standing of your parents differ from the social standing of your grandparents and great-grandparents? Are there any exogamous marriages in your history? Does your family exhibit status consistencies or inconsistencies?
2. Review the concept of stratification. Does your family have wealth? What is the overall family income? What kind of employment do your caregivers/parents/guardians have? Where would you guess you fall within the social classes (low, middle, or high)?
3. Where did your family grow up? What is their understanding of the American Dream and how you can achieve it? Does your family share the same understanding of stratification?

7.3 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

4. Which social class do you and your family belong to? Are you in a different or same social class than your grandparents and great-grandparents? Why are you in the class you are? What changed? What stayed the same? Marriages? Acquisition of property? Education? Career changes? Reflect on your family's journey within the classes.
5. What class traits define your peer group? For example, what speech patterns or clothing trends do you and your friends share? What cultural elements, such as taste in music or hobbies, define your peer group? How do you see this set of class traits as different from other classes either above or below yours?
6. Write a list of ten to twenty class traits that describe the environment of your upbringing. Which of these seem like true class traits, and which seem like stereotypes? What items might fall into both categories? How do you imagine a sociologist might address the conflation of class traits and stereotypes?

7.4 Global Stratification and Inequality

7. What does it mean for a country to be seen as "underdeveloped"? What about "developed"? How does this shape our perception of the citizens within those countries?
8. Why is it important to understand and be aware of global stratification? Make a list of specific issues that are related to global stratification. For inspiration, turn on a news channel or read the newspaper. Next, choose a topic from your list, and look at it more closely. Who is affected by this issue? How is the issue specifically related to global stratification?

7.5 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

9. Analyze the Davis-Moore thesis. Do you agree with Davis and Moore? Does social stratification have an important function in society? What examples can you think of that support the thesis? What examples can you think of that refute the thesis?
10. Consider social stratification from the symbolic interactionist perspective. How does social stratification influence the daily interactions of individuals? How do systems of class, based on factors such as prestige, power, income, and wealth, influence your own daily routines, as well as your beliefs and attitudes? Illustrate your ideas with specific examples and anecdotes from your own life and the lives of people in your community.

7.6 Global Stratification and Classification

11. Consider the matter of rock-bottom prices at Walmart. What would a functionalist think of Walmart's model of squeezing vendors to get the absolute lowest prices so it can pass them along to core nation consumers?
12. Why do you think some scholars find Cold War terminology ("first world" and so on) objectionable?
13. Give an example of the feminization of poverty in core nations. How is it the same or different in peripheral nations?
14. Pretend you are a sociologist studying global inequality by looking at child labor manufacturing Barbie dolls in China. What do you focus on? How will you find this information? What theoretical perspective might you use?

7.7 Global Wealth and Poverty

15. Consider the concept of subjective poverty. Does it make sense that poverty is in the eye of the beholder? When you see a person who is homeless, is your reaction different if he or she is seemingly content versus begging? Why?
16. Think of people among your family, your friends, or your classmates who are relatively unequal in terms of wealth. What is their

relationship like? What factors come into play?
17. Go to your campus bookstore or visit its web site. Find out who manufactures apparel and novelty items with your school's insignias. In what countries are these produced? Conduct some research to determine how well your school adheres to the principles advocated by USAS.

7.8 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

18. There is much criticism that modernization theory is Eurocentric. Do you think dependency theory is also biased? Why, or why not?
19. Compare and contrast modernization theory and dependency theory. Which do you think is more useful for explaining global inequality? Explain, using examples.

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7.13: Further Research

7.2 What Is Social Stratification?

The New Press provides an interactive helpful in exploring social stratification. Within the relatively straightforward graphic activity, you can select two demographic categories and illustrate the quantity those populations by income level.

7.3 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

The Pew Research Center Created an income calculator to determine people's socioeconomic classification according to state and income.

7.4 Global Stratification and Inequality

Our World in Data's Global Economic Inequality page a wide range of data sources, narratives, and charts. While the sources should be verified before citing them in papers, the presentation offers a multifaceted picture of global inequality.

7.5 Global Stratification and Classification

To learn more about the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, look here.

To learn more about the existence and impact of global poverty, peruse the poverty and equity data portal here.

7.6 Global Wealth and Poverty

Students often think that the United States is immune to the atrocity of human trafficking. Check out this website to learn more about trafficking in the United States.

For more information about the ongoing practices of slavery in the modern world take a look at the Anti-Slavery International website.

7.7 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

For more information about economic modernization, check out the Hudson Institute.

Learn more about economic dependency at the University of Texas Inequality Project.

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8: RACE AND ETHNICITY

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8.1: Introduction

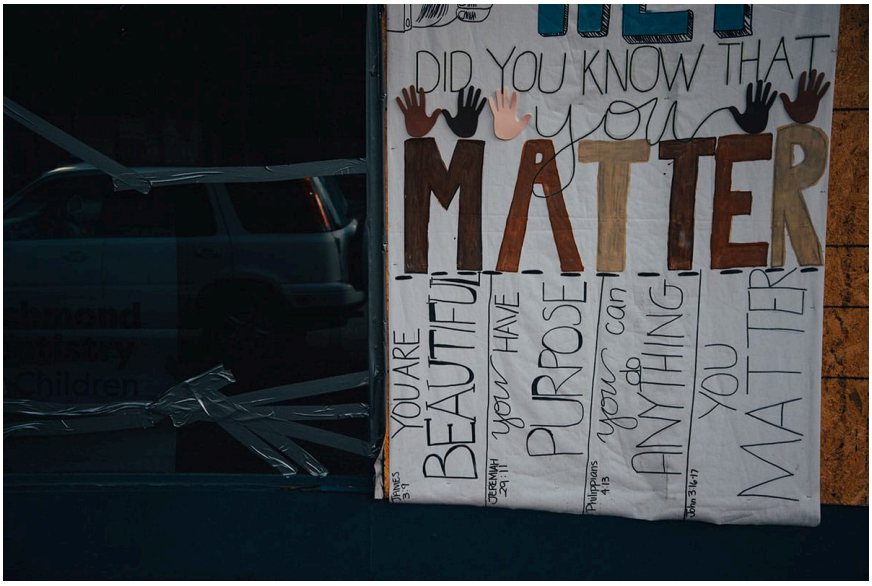


Figure 11.1: The juxtaposition of anger and hope. Over a window broken during protests in Richmond, Virginia, the business owner placed a sign that reads "Did You Know That You Matter. You are beautiful. You have purpose. You can do anything. You matter," and is accompanied with bible verses. (Credit: 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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8.2: 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.

Multiple Identities



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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8.3: 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.

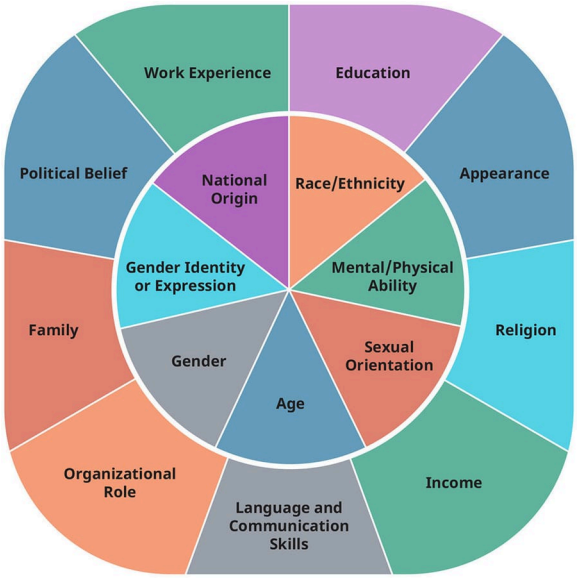


Figure 11.3: Our identities are formed by dozens of factors, sometimes represented in intersection wheels. Consider the subset of identity elements represented here. Generally, the outer ring contains elements that may change relatively often, while the elements in the inner circle are often considered 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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8.4: 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.

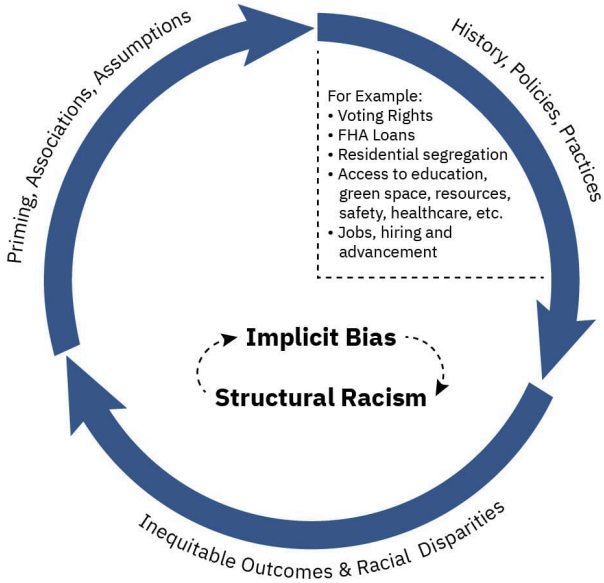


Figure 11.5: Implicit Bias and Structural Racialization (Osta and Vasquez 2021)

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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8.5: 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.

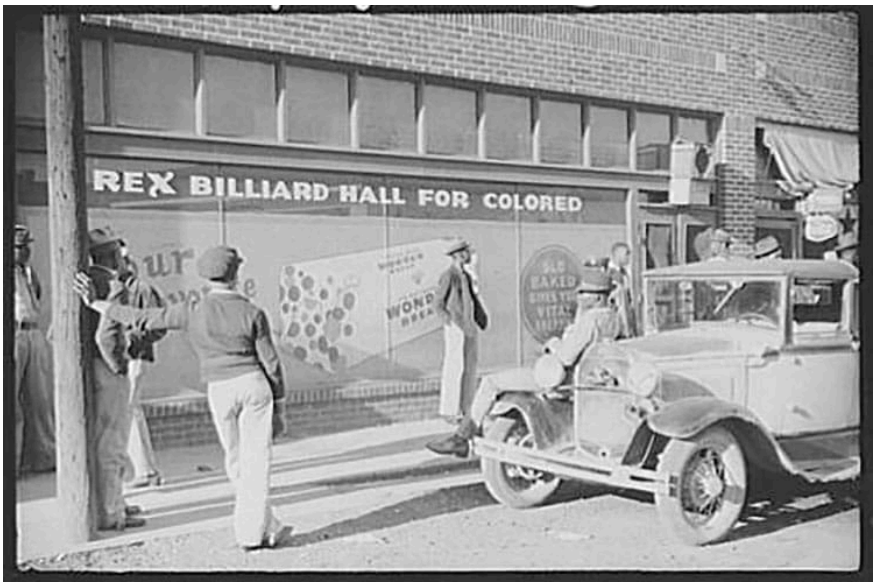


Figure 11.7: In the "Jim Crow" South, it was legal to have "separate but equal" facilities for Black people and White people. (Credit: Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons)

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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8.6: 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


(a) (b)

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 inexpensive 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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8.7: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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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8.8: Section Summary

8.2 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.

8.3 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.

8.4 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.

8.5 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.

8.6 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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8.9: Section Quiz

8.2 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

1.

The racial term “African American” can refer to:

a. a Black person living in the United States
b. people whose ancestors came to the United States through the slave trade
c. a White person who originated in Africa and now lives in the United States
d. any of the above

2.

What is the one defining feature of a minority group?

a. Self-definition
b. Numerical minority
c. Lack of power
d. Strong cultural identity

3.

Ethnicity describes shared:

a. beliefs
b. language
c. religion
d. any of the above

4.

Which of the following is an example of a numerical majority being treated as a subordinate group?

a. Jewish people in Germany
b. Creoles in New Orleans
c. White people in Brazil
d. Black people under apartheid in South Africa

5.

Scapegoat theory shows that:

a. subordinate groups blame dominant groups for their problems
b. dominant groups blame subordinate groups for their problems
c. some people are predisposed to prejudice
d. all of the above

8.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

6.

As a White person in the United States, being reasonably sure that you will be dealing with authority figures of the same race as you is a result of:

a. intersection theory

b. conflict theory
c. White privilege
d. scapegoating theory

7.

Speedy Gonzalez is an example of:

a. intersection theory
b. stereotyping
c. interactionist view
d. culture of prejudice

8.4 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

8.

Stereotypes can be based on:

a. race
b. ethnicity
c. gender
d. all of the above

9.

What is discrimination?

a. Biased thoughts against an individual or group
b. Biased actions against an individual or group
c. Belief that a race different from yours is inferior
d. Another word for stereotyping

10.

Which of the following is the best explanation of racism as a social fact?

a. It needs to be eradicated by laws.
b. It is like a magic pill.
c. It does not need the actions of individuals to continue.
d. None of the above

8.5 Intergroup Relationships

11.

Which intergroup relation displays the least tolerance?

a. Segregation
b. Assimilation
c. Genocide
d. Expulsion

12.

What doctrine justified legal segregation in the South?

a. Jim Crow
b. *Plessy v. Ferguson*
c. *De jure*

d. Separate but equal

13.

What intergroup relationship is represented by the “salad bowl” metaphor?

a. Assimilation
b. Pluralism
c. Amalgamation
d. Segregation

14.

Amalgamation is represented by the _____ metaphor.

a. melting pot
b. Statue of Liberty
c. salad bowl
d. separate but equal

8.6 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

15.

What makes Native Americans unique as a subordinate group in the United States?

a. They are the only group that experienced expulsion.
b. They are the only group that was segregated.
c. They are the only group that was enslaved.
d. They are the only group that is indigenous to the United States.

16.

Which subordinate group is often referred to as the “model minority?”

a. African Americans
b. Asian Americans
c. White ethnic Americans
d. Native Americans

17.

Which federal act or program was designed to allow more Hispanic American immigration, not block it?

a. The Bracero Program
b. Immigration Reform and Control Act
c. Operation Wetback
d. SB 1070

18.

Many Arab Americans face _____, especially after 9/11.

a. racism
b. segregation
c. Islamophobia
d. prejudice

19.

Why did most White ethnic Americans come to the United States?

a. For a better life
b. To escape oppression
c. Because they were forced out of their own countries
d. a and b only

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8.10: Short Answer

8.2 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

1.

Why do you think the term “minority” has persisted when the word “subordinate” is more descriptive?

2.

How do you describe your ethnicity? Do you include your family’s country of origin? Do you consider yourself multiethnic? How does your ethnicity compare to that of the people you spend most of your time with?

8.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

3.

How do redlining and racial steering contribute to institutionalized racism?

4.

Give an example of stereotyping that you see in everyday life. Explain what would need to happen for this to be eliminated.

8.4 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

5.

Give three examples of White privilege. Do you know people who have experienced this? From what perspective?

6.

What is the worst example of culture of prejudice you can think of? What are your reasons for thinking it is the worst?

8.5 Intergroup Relationships

7.

Do you believe immigration laws should foster an approach of pluralism, assimilation, or amalgamation? Which perspective do you think is most supported by current U.S. immigration policies?

8.

Which intergroup relation do you think is the most beneficial to the subordinate group? To society as a whole? Why?

8.6 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

9.

In your opinion, which group had the easiest time coming to this country? Which group had the hardest time? Why?

10.

Which group has made the most socioeconomic gains? Why do you think that group has had more success than others have?

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8.11: Further Research

8.2 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

Explore aspects of race and ethnicity at PBS's site, "What Is Race?".

8.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

Are you aware of your own or others' privilege? Watch this TED Talk on White privilege to explore the concept.

8.4 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

How far should First Amendment rights extend? Read more about the subject at the First Amendment Center.

Learn more about institutional racism at the Southern Poverty Law Center's website.

Learn more about how prejudice develops by watching the short documentary "Eye of the Storm"

8.5 Intergroup Relationships

So you think you know your own assumptions? Check and find out with the Implicit Association Test

What do you know about the treatment of Australia's aboriginal population? Find out more by viewing the feature-length documentary *Our Generation*.

8.6 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Are people interested in reclaiming their ethnic identities? Read the article *The White Ethnic Revival* and decide.

What is the current racial composition of the United States? Review up-to-the minute statistics at the United States Census Bureau.

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9: GENDER, SEX, AND SEXUALITY

9.1: Introduction

9.2: Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

9.3: Gender and Gender Inequality

9.4: Sexuality

9.5: Key Terms

9.6: Section Summary

9.7: Section Quiz

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9.1: 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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9.2: 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.

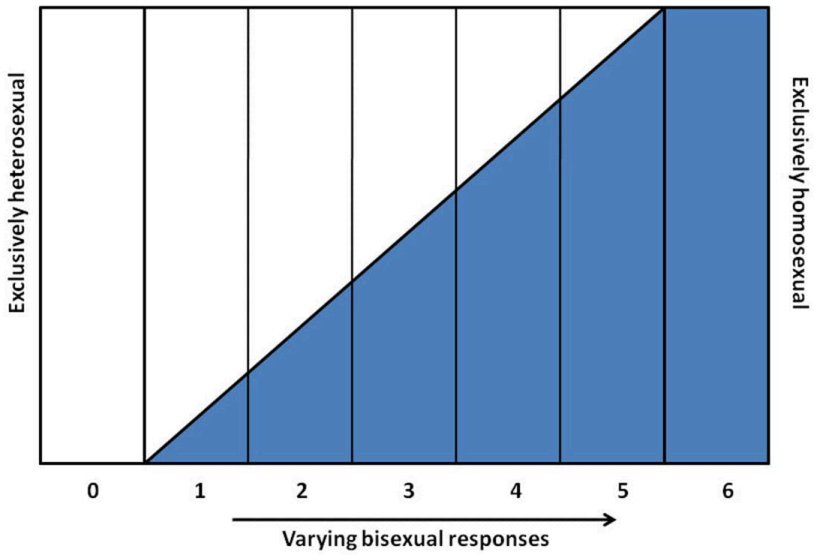


Figure 12.3: The Kinsey scale was one of the first attempts to frame the diversity of human sexual orientation.

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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9.3: 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).

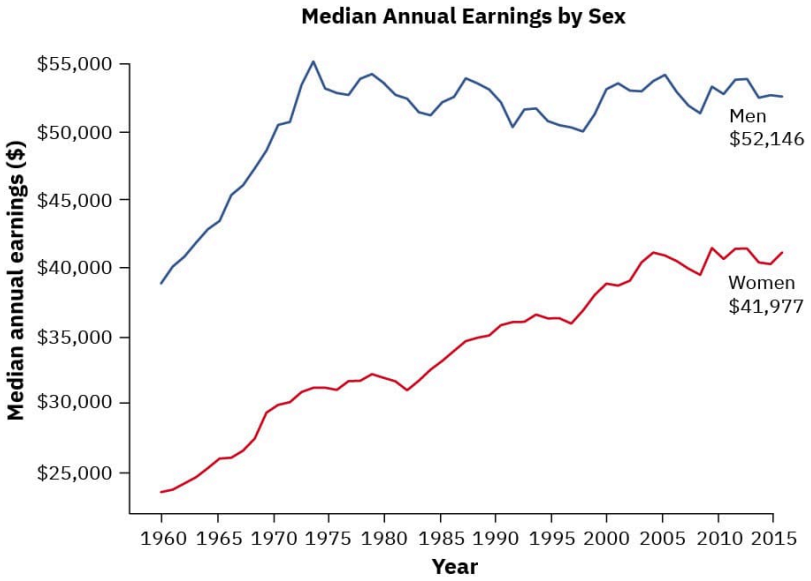


Figure 12.10: In 2017 men's overall median earnings were $52,146 and women's were $41,977. This means that women earned 80.1% of what men earned in the United States. (Credit: Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor)

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.

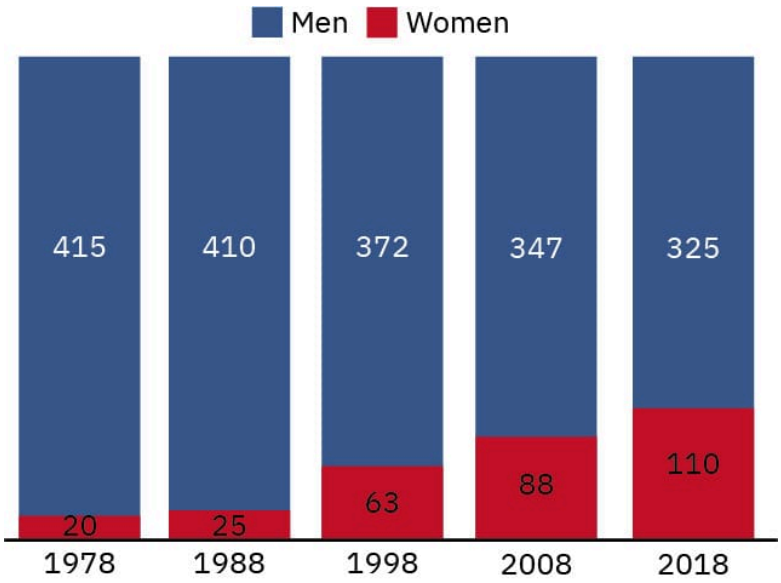


Figure 12.12: Breakdown of Congressional Membership by Gender. 2021 saw a record number of women in Congress, with 120 women serving in the House and 24 serving in the Senate. Gender representation has been steadily increasing over time, but is not close to being equal. (Credit: Based on data from Center 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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9.4: 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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9.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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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9.6: Section Summary

9.2 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.

9.3 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.

9.4 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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9.7: Section Quiz

9.2 Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

1.

The terms “masculine” and “feminine” refer to a person’s _____.

a. sex
b. gender
c. both sex and gender
d. none of the above

2.

The term _____ refers to society's concept of how men and women are expected to act and how they should behave.

a. gender role
b. gender bias
c. sexual orientation
d. sexual attitudes

3.

Research indicates that individuals are aware of their sexual orientation _____.

a. at infancy
b. in early adolescence
c. in early adulthood
d. in late adulthood

9.3 Gender and Gender Inequality

4.

Which of the following is the best example of a gender stereotype?

a. Women are typically shorter than men.
b. Men do not live as long as women.
c. Women tend to be overly emotional, while men tend to be levelheaded.
d. Men hold more high-earning, leadership jobs than women.

5.

Which of the following is the best example of the role peers play as an agent of socialization for school-aged children?

a. Children can act however they wish around their peers because children are unaware of gender roles.
b. Peers serve as a support system for children who wish to act outside of their assigned gender roles.
c. Peers tend to reinforce gender roles by criticizing and marginalizing those who behave outside of their assigned roles.
d. None of the above

6.

To which theoretical perspective does the following statement most likely apply: Women continue to assume the responsibility in the household along with a paid occupation because it keeps the household running smoothly, i.e., at a state of balance?

a. Conflict theory

b. Functionalism
c. Feminist theory
d. Symbolic interactionism

7.

Only women are affected by gender stratification.

a. True
b. False

8.

According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, we “do gender”:

a. during half of our activities
b. only when they apply to our biological sex
c. only if we are actively following gender roles
d. all of the time, in everything we do

9.

Misogyny is:

a. A certain kind if spa treatment
b. One’s biological sex
c. How we know our gender roles
d. the hatred of or, aversion to, or prejudice against women

10.

Which of the following factors can affect the pay gap?

a. having children
b. lower education level
c. being married
d. all of the above

11.

The idea that gender inequality comes from the division of labor fits with which Sociological theory?

a. Symbolic Interactionism
b. Functionalism
c. Conflict Theory
d. Feminist Theory

12.

Prior to the 19th Amendment being ratified, women were not considered a legal person on their own.

a. True
b. False

13.

In the 115th Congress of the United States, what percentage of the elected officials were women?

a. 10.5%
b. 21.2%

c. 30.4%
d. 50%

9.4 Sexuality

14.

Of these, which country is thought to be the most liberal in its attitudes toward sex?

a. United States
b. Sweden
c. Mexico
d. Ireland

15.

Compared to most Western societies, U.S. sexual attitudes are considered _____.

a. conservative
b. liberal
c. permissive
d. free

16.

Sociologists associate sexuality with _____.

a. a person's capacity for personal attachment
b. sexual maturation
c. biological factors
d. a person's capacity for sexual feelings

17.

According to national surveys, most U.S. parents support which type of sex education program in school?

a. Abstinence only
b. Abstinence plus sexual safety
c. Sexual safety without promoting abstinence
d. No sex education

18.

Which theoretical perspective stresses the importance of regulating sexual behavior to ensure marital cohesion and family stability?

a. Functionalism
b. Conflict theory
c. Symbolic interactionalism
d. Queer theory

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9.8: Short Answer

9.2 Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

1.

Why do sociologists find it important to differentiate between sex and gender? What importance does the differentiation have in modern society?

2.

How is children's play influenced by gender roles? Think back to your childhood. How "gendered" were the toys and activities available to you? Do you remember gender expectations being conveyed through the approval or disapproval of your playtime choices?

9.3 Gender and Gender Inequality

3.

In what way do parents treat sons and daughters differently? How do sons and daughters typically respond to this treatment?

4.

What can be done to lessen the effects of gender stratification in the workplace? How does gender stratification harm both men and women?

5.

Why is it important to have women in political roles?

6.

What can be done to narrow the pay gap for women?

9.4 Sexuality

7.

Identify three examples of how U.S. society is heteronormative.

8.

Consider the types of derogatory labeling that sociologists study and explain how these might apply to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

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9.9: Further Research

9.2 Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

To learn about what organizations are doing to improve diversity and social justice education for young people, review Learning For Justice's educational materials.

For more information on gender identity and advocacy for transgender individuals see the Global Action for Trans Equality web site.

Visit The Trevor Project website for more information on suicide prevention and crisis intervention for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) young people.

9.3 Gender and Gender Inequality

Learn more about Women's Rights movements in the United States.

9.4 Sexuality

To learn about different approaches to sex education, visit Advocates for Youth.

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10: MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

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10.1: 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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10.2: What Is Marriage? What Is a 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 (*wàipó*) 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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10.3: 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).

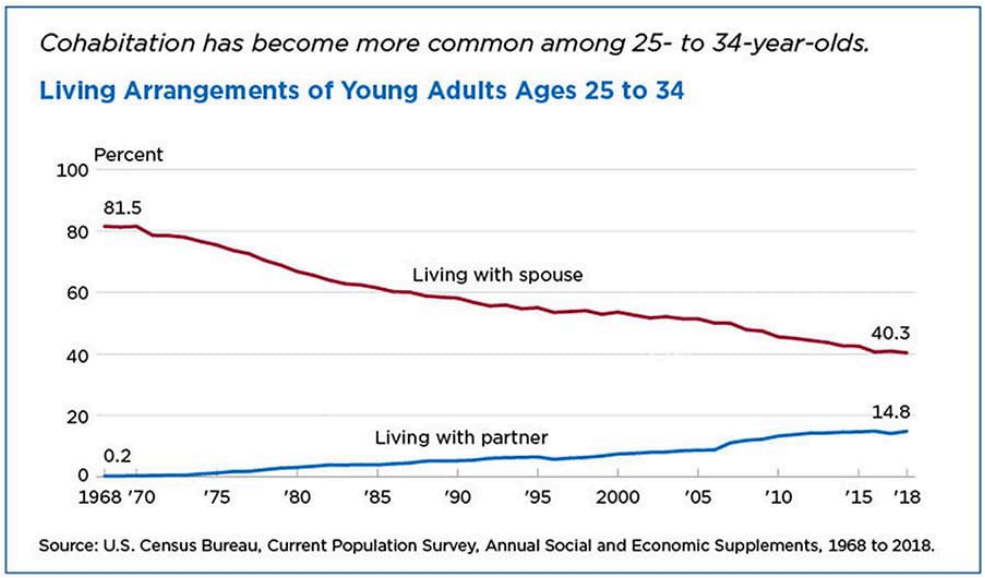


Figure 14.5: As shown by this graph of marital status percentages among young adults, more young people are choosing to delay or opt out of marriage, while the number of people living with a partner has increased. The overall number of people living with either a spouse or a partner has also declined. (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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10.4: 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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10.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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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10.6: Section Summary

10.2 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.

10.3 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.

10.4 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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10.7: Section Quiz

10.2 What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?

1.

Sociologists tend to define family in terms of

a. how a given society sanctions the relationships of people who are connected through blood, marriage, or adoption
b. the connection of bloodlines
c. the status roles that exist in a family structure
d. how closely members adhere to social norms

2.

Research suggests that people generally feel that their current family is _____ than the family they grew up with.

a. less close
b. more close
c. at least as close
d. none of the above

3.

A woman being married to two men would be an example of:

a. monogamy
b. polygyny
c. polyandry
d. cohabitation

4.

A child who associates his line of descent with his father's side only is part of a ____ society.

a. matrilocal
b. bilateral
c. matrilineal
d. patrilineal

5.

Which of the following is a criticism of the family life cycle model?

a. It is too broad and accounts for too many aspects of family.
b. It is too narrowly focused on a sequence of stages.
c. It does not serve a practical purpose for studying family behavior.
d. It is not based on comprehensive research.

10.3 Variations in Family Life

6.

The majority of U.S. children live in:

a. two-parent households
b. one-parent households

c. no-parent households
d. multigenerational households

7.

According to the study cited by the U.S. Census Bureau, children who live with married parents grow up with more advantages than children who live with:

a. a divorced parent
b. a single parent
c. a grandparent
d. all of the above

8.

Couples who cohabitate before marriage are _____ couples who did not cohabitate before marriage to be married at least ten years.

a. far more likely than
b. far less likely than
c. slightly less likely than
d. equally as likely as

9.

Same-sex couple households account for _____ percent of U.S. households.

a. 1
b. 10
c. 15
d. 30

10.

The median age of first marriage has _____ in the last fifty years.

a. increased for men but not women
b. decreased for men but not women
c. increased for both men and women
d. decreased for both men and women

10.4 Challenges Families Face

11.

Current divorce rates are:

a. at an all-time high
b. at an all-time low
c. steadily increasing
d. steadily declining

12.

Children of divorced parents are _____ to divorce in their own marriage than children of parents who stayed married.

a. more likely
b. less likely
c. equally likely

13.

In general, children in _____ households benefit from divorce.

a. stepfamily
b. multigenerational
c. high-conflict
d. low-conflict

14.

Which of the following is true of intimate partner violence (IPV)?

a. IPV victims are more frequently men than women.
b. One in ten women is a victim of IPV.
c. Nearly half of instances of IPV involve drugs or alcohol.
d. Rape is the most common form of IPV.

15.

Which type of child abuse is most prevalent in the United States?

a. Physical abuse
b. Neglect
c. Shaken-baby syndrome
d. Verbal mistreatment

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10.8: Short Answer

10.2 What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?

1.

According to research, what are people's general thoughts on family in the United States? How do they view nontraditional family structures? How do you think these views might change in twenty years?

2.

Explain the difference between bilateral and unilateral descent. Using your own association with kinship, explain which type of descent applies to you?

10.3 Variations in Family Life

3.

Explain the different variations of the nuclear family and the trends that occur in each.

4.

Why are some couples choosing to cohabitate before marriage? What effect does cohabitation have on marriage?

10.4 Challenges Families Face

5.

Explain how financial status impacts marital stability. What other factors are associated with a couple's financial status?

6.

Explain why more than half of IPV goes unreported? Why are those who are abused unlikely to report the abuse?

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10.9: Further Research

10.2 What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?

For more information on family development and lines of descent, visit the New England Historical Genealogical Society's web site, American Ancestors, and find out how genealogies have been established and recorded since 1845.

10.3 Variations in Family Life

For more statistics on marriage and family, see the Forum on Child and Family Statistics at http://openstax.org/l/child_family_statistics, as well as the American Community Survey, the Current Population Survey, and the U.S. Census decennial survey at the U.S. Census Bureau's web site.

10.4 Challenges Families Face

To find more information on child abuse, visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services web site to review documents provided by the Child Welfare Information Gateway.

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11: EDUCATION

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11.1: Introduction



Figure 16.1: High school and college graduation often marks a milestone for families, friends, and even the wider community. Education, however, occurs in many venues and with far ranging outcomes. (Credit: Kevin Dooley/flickr)

Chapter Outline

16.1 Education around the World
16.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Education
16.3 Issues in Education

“What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves” (Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed). David Simon, in his book *Social Problems and the Sociological Imagination: A Paradigm for Analysis* (1995), points to the notion that social problems are, in essence, contradictions—that is, statements, ideas, or features of a situation that are opposed to one another. Consider then, that one of the greatest expectations in U.S. society is that to attain any form of success in life, a person needs an education. In fact, a college degree is rapidly becoming an expectation at many levels of success, not merely an enhancement to our occupational choices. And, as you might expect, the number of people graduating from college in the United States continues to rise dramatically.

The contradiction, however, lies in the fact that the more impactful a college degree has become, the harder it has become to achieve it. The cost of getting a college degree has risen sharply since the mid-1980s, while many important forms of government support have barely increased.

The net result is that those who do graduate from college are likely to begin a career in debt. As of 2009, a typical student’s loans amounted to around $23,000. Ten years later, the average amount of debt for students who took loans grew to over $30,000. The overall national student loan debt topped $1.6 trillion in 2020, according to the Federal Reserve. These rising costs and risky debt burdens have led to a number of diverse proposals for solutions. Some call for cancelling current college debt and making more colleges free to qualifying students. Others advocate for more focused and efficient education in order to achieve needed career requirements more quickly. Employers, seeking both to widen their applicant pool and increase equity among their workforce, have increasingly sought ways to eliminate unnecessary degree requirements: If a person has the skills and knowledge to do the job, they have more access to it (Kerr 2020).

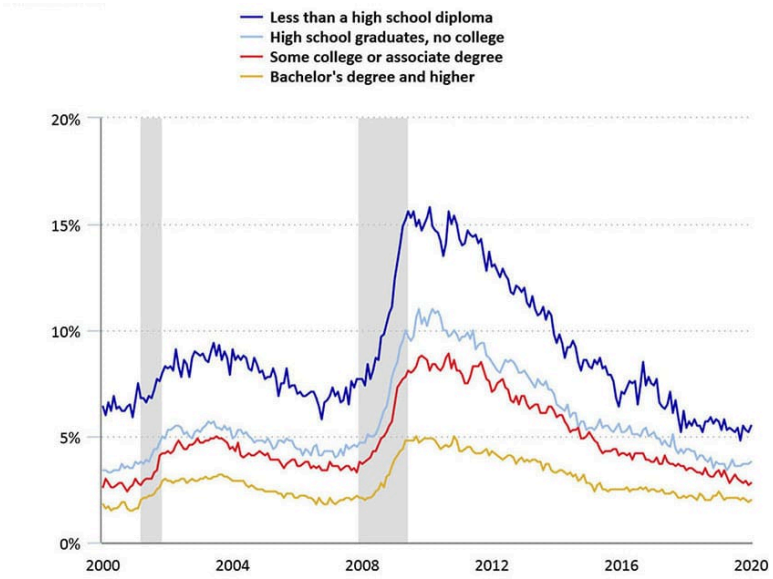


Figure 16.2: Unemployment rates for people age 25 and older by educational attainment. As can be seen in the graph, the overall unemployment rate began falling in 2009 after it peaked during the financial crisis and continued its downward trend through the decade from 2010 to 2020. (This graph does not account for the unemployment spike during the COVID-19 pandemic.) Note the differences in educational attainment and their impact on unemployment. People with bachelor's degrees have always had the lowest levels of unemployment, while those without a high school diploma have always had the highest level. (Credit: Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Is a college degree still worth it? Lifetime earnings among those with a college degree are, on average, still much higher than for those without. A 2019 Federal Reserve report indicated that, on average, college graduates earn $30,000 per year more than non-college graduates. Also, that wage gap has nearly doubled in the past 40 years (Abel 2019).

Is the wage advantage enough to overcome the potential debt? And what's behind those averages? Remember, since the $30,000 is an average, it also confirms what we see from other data: That certain people and certain college majors earn far more than others. As a result, earning a college degree in a field that has a smaller wage advantage over non-college graduates might not seem "worth it."

But is college worth more than money?

A student earning Associate's and Bachelor's degrees generally will often take a wide array of courses, including many outside of their major. The student is exposed to a fairly broad range of topics, from mathematics and the physical sciences to history and literature, the social sciences, and music and art through introductory and survey-styled courses. It is in this period that the student's world view is, it is hoped, expanded. Then, when they begin the process of specialization, it is with a much broader perspective than might be otherwise. This additional "cultural capital" can further enrich the life of the student, enhance their ability to work with experienced professionals, and build wisdom upon knowledge. Over two thousand years ago, Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." The real value of an education, then, is to enhance our skill at self-examination. Education, its impact, and its costs are important not just to sociologists, but to policymakers, employers, and of course to parents.

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11.2: Education around the World

Learning Objectives

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

- Identify differences in educational resources around the world
- Describe the concept of universal access to education



Figure 16.3: These students in Cambodia have a relatively informal classroom setting. Other schools, both nearby and around the world, have very different environments and practices. (Credit: Nguyen Hun Vu/flickr)

Education is a social institution through which members of a society are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms. Every nation in the world is equipped with some form of education system, though those systems vary greatly. The major factors that affect education systems are the resources and money that are utilized to support those systems in different nations. As you might expect, a country's wealth has much to do with the amount of money spent on education. Countries that do not have such basic amenities as running water are unable to support robust education systems or, in many cases, any formal schooling at all. The result of this worldwide educational inequality is a social concern for many countries, including the United States.

International differences in education systems are not solely a financial issue. The value placed on education, the amount of time devoted to it, and the distribution of education within a country also play a role in those differences. For example, students in South Korea spend 220 days a year in school, compared to the 180 days a year of their United States counterparts (Pellissier 2010).

Then there is the issue of educational distribution and changes within a nation. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is administered to samples of fifteen-year-old students worldwide. In 2010, the results showed that students in the United States had fallen from fifteenth to twenty-fifth in the rankings for science and math (National Public Radio 2010). The same program showed that by 2018, U.S. student achievement had remained on the same level for mathematics and science, but had shown improvements in reading. In 2018, about 4,000 students from about 200 high schools in the United States took the PISA test (OECD 2019).

Analysts determined that the nations and city-states at the top of the rankings had several things in common. For one, they had well-established standards for education with clear goals for all students. They also recruited teachers from the top 5 to 10 percent of university graduates each year, which is not the case for most countries (National Public Radio 2010).

Finally, there is the issue of social factors. One analyst from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the organization that created the PISA test, attributed 20 percent of performance differences and the United States' low rankings to differences in social background. Researchers noted that educational resources, including money and quality teachers, are not distributed equitably in the United States. In the top-ranking countries, limited access to resources did not necessarily predict low performance. Analysts also noted what they described as "resilient students," or those students who achieve at a higher level than one might expect given their social background. In Shanghai and Singapore, the proportion of resilient students is about 70 percent. In the United States, it is below 30 percent. These insights suggest that the United States' educational system may be on a descending path that could detrimentally affect the country's economy and its social landscape (National Public Radio 2010).

Big Picture: Education in Finland

With public education in the United States under such intense criticism, why is it that Singapore, South Korea, and especially Finland (which is culturally most similar to us), have such excellent public education? Over the course of thirty years, the country has pulled itself from among the lowest rankings by the Organization of Economic Cooperation (OEDC) to first in 2012, and remains, as of 2014, in the top five. Contrary to the rigid curriculum and long hours demanded of students in South Korea and Singapore, Finnish education often seems paradoxical to outside observers because it appears to break a lot of the rules we take for granted. It is common for children to enter school at seven years old, and children will have more recess and less hours in school than U.S. children—approximately 300 less hours. Their homework load is light when compared to all other industrialized nations (nearly 300 fewer hours per year in elementary school). There are no gifted programs, almost no private schools, and no high-stakes national standardized tests (Laukkanen 2008; LynNell Hancock 2011).

Prioritization is different than in the United States. There is an emphasis on allocating resources for those who need them most, high standards, support for special needs students, qualified teachers taken from the top 10 percent of the nation's graduates and who must earn a Master's degree, evaluation of education, balancing decentralization and centralization.

"We used to have a system which was really unequal," stated the Finnish Education Chief in an interview. "My parents never had a real possibility to study and have a higher education. We decided in the 1960s that we would provide a free quality education to all. Even universities are free of charge. Equal means that we support everyone and we're not going to waste anyone's skills." As for teachers, "We don't test our teachers or ask them to prove their knowledge. But it's true that we do invest in a lot of additional teacher training even after they become teachers" (Gross-Loh 2014).

Yet over the past decade Finland has consistently performed among the top nations on the PISA. Finland's school children didn't always excel. Finland built its excellent, efficient, and equitable educational system in a few decades from scratch, and the concept guiding almost every educational reform has been equity. The Finnish paradox is that by focusing on the bigger picture for all, Finland has succeeded at fostering the individual potential of most every child.

"We created a school system based on equality to make sure we can develop everyone's potential. Now we can see how well it's been working. Last year the OECD tested adults from twenty-four countries measuring the skill levels of adults aged sixteen to sixty-five on a survey called the PIAAC (Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies), which tests skills in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments. Finland scored at or near the top on all measures."

Formal and Informal Education

As already mentioned, education is not solely concerned with the basic academic concepts that a student learns in the classroom. Societies also educate their children, outside of the school system, in matters of everyday practical living. These two types of learning are referred to as formal education and informal education.

Formal education describes the learning of academic facts and concepts through a formal curriculum. Arising from the tutelage of ancient Greek thinkers, centuries of scholars have examined topics through formalized methods of learning. Education in earlier times was only available to the higher classes; they had the means for access to scholarly materials, plus the luxury of leisure time that could be used for learning. The Industrial Revolution and its accompanying social changes made education more accessible to the general population. Many families in the emerging middle class found new opportunities for schooling.

The modern U.S. educational system is the result of this progression. Today, basic education is considered a right and

responsibility for all citizens. Expectations of this system focus on formal education, with curricula and testing designed to ensure that students learn the facts and concepts that society believes are basic knowledge.

In contrast, informal education describes learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviors by participating in a society. This type of learning occurs both through the formal education system and at home. Our earliest learning experiences generally happen via parents, relatives, and others in our community. Through informal education, we learn important life skills that help us get through the day and interact with each other, including how to dress for different occasions, how to perform regular tasks such as shopping for and preparing food, and how to keep our bodies clean. Many professional tasks and local customs are learned informally, as well.



Figure 16.4: Children showing younger siblings how to serve food is an example of informal education. (Credit: Tim Pierce/flickr)

Cultural transmission refers to the way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture. Both informal and formal education include cultural transmission. For example, a student will learn about cultural aspects of modern history in a U.S. History classroom. In that same classroom, the student might learn the cultural norm for asking a classmate out on a date through passing notes and whispered conversations.

Access to Education

Another global concern in education is universal access. This term refers to people's equal ability to participate in an education system. On a world level, access might be more difficult for certain groups based on class or gender (as was the case in the United States earlier in the nation's history, a dynamic we still struggle to overcome). The modern idea of universal access arose in the United States as a concern for people with disabilities. In the United States, one way in which universal education is supported is through federal and state governments covering the cost of free public education. Of course, the way this plays out in terms of school budgets and taxes makes this an often-contested topic on the national, state, and community levels.

Table 16.1: How does state spending affect educational opportunities? (EducationData.org 2018)

Rank	State	Education Spending Per Student
1	New York	$24,040
2	District of Columbia	$22,759
3	Connecticut	$20,635
4	New Jersey	$20,021
5	Vermont	$19,340
6	Alaska	$17,726

Rank	State	Education Spending Per Student
7	Massachusetts	$17,058
8	New Hampshire	$16,893
9	Pennsylvania	$16,395
10	Wyoming	$16,224
11	Rhode Island	$16,121
12	Illinois	$15,741
13	Delaware	$15,639
14	Hawaii	$15,242
15	Maryland	$14,762
16	Maine	$14,145
17	North Dakota	$13,758
18	Ohio	$13,027
19	Washington	$12,995
20	Minnesota	$12,975
21	California	$12,498
22	Nebraska	$12,491
23	Michigan	$12,345
24	Wisconsin	$12,285
25	Virginia	$12,216
26	Oregon	$11,920
27	Iowa	$11,732
28	Montana	$11,680
29	Kansas	$11,653
30	Louisiana	$11,452
31	West Virginia	$11,334
32	Kentucky	$11,110
33	South Carolina	$10,856
34	Missouri	$10,810
34	Georgia	$10,810
36	Indiana	$10,262
37	Colorado	$10,202
38	Arkansas	$10,139
39	South Dakota	$10,073
40	Alabama	$9,696
41	Texas	$9,606
42	New Mexico	$9,582
43	Tennessee	$9,544

Rank	State	Education Spending Per Student
44	Nevada	$9,417
45	North Carolina	$9,377
46	Florida	$9,346
47	Mississippi	$8,935
48	Oklahoma	$8,239
49	Arizona	$8,239
50	Idaho	$7,771
51	Utah	$7,628

A precedent for universal access to education in the United States was set with the 1972 U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia's decision in *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia*. This case was brought on the behalf of seven school-age children with special needs who argued that the school board was denying their access to free public education. The school board maintained that the children's "exceptional" needs, which included intellectual disabilities, precluded their right to be educated for free in a public school setting. The board argued that the cost of educating these children would be too expensive and that the children would therefore have to remain at home without access to education.

This case was resolved in a hearing without any trial. The judge, Joseph Cornelius Waddy, upheld the students' right to education, finding that they were to be given either public education services or private education paid for by the Washington, D.C., board of education. He noted that

> Constitutional rights must be afforded citizens despite the greater expense involved … the District of Columbia's interest in educating the excluded children clearly must outweigh its interest in preserving its financial resources. … The inadequacies of the District of Columbia Public School System whether occasioned by insufficient funding or administrative inefficiency, certainly cannot be permitted to bear more heavily on the "exceptional" or handicapped child than on the normal child (*Mills v. Board of Education* 1972).

Today, the optimal way to include people with disabilities students in standard classrooms is still being researched and debated. "Inclusion" is a method that involves complete immersion in a standard classroom, whereas "mainstreaming" balances time in a special-needs classroom with standard classroom participation. There continues to be social debate surrounding how to implement the ideal of universal access to education.

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11.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Education

Learning Objectives

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

- Define manifest and latent functions of education
- Explain and discuss how functionalism, conflict theory, feminism, and interactionism view issues of education

While it is clear that education plays an integral role in individuals' lives as well as society as a whole, sociologists view that role from many diverse points of view. Functionalists believe that education equips people to perform different functional roles in society. Conflict theorists view education as a means of widening the gap in social inequality. Feminist theorists point to evidence that sexism in education continues to prevent women from achieving a full measure of social equality. Symbolic interactionists study the dynamics of the classroom, the interactions between students and teachers, and how those affect everyday life. In this section, you will learn about each of these perspectives.

Functionalism

Functionalists view education as one of the more important social institutions in a society. They contend that education contributes two kinds of functions: manifest (or primary) functions, which are the intended and visible functions of education; and latent (or secondary) functions, which are the hidden and unintended functions.

Manifest Functions

There are several major manifest functions associated with education. The first is socialization. Beginning in preschool and kindergarten, students are taught to practice various societal roles. The French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), who established the academic discipline of sociology, characterized schools as "socialization agencies that teach children how to get along with others and prepare them for adult economic roles" (Durkheim 1898). Indeed, it seems that schools have taken on this responsibility in full.

This socialization also involves learning the rules and norms of the society as a whole. In the early days of compulsory education, students learned the dominant culture. Today, since the culture of the United States is increasingly diverse, students may learn a variety of cultural norms, not only that of the dominant culture.

School systems in the United States also transmit the core values of the nation through manifest functions like social control. One of the roles of schools is to teach students conformity to law and respect for authority. Obviously, such respect, given to teachers and administrators, will help a student navigate the school environment. This function also prepares students to enter the workplace and the world at large, where they will continue to be subject to people who have authority over them. Fulfillment of this function rests primarily with classroom teachers and instructors who are with students all day.



Figure 16.5: The teacher's authority in the classroom is a way in which education fulfills the manifest functions of social control. (Credit: US Department of Education/flickr)

Education also provides one of the major methods used by people for upward social mobility. This function is referred to as social placement. College and graduate schools are viewed as vehicles for moving students closer to the careers that will give them the financial freedom and security they seek. As a result, college students are often more motivated to study areas that they believe will be advantageous on the social ladder. A student might value business courses over a class in Victorian poetry because she sees business class as a stronger vehicle for financial success.

Latent Functions

Education also fulfills latent functions. As you well know, much goes on in a school that has little to do with formal education. For example, you might notice an attractive fellow student when he gives a particularly interesting answer in class—catching up with him and making a date speaks to the latent function of courtship fulfilled by exposure to a peer group in the educational setting.

The educational setting introduces students to social networks that might last for years and can help people find jobs after their schooling is complete. Of course, with social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn, these networks are easier than ever to maintain. Another latent function is the ability to work with others in small groups, a skill that is transferable to a workplace and that might not be learned in a homeschool setting.

The educational system, especially as experienced on university campuses, has traditionally provided a place for students to learn about various social issues. There is ample opportunity for social and political advocacy, as well as the ability to develop tolerance to the many views represented on campus. In 2011, the Occupy Wall Street movement swept across college campuses all over the United States, leading to demonstrations in which diverse groups of students were unified with the purpose of changing the political climate of the country.

Table 16.2 Manifest and Latent Functions of Education: According to functionalist theory, education contributes both manifest and latent functions.

Manifest Functions: Openly stated functions with intended goals	Latent Functions: Hidden, unstated functions with sometimes unintended consequences
Socialization	Courtship
Transmission of culture	Social networks
Social control	Group work
Social placement	Creation of generation gap
Cultural innovation	Political and social integration

Functionalists recognize other ways that schools educate and enculturate students. One of the most important U.S. values students in the United States learn is that of individualism—the valuing of the individual over the value of groups or society as a whole. In countries such as Japan and China, where the good of the group is valued over the rights of the individual, students do not learn as they do in the United States that the highest rewards go to the "best" individual in academics as well as athletics. One of the roles of schools in the United States is fostering self-esteem; conversely, schools in Japan focus on fostering social esteem—the honoring of the group over the individual.

In the United States, schools also fill the role of preparing students for competition in life. Obviously, athletics foster a competitive nature, but even in the classroom students compete against one another academically. Schools also fill the role of teaching patriotism. Students recite the Pledge of Allegiance each morning and take history classes where they learn about national heroes and the nation's past.



Figure 16.6: Starting each day with the Pledge of Allegiance is one way in which students are taught patriotism. According to a number of court rulings, students in the United States cannot be compelled to recite or salute during the Pledge. (Credit: SC National Guard/flickr)

Another role of schools, according to functionalist theory, is that of sorting, or classifying students based on academic merit or potential. The most capable students are identified early in schools through testing and classroom achievements. Such students are placed in accelerated programs in anticipation of successful college attendance.

Functionalists also contend that school, particularly in recent years, is taking over some of the functions that were traditionally undertaken by family. Society relies on schools to teach about human sexuality as well as basic skills such as budgeting and job applications—topics that at one time were addressed by the family.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists do not believe that public schools reduce social inequality. Rather, they believe that the educational system reinforces and perpetuates social inequalities that arise from differences in class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Where functionalists see education as serving a beneficial role, conflict theorists view it more negatively. To them, educational systems preserve the status quo and push people of lower status into obedience.



Figure 16.7: Conflict theorists see the education system as a means by which those in power stay in power. (Credit: Thomas Ricker/flickr)

The fulfillment of one's education is closely linked to social class. Students of low socioeconomic status are generally not afforded the same opportunities as students of higher status, no matter how great their academic ability or desire to learn. Picture a student from a working-class home who wants to do well in school. On a Monday, he's assigned a paper that's due Friday. Monday evening, he has to babysit his younger sister while his divorced mother works. Tuesday and Wednesday, he works stocking shelves after school until 10:00 p.m. By Thursday, the only day he might have available to work on that assignment, he's so exhausted he can't bring himself to start the paper. His mother, though she'd like to help him, is so tired herself that she isn't able to give him the encouragement or support he needs. And since English is her second language, she has difficulty with some of his educational materials. They also lack a computer and printer at home, which most of his classmates have, so they have to rely on the public library or school system for access to technology. As this story shows, many students from working-class families have to contend with helping out at home, contributing financially to the family, poor study environments and a lack of support from their families. This is a difficult match with education systems that adhere to a traditional curriculum that is more easily understood and completed by students of higher social classes.

Such a situation leads to social class reproduction, extensively studied by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. He researched how cultural capital, or cultural knowledge that serves (metaphorically) as currency that helps us navigate a culture, alters the experiences and opportunities available to French students from different social classes. Members of the upper and middle classes have more cultural capital than do families of lower-class status. As a result, the educational system maintains a cycle in which the dominant culture's values are rewarded. Instruction and tests cater to the dominant culture and leave others struggling to identify with values and competencies outside their social class. For example, there has been a great deal of discussion over what standardized tests such as the SAT truly measure. Many argue that the tests group students by cultural ability rather than by natural intelligence.

The cycle of rewarding those who possess cultural capital is found in formal educational curricula as well as in the hidden curriculum, which refers to the type of nonacademic knowledge that students learn through informal learning and cultural transmission. This hidden curriculum reinforces the positions of those with higher cultural capital and serves to bestow status unequally.

Conflict theorists point to tracking, a formalized sorting system that places students on "tracks" (advanced versus low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities. While educators may believe that students do better in tracked classes because they are with students of similar ability and may have access to more individual attention from teachers, conflict theorists feel that tracking leads to self-fulfilling prophecies in which students live up (or down) to teacher and societal expectations (Education Week 2004).

To conflict theorists, schools play the role of training working-class students to accept and retain their position as lower members of society. They argue that this role is fulfilled through the disparity of resources available to students in richer and poorer neighborhoods as well as through testing (Lauen and Tyson 2008).

IQ tests have been attacked for being biased—for testing cultural knowledge rather than actual intelligence. For example, a test item may ask students what instruments belong in an orchestra. To correctly answer this question requires certain cultural

knowledge—knowledge most often held by more affluent people who typically have more exposure to orchestral music. Though experts in testing claim that bias has been eliminated from tests, conflict theorists maintain that this is impossible. These tests, to conflict theorists, are another way in which education does not provide opportunities, but instead maintains an established configuration of power.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory aims to understand the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education, as well as their societal repercussions. Like many other institutions of society, educational systems are characterized by unequal treatment and opportunity for women. Almost two-thirds of the world's 862 million illiterate people are women, and the illiteracy rate among women is expected to increase in many regions, especially in several African and Asian countries (UNESCO 2005; World Bank 2007).

Women in the United States have been relatively late, historically speaking, to be granted entry to the public university system. In fact, it wasn't until the establishment of Title IX of the Education Amendments in 1972 that discriminating on the basis of sex in U.S. education programs became illegal. In the United States, there is also a post-education gender disparity between what male and female college graduates earn. A study released in May 2011 showed that, among men and women who graduated from college between 2006 and 2010, men out-earned women by an average of more than $5,000 each year. First-year job earnings for men averaged $33,150; for women the average was $28,000 (Godofsky, Zukin, and van Horn 2011). Similar trends are seen among salaries of professionals in virtually all industries.

When women face limited opportunities for education, their capacity to achieve equal rights, including financial independence, are limited. Feminist theory seeks to promote women's rights to equal education (and its resultant benefits) across the world.

Sociology in the Real World: Grade Inflation: When Is an A Really a C?

In 2019, news emerged of a criminal conspiracy regarding wealthy and, in some cases, celebrity parents who illegally secured college admission for their children. Over 50 people were implicated in the scandal, including employees from prestigious universities; several people were sentenced to prison. Their activity included manipulating test scores, falsifying students' academic or athletic credentials, and acquiring testing accommodations through dishonest claims of having a disability.

One of the questions that emerged at the time was how the students at the subject of these efforts could succeed at these challenging and elite colleges. Meaning, if they couldn't get in without cheating, they probably wouldn't do well. Wouldn't their lack of preparation quickly become clear?

Many people would say no. First, many of the students involved (the children of the conspirators) had no knowledge or no involvement of the fraud; those students may have been admitted anyway. But there may be another safeguard for underprepared students at certain universities: grade inflation.

Grade inflation generally refers to a practice of awarding students higher grades than they have earned. It reflects the observation that the relationship between letter grades and the achievements they reflect has been changing over time. Put simply, what used to be considered C-level, or average, now often earns a student a B, or even an A.

Some, including administrators at elite universities, argue that grade inflation does not exist, or that there are other factors at play, or even that it has benefits such as increased funding and elimination of inequality (Boleslavsky 2014). But the evidence reveals a stark change. Based on data compiled from a wide array of four-year colleges and universities, a widely cited study revealed that the number of A grades has been increasing by several percentage points per decade, and that A's were the most common grade awarded (Jaschik 2016). In an anecdotal case, a Harvard dean acknowledged that the median grade there was an A-, and the most common was also an A. Williams College found that the number of A+ grades had grown from 212 instances in 2009-10 to 426 instances in 2017-18 (Berlinsky-Schine 2020). Princeton University took steps to reduce inflation by limiting the number of A's that could be issued, though it then reversed course (Greason 2020).

Why is this happening? Some cite the alleged shift toward a culture that rewards effort instead of product, i.e., the amount of work a student puts in raises the grade, even if the resulting product is poor quality. Another oft-cited contributor is the pressure for instructors to earn positive course evaluations from their students. Finally, many colleges may accept a level of grade inflation because it works. Analysis and formal experiments involving graduate school admissions and hiring practices

showed that students with higher grades are more likely to be selected for a job or a grad school. And those higher-grade applicants are still preferred even if decision-maker knows that the applicant's college may be inflating grades (Swift 2013). In other words, people with high GPA at a school with a higher average GPA are preferred over people who have a high GPA at a school with a lower average GPA.

Ironically, grade inflation is not simply a college issue. Many of the same college faculty and administrators who encounter or engage in some level of grade inflation may lament that it is also occurring at high schools (Murphy 2017).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism sees education as one way that labeling theory is seen in action. A symbolic interactionist might say that this labeling has a direct correlation to those who are in power and those who are labeled. For example, low standardized test scores or poor performance in a particular class often lead to a student who is labeled as a low achiever. Such labels are difficult to "shake off," which can create a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1968).

In his book *High School Confidential*, Jeremy Iversen details his experience as a Stanford graduate posing as a student at a California high school. One of the problems he identifies in his research is that of teachers applying labels that students are never able to lose. One teacher told him, without knowing he was a bright graduate of a top university, that he would never amount to anything (Iversen 2006). Iversen obviously didn't take this teacher's false assessment to heart. But when an actual seventeen-year-old student hears this from a person with authority over her, it's no wonder that the student might begin to "live down to" that label.

The labeling with which symbolic interactionists concern themselves extends to the very degrees that symbolize completion of education. Credentialism embodies the emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that a person has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, or has met certain job qualifications. These certificates or degrees serve as a symbol of what a person has achieved, and allows the labeling of that individual.

Indeed, as these examples show, labeling theory can significantly impact a student's schooling. This is easily seen in the educational setting, as teachers and more powerful social groups within the school dole out labels that are adopted by the entire school population.

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11.4: Issues in Education

Learning Objectives

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

- Identify historical and contemporary issues in education
- Discuss the impacts of educational equality efforts
- Explain important United States government actions and programs in education

As schools strive to fill a variety of roles in their students' lives, many issues and challenges arise. Students walk a minefield of bullying, violence in schools, the results of declining funding, changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and other problems that affect their education. When Americans are asked about their opinion of public education on the Gallup poll each year, reviews are mixed at best (Saad 2008). Schools are no longer merely a place for learning and socializing. With the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling in 1954, schools became a repository of much political and legal action that is at the heart of several issues in education.

Equal Education

Until the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, schools had operated under the precedent set by *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, which allowed racial segregation in schools and private businesses (the case dealt specifically with railroads) and introduced the much maligned phrase "separate but equal" into the U.S. lexicon. The 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision overruled this, declaring that state laws that had established separate schools for Black and White students were, in fact, unequal and unconstitutional.

While the ruling paved the way toward civil rights, it was also met with contention in many communities. In Arkansas in 1957, the governor mobilized the state National Guard to prevent Black students from entering Little Rock Central High School. President Eisenhower, in response, sent members of the 101st Airborne Division from Kentucky to uphold the students' right to enter the school. In 1963, almost ten years after the ruling, Governor George Wallace of Alabama used his own body to block two Black students from entering the auditorium at the University of Alabama to enroll in the school. Wallace's desperate attempt to uphold his policy of "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever," stated during his 1963 inauguration (PBS 2000) became known as the "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door." He refused to grant entry to the students until a general from the Alabama National Guard arrived on President Kennedy's order.



Figure 16.8: President Eisenhower sent members of the 101st Airborne Division from Kentucky to escort Black students into Little Rock Central High School after the governor of Arkansas tried to deny them entry. (Credit: the U.S. Army)

Presently, students of all races and ethnicities are permitted into schools, but there remains a troubling gap in the equality of education they receive. The long-term socially embedded effects of racism—and other discrimination and disadvantage—have left a residual mark of inequality in the nation's education system. Students from wealthy families and those of lower socioeconomic status do not receive the same opportunities.

Today's public schools, at least in theory, are positioned to help remedy those gaps. Predicated on the notion of universal access, this system is mandated to accept and retain all students regardless of race, religion, social class, and the like. Moreover, public schools are held accountable to equitable per-student spending (Resnick 2004). Private schools, usually only accessible to students from high-income families, and schools in more affluent areas generally enjoy access to greater resources and better opportunities. In fact, some of the key predictors for student performance include socioeconomic status and family background. Children from families of lower socioeconomic status often enter school with learning deficits they struggle to overcome throughout their educational tenure. These patterns, uncovered in the landmark Coleman Report of 1966, are still highly relevant today, as sociologists still generally agree that there is a great divide in the performance of white students from affluent backgrounds and their nonwhite, less affluent, counterparts (Coleman 1966).

The findings in the Coleman Report were so powerful that they brought about two major changes to education in the United States. The federal Head Start program, which is still active and successful today, was developed to give low-income students an opportunity to make up the preschool deficit discussed in Coleman's findings. The program provides academic-centered preschool to students of low socioeconomic status.

Transfers and Busing

In the years following *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Southern states were not alone in their resistance to change. In New York City, schools in lower-income neighborhoods had less experienced teachers, inadequate facilities, and lower spending per student than did schools in higher-income neighborhoods, even though all of the schools were in the same district. In 1958, Activist Mae Mallory, with the support of grassroots advocate Ella Baker and the NAACP, led a group of parents who kept their children out of school, essentially boycotting the district. She and the rest of the group, known as the Harlem Nine, were publicly chastised and pursued by the judicial system. After several decisions and appeals, the culminating legal decision found that the city was effectively segregating schools, and that students in certain neighborhoods were still receiving a "discriminatorily inferior education." New York City, the nation's largest school district, enacted an open transfer policy that laid the groundwork for further action (Jeffries 2012).

With the goal of further desegregating education, courts across the United States ordered some school districts to begin a program that became known as "busing." This program involved bringing students to schools outside their neighborhoods (and therefore schools they would not normally have the opportunity to attend) to bring racial diversity into balance. This practice was met with a great deal of public resistance from people on both sides dissatisfied with White students traveling to inner city schools and minority students being transported to schools in the suburbs.

No Child Left Behind and Every Student Succeeds

In 2001, the Bush administration passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which requires states to test students in grades three through eight. The results of those tests determine eligibility to receive federal funding. Schools that do not meet the standards set by the Act run the risk of having their funding cut. Sociologists and teachers alike have contended that the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act is far more negative than positive, arguing that a "one size fits all" concept cannot apply to education.

As a result of widespread criticism, many of the national aspects of the act were gradually altered, and in 2015 they were essentially eliminated. That year, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The law decreases the federal role in education. Annual testing is still required, but the achievement and improvement accountability is shifted to the states, which must submit plans and goals regarding their approaches to the U.S. Department of Education for approval. While this aspect of ESSA was delayed for several years under the Trump administration, the Department of Education announced in April, 2020 that Massachusetts had become the first to have its plans approved. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed many states' further action in terms of ESSA approval.

New Views On Standardized Tests

The funding tie-in of the No Child Left Behind Act has led to the social phenomenon commonly called "teaching to the test,"

which describes when a curriculum focuses on equipping students to succeed on standardized tests, to the detriment of broader educational goals and concepts of learning. At issue are two approaches to classroom education: the notion that teachers impart knowledge that students are obligated to absorb, versus the concept of student-centered learning that seeks to teach children not facts, but problem solving abilities and learning skills. Both types of learning have been valued in the U.S. school system. The former, to critics of "teaching to the test," only equips students to regurgitate facts, while the latter, to proponents of the other camp, fosters lifelong learning and transferable work skills.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Testing (ACT) have for decades served as rites of passage for millions of high school students. Colleges utilize the scores as benchmarks in the admissions process. Since the tests have been important in college admissions, many families place significant emphasis on preparing for them.

However, the disparity in how much money families are able to spend on that preparation results in inequities. SAT/ACT-prep courses and tutors are expensive, and not everyone can afford them. As a result, the inequity found in K-12 education may extend to college.

For years, college admissions programs have been taking these disparities into account, and have based admissions on factors beyond standardized test scores. However, issues with the tests remain. In 2020, a slate of highly selective colleges eliminated their standardized test requirement for admission, and, in 2021 several colleges expanded and extended their "test-optional" approach.

Students With Disabilities

Since the 1978 implementation of what would become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), states and local districts have continually increased their investment in the quality of education for students with disabilities. The Act's reauthorization, coupled with No Child Left Behind, added requirements and guidance for states and school districts. Until that point in time, students with intellectual or other disabilities had been steadily improving their achievement, graduation rates, and success in post-high school endeavors. However, significant disparities existed (and persist today) based on race, ethnicity, and also on geography. Beyond the quality of education for students with disabilities, the disparity was often most noticeable in the classification of those students. States varied on which disabilities received services, and how much support was provided.

Many students with dyslexia, ADHD, and other disorders are either not diagnosed, not taken seriously, or not given as much support as they require in order to succeed. This can extend into adulthood. For example, ADHD was for years considered only a children's disease, something that people "grew out of." But the disorder can impact people at any age, something that many educators and even some doctors are not aware of.

No Child Left Behind's focus on standards and standardized testing extended to students with disabilities as well. A core goal was that students with disabilities would work toward the same standards and take the same tests (with accommodations, if needed) as did students without disabilities. The outcomes were mixed. Test performance for students with disabilities increased, but so did drop outs. There was also evidence that some schools were less welcoming to students with disabilities, as a way to increase average scores (National Council on Disabilities 2004).

In general, programs have improved to the point that students with disabilities are graduating from high school at a national average of about 73 percent. This is lower than the average graduation rate for students in all populations, which is 88 percent, but it is a vast improvement over previous decades (NCES 2020). However, several issues remain. First, students from lower-income and areas and states with lower education budgets still are offered far fewer services; they graduate high school at a much lower rate than the average. Second, because identification remains a major gap, many students with disabilities may be in the "mainstream" population but are not supported as well as they should be. Even when this group gets to college, they may be starting with a lower level of preparation (Samuels 2019).

School Choice

As we have seen, education is not equal, and people have varied needs. Parents, guardians, and child advocates work to obtain the best schooling for children, which may take them outside the traditional environment.

Public school alternatives to traditional schools include vocational schools, special education schools, magnet schools, charter schools, alternative schools, early college schools, and virtual schools. Private school options may include religious and non-religious options, as well as boarding schools. In some locations, a large number of students engage in these options. For

example, in North Carolina, one in five students does not attend a traditional public school (Hui 2019).

Homeschooling refers to children being educated in their own homes, typically by a parent, instead of in a traditional public or private school system. Proponents of this type of education argue that it provides an outstanding opportunity for student-centered learning while circumventing problems that plague today's education system. Opponents counter that homeschooled children miss out on the opportunity for social development that occurs in standard classroom environments and school settings.

School choice advocates promote the idea that more choice allows parents and students a more effective educational experience that is right for them. They may choose a nontraditional school because it is more aligned with their philosophy, because they've been bullied or had other trouble in their neighborhood school, or because they want to prepare for a specific career (American Federation for Children 2017). School choice opponents may argue that while the alternative schools may be more effective for those students who need them and are fortunate enough to get in, the money would be better spent in general public schools.

Remote and Hybrid Schooling

The COVID-19 pandemic was among the most disruptive events in American education. You likely have your own stories, successes, failures, and preferences based on your experiences as students, parents, and family members. Educators at every level went through stages of intense stress, lack of information, and difficult choices. In many cities and states, families, school districts, governments, and health departments found themselves on different sides of debates. Countless arguments raged over attendance, mental health, instructional quality, safety, testing, academic integrity, and the best ways to move forward as the situation began to improve.

College students and their families went through similar disruptions and debates, compounded by the fact that many students felt that the high costs of particular colleges were not worth it. Overall college enrollment dipped significantly during the pandemic (Koenig 2020).

At the time of this writing, the sociological and educational impact of the pandemic is difficult to assess, though many are studying it. Overall data indicates that most outcomes are negative. Students underperformed, stress and mental health problems increased, and overall plans and pathways were interrupted. Perhaps most damaging was that the pandemic amplified many of the other challenges in education, meaning that under-resourced districts and underserved students were impacted even more severely than others. On the other hand, once instructors and students adapted to the technological and social differences, many began to employ new techniques to ensure more caretaking, connection, differentiated instruction, and innovation. Most agree that education will be changed for years following the pandemic, but it might not all be for the worse.

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11.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
credentialism	the emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that a person has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, or has met certain job qualifications				
cultural capital	cultural knowledge that serves (metaphorically) as currency to help one navigate a culture				
cultural transmission	the way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture				
education	a social institution through which a society's children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms				
formal education	the learning of academic facts and concepts				
grade inflation	the idea that the achievement level associated with an A today is notably lower than the achievement level associated with A-level work a few decades ago				
Head Start program	a federal program that provides academically focused preschool to students of low socioeconomic status				
hidden curriculum	the type of nonacademic knowledge that people learn through informal learning and cultural transmission				
informal education	education that involves learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviors through participation in a society				
No Child Left Behind Act	an act that requires states to test students in prescribed grades, with the results of those tests determining eligibility to receive federal funding				
social placement	the use of education to improve one's social standing				
sorting	classifying students based on academic merit or potential				
tracking	a formalized sorting system that places students on "tracks" (advanced, low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities				
universal access	the equal ability of all people to participate in an education system				

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11.6: Section Summary

11.2 Education around the World

Educational systems around the world have many differences, though the same factors—including resources and money—affect every educational system. Educational distribution is a major issue in many nations, including in the United States, where the amount of money spent per student varies greatly by state. Education happens through both formal and informal systems; both foster cultural transmission. Universal access to education is a worldwide concern.

11.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Education

The major sociological theories offer insight into how we understand education. Functionalists view education as an important social institution that contributes both manifest and latent functions. Functionalists see education as serving the needs of society by preparing students for later roles, or functions, in society. Conflict theorists see schools as a means for perpetuating class, racial-ethnic, and gender inequalities. In the same vein, feminist theory focuses specifically on the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education. The theory of symbolic interactionism focuses on education as a means for labeling individuals.

11.4 Issues in Education

As schools continue to fill many roles in the lives of students, challenges arise. Historical issues include the racial desegregation of schools, marked by the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling. In today's diverse educational landscape, socioeconomic status and diversity remain at the heart of issues in education. Students with disabilities have improved outcomes compared to previous decades, but issues with identifying and serving varied needs remain. Other educational issues that impact society include school choice and standardized testing.

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11.7: Section Quiz

11.2 Education around the World

1.

What are the major factors that affect education systems throughout the world?

a. Resources and money
b. Student interest
c. Teacher interest
d. Transportation

2.

What do nations that are top-ranked in science and math have in common?

a. They are all in Asia.
b. They recruit top teachers.
c. They spend more money per student.
d. They use cutting-edge technology in classrooms.

3.

Informal education _____.

a. describes when students teach their peers
b. refers to the learning of cultural norms
c. only takes place at home
d. relies on a planned instructional process

4.

Learning from classmates that most students buy lunch on Fridays is an example of _____.

a. cultural transmission
b. educational access
c. formal education
d. informal education

5.

The 1972 case *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* set a precedent for _____.

a. access to education
b. average spending on students
c. desegregation of schools
d. teacher salary

11.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Education

6.

Which of the following is *not* a manifest function of education?

a. Cultural innovation
b. Courtship

c. Social placement
d. Socialization

7.

Because she plans on achieving success in marketing, Tammie is taking courses on managing social media. This is an example of _____.

a. cultural innovation
b. social control
c. social placement
d. socialization

8.

Which theory of education focuses on the ways in which education maintains the status quo?

a. Conflict theory
b. Feminist theory
c. Functionalist theory
d. Symbolic interactionism

9.

Which theory of education focuses on the labels acquired through the educational process?

a. Conflict theory
b. Feminist theory
c. Functionalist theory
d. Symbolic interactionism

10.

What term describes the assignment of students to specific education programs and classes on the basis of test scores, previous grades, or perceived ability?

a. Hidden curriculum
b. Labeling
c. Self-fulfilling prophecy
d. Tracking

11.

Functionalist theory sees education as serving the needs of _____.

a. families
b. society
c. the individual
d. all of the above

12.

Rewarding students for meeting deadlines and respecting authority figures is an example of _____.

a. a latent function
b. a manifest function
c. informal education
d. transmission of moral education

13.

What term describes the separation of students based on merit?

a. Cultural transmission
b. Social control
c. Sorting
d. Hidden curriculum

14.

Conflict theorists see sorting as a way to _____.

a. challenge gifted students
b. perpetuate divisions of socioeconomic status
c. help students who need additional support
d. teach respect for authority

15.

Conflict theorists see IQ tests as being biased. Why?

a. They are scored in a way that is subject to human error.
b. They do not give children with learning disabilities a fair chance to demonstrate their true intelligence.
c. They don't involve enough test items to cover multiple intelligences.
d. They reward affluent students with questions that assume knowledge associated with upper-class culture.

11.4 Issues in Education

16.

Plessy v. Ferguson set the precedent that _____.

a. racial segregation in schools was allowed
b. separate schools for Black and White students were unconstitutional
c. students do not have a right to free speech in public schools
d. students have a right to free speech in public schools

17.

Public schools must guarantee that _____.

a. all students graduate from high school
b. all students receive an equal education
c. per-student spending is equitable
d. the amount spent on each student is equal to that spent regionally

18.

Key predictors for student success include _____.

a. how many school-age siblings the student has
b. socioeconomic status and family background
c. the age of the student when she or he enters kindergarten
d. how many students attend the school

19.

Allowing a student to move to the next grade regardless of whether or not they have met the requirements for that grade is called _____.

a. affirmative action

b. social control
c. social promotion
d. socialization

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11.8: Short Answer

11.2 Education around the World

1.

Has there ever been a time when your formal and informal educations in the same setting were at odds? How did you overcome that disconnect?

2.

Do you believe free access to schools has achieved its intended goal? Explain.

11.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Education

3.

Thinking of your school, what are some ways that a conflict theorist would say that your school perpetuates class differences?

4.

Which sociological theory best describes your view of education? Explain why.

5.

Based on what you know about symbolic interactionism and feminist theory, what do you think proponents of those theories see as the role of the school?

11.4 Issues in Education

6.

Is busing a reasonable method of serving students from diverse backgrounds? If not, suggest and support an alternative.

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11.9: Further Research

11.2 Education around the World

Though it's a struggle, education is continually being improved in the developing world. To learn how educational programs are being fostered worldwide, explore the Education section of the Center for Global Development's website.

11.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Education

Can tracking actually improve learning? This 2009 article from *Education Next* explores the debate with evidence from Kenya.

The National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest) is committed to ending the bias and other flaws seen in standardized testing. Their mission is to ensure that students, teachers, and schools are evaluated fairly. You can learn more about their mission, as well as the latest in news on test bias and fairness, at their website.

11.4 Issues in Education

Whether or not students in public schools are entitled to free speech is a subject of much debate. In the public school system, there can be a clash between the need for a safe learning environment and the guarantee to free speech granted to U.S. citizens. You can learn more about this complicated issue on this web page about the First Amendment in schools.

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12: HEALTH AND MEDICINE

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12.1: Introduction



Figure 19.1: Medical personnel are at the front lines of extremely dangerous work. Personal protective clothing is essential for any health worker entering an infection zone. (Credit: Navy Medicine/flickr)

Chapter Outline

19.1 The Social Construction of Health
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On March 19, 2014 a "mystery" hemorrhagic fever outbreak occurred in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This outbreak was later confirmed to be Ebola, a disease first discovered in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. The 2014-2016 outbreak sickened more than 28,000 people and left more than 11,000 dead (CDC 2020).

For the people in West Africa, the outbreak was personally tragic and terrifying. In much of the rest of the world, the outbreak increased tensions, but did not change anyone's behavior. Infection of U.S. medical staff (both in West Africa and at home) led to fear and distrust, and restrictions on flights from West Africa was one proposed way to stop the spread of the disease. Ebola first entered the United States via U.S. missionary medical staff who were infected in West Africa and then transported home for treatment. Several other Ebola outbreaks occurred in West Africa in subsequent years, killing thousands of people.

Six years after the massive 2014 epidemic, the people of West Africa faced another disease, but this time they were not alone. The Coronavirus pandemic swept across the globe in a matter of months. While some countries managed the disease far better than others, it affected everyone. Highly industrialized countries, such as China, Italy, and the United States, were early centers of the outbreak. Brazil and India had later increases, as did the U.K. and Russia. Most countries took measures that were considered extreme—closing their borders, forcing schools and businesses to close, transforming their people's lives. Other nations went further, completely shutting down at the discovery of just a few cases. And some countries had mixed responses, typically resulting in high rates of infection and overwhelming losses of life. In Brazil and the United States, for example, political leaders and large swaths of the populations rejected measures to contain the virus. By the time vaccines became widely available, those two countries had the highest numbers of coronavirus death worldwide.

Did the world learn from the Ebola virus epidemics? Or did only parts of it learn? Prior to the United States facing the worst COVID-19 outbreak in the world, the government shut down travel, as did many countries in Europe. This was certainly an important step, but other measures fell short; conflicting messages about mask wearing and social distancing became political weapons amid the country's Presidential election, and localized outbreaks and spikes of deaths were continually traced to gatherings that occurred against scientific guidance. Brazil's president actively disputed medical opinions, rejected any travel or

business restrictions, and was in conflict with many people in his own government (even his political allies); with Brazil's slower pace of vaccination compared to the U.S., it saw a steep increase in cases and deaths just as the United States' numbers started to decline.

Both those opposed to heavy restrictions and those who used them to fight the disease acknowledge that the impacts went far beyond physical health. Families shattered by the loss of a loved one had to go through the pain without relatives to support them at funerals or other gatherings. Many who recovered from the virus had serious health issues to contend with, while other people who delayed important treatments had larger problems than they normally would have. Fear, isolation, and strained familial relationships led to emotional problems. Many families lost income. Learning was certainly impacted as education practices went through sudden shifts. The true outcomes will likely not be fully understood for years after the pandemic is under control.

So now, after the height of the coronavirus pandemic, what does “health” mean to you? Does your opinion of it differ from your pre-COVID attitudes? Many people who became severely ill or died from COVID had other health issues (known as comorbidities) such as hypertension and obesity. Do you know people whose attitudes about their general health changed? Do you know people who are more or less suspicious of the government, more or less likely to listen to doctors or scientists? What do you think will be the best way to prevent illness and death should another pandemic strike?

Medical sociology is the systematic study of how humans manage issues of health and illness, disease and disorders, and healthcare for both the sick and the healthy. Medical sociologists study the physical, mental, and social components of health and illness. Major topics for medical sociologists include the doctor/patient relationship, the structure and socioeconomics of healthcare, and how culture impacts attitudes toward disease and wellness.

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12.2: The Social Construction of Health

Learning Objectives

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

- Define the term medical sociology
- Differentiate between the cultural meaning of illness, the social construction of illness, and the social construction of medical knowledge

The social construction of health is a major research topic within medical sociology. At first glance, the concept of a social construction of health does not seem to make sense. After all, if disease is a measurable, physiological problem, then there can be no question of socially constructing disease, right? Well, it's not that simple. The idea of the social construction of health emphasizes the socio-cultural aspects of the discipline's approach to physical, objectively definable phenomena.

Sociologists Conrad and Barker (2010) offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the major findings of the last fifty years of development in this concept. Their summary categorizes the findings in the field under three subheadings: the cultural meaning of illness, the social construction of the illness experience, and the social construction of medical knowledge.

The Cultural Meaning of Illness

Many medical sociologists contend that illnesses have both a biological and an experiential component and that these components exist independently of each other. Our culture, not our biology, dictates which illnesses are stigmatized and which are not, which are considered disabilities and which are not, and which are deemed contestable (meaning some medical professionals may find the existence of this ailment questionable) as opposed to definitive (illnesses that are unquestionably recognized in the medical profession) (Conrad and Barker 2010).

For instance, sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) described how social stigmas hinder individuals from fully integrating into society. In essence, Goffman (1963) suggests we might view illness as a stigma that can push others to view the ill in an undesirable manner. The stigmatization of illness often has the greatest effect on the patient and the kind of care they receive. Many contend that our society and even our healthcare institutions discriminate against certain diseases—like mental disorders, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, and skin disorders (Sartorius 2007). Facilities for these diseases may be sub-par; they may be segregated from other healthcare areas or relegated to a poorer environment. The stigma may keep people from seeking help for their illness, making it worse than it needs to be.

Contested illnesses are those that are questioned or questionable by some medical professionals. Disorders like fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome may be either true illnesses or only in the patients' heads, depending on the opinion of the medical professional. This dynamic can affect how a patient seeks treatment and what kind of treatment they receive.

The Social Construction of the Illness Experience

The idea of the social construction of the illness experience is based on the concept of reality as a social construction. In other words, there is no objective reality; there are only our own perceptions of it. The social construction of the illness experience deals with such issues as the way some patients control the manner in which they reveal their diseases and the lifestyle adaptations patients develop to cope with their illnesses.

In terms of constructing the illness experience, culture and individual personality both play a significant role. For some people, a long-term illness can have the effect of making their world smaller, more defined by the illness than anything else. For others, illness can be a chance for discovery, for re-imaging a new self (Conrad and Barker 2007). Culture plays a huge role in how an individual experiences illness. Widespread diseases like AIDS or breast cancer have specific cultural markers that have changed over the years and that govern how individuals—and society—view them.

Today, many institutions of wellness acknowledge the degree to which individual perceptions shape the nature of health and

illness. Regarding physical activity, for instance, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that individuals use a standard level of exertion to assess their physical activity. This Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) gives a more complete view of an individual's actual exertion level, since heartrate or pulse measurements may be affected by medication or other issues (Centers for Disease Control 2011a). Similarly, many medical professionals use a comparable scale for perceived pain to help determine pain management strategies.

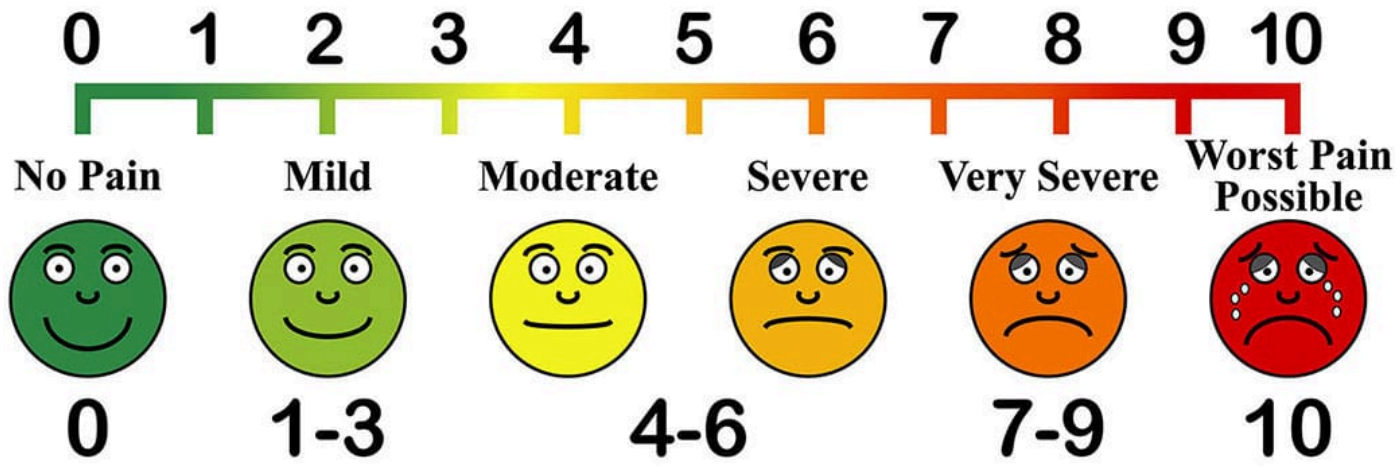


Figure 19.2: PAIN ASSESSMENT TOOL. The Mosby pain rating scale helps health care providers assess an individual's level of pain. What might a symbolic interactionist observe about this method? (Credit: Arvin61r58/openclipart)

The Social Construction of Medical Knowledge

Conrad and Barker show how medical knowledge is socially constructed; that is, it can both reflect and reproduce inequalities in gender, class, race, and ethnicity. Conrad and Barker (2011) use the example of the social construction of women's health and how medical knowledge has changed significantly in the course of a few generations. For instance, in the early nineteenth century, pregnant women were discouraged from driving or dancing for fear of harming the unborn child, much as they are discouraged, with more valid reason, from smoking or drinking alcohol today.

Social Policy and Debate: Has Breast Cancer Awareness Gone Too Far?



Figure 19.3: Pink ribbons are a ubiquitous reminder of breast cancer. But do pink ribbon chocolates do anything to eradicate the disease? (Credit: wishuponacupcake/Wikimedia Commons)

Every October, the world turns pink. Football and baseball players wear pink accessories. Skyscrapers and large public buildings are lit with pink lights at night. Shoppers can choose from a huge array of pink products. In 2014, people wanting to support the fight against breast cancer could purchase any of the following pink products: KitchenAid mixers, Master Lock padlocks and bike chains, Wilson tennis rackets, Fiat cars, and Smith & Wesson handguns. You read that correctly. The goal of all these pink products is to raise awareness and money for breast cancer. However, the relentless creep of pink has many people wondering if the pink marketing juggernaut has gone too far.

Pink has been associated with breast cancer since 1991, when the Susan G. Komen Foundation handed out pink ribbons at its 1991 Race for the Cure event. Since then, the pink ribbon has appeared on countless products, and then by extension, the color pink has come to represent support for a cure of the disease. No one can argue about the Susan G. Komen Foundation's mission—to find a cure for breast cancer—or the fact that the group has raised millions of dollars for research and care. However, some people question if, or how much, all these products really help in the fight against breast cancer (Begos 2011).

The advocacy group Breast Cancer Action (BCA) position themselves as watchdogs of other agencies fighting breast cancer. They accept no funding from entities, like those in the pharmaceutical industry, with potential profit connections to this health industry. They've developed a trademarked "Think Before You Pink" campaign to provoke consumer questioning of the end contributions made to breast cancer by companies hawking pink wares. They do not advise against "pink" purchases; they just want consumers to be informed about how much money is involved, where it comes from, and where it will go. For instance, what percentage of each purchase goes to breast cancer causes? BCA does not judge how much is enough, but it informs customers and then encourages them to consider whether they feel the amount is enough (Think Before You Pink 2012).

BCA also suggests that consumers make sure that the product they are buying does not actually *contribute* to breast cancer, a phenomenon they call "pinkwashing." This issue made national headlines in 2010, when the Susan G. Komen Foundation partnered with Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) on a promotion called "Buckets for the Cure." For every bucket of grilled or regular fried chicken, KFC would donate fifty cents to the Komen Foundation, with the goal of reaching 8 million dollars: the largest single donation received by the foundation. However, some critics saw the partnership as an unholy alliance. Higher body fat and eating fatty foods has been linked to increased cancer risks, and detractors, including BCA, called the Komen Foundation out on this apparent contradiction of goals. Komen's response was that the program did a great deal to raise awareness in low-income communities, where Komen previously had little outreach (Hutchison 2010).

What do you think? Are fundraising and awareness important enough to trump issues of health? What other examples of "pinkwashing" can you think of?

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12.3: Global Health

Learning Objectives

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

- Define social epidemiology
- Apply theories of social epidemiology to an understanding of global health issues
- Differentiate high-income and low-income nations

Social epidemiology is the study of the causes and distribution of diseases. Social epidemiology can reveal how social problems are connected to the health of different populations. These epidemiological studies show that the health problems of high-income nations differ from those of low-income nations, but also that diseases and their diagnosis are changing. Cardiovascular disease, for example, is now the both most prevalent disease and the disease most likely to be fatal in lower-income countries. And globally, 70 percent of cardiovascular disease cases and deaths are due to modifiable risks (Dagenais 2019).

Some theorists differentiate among three types of countries: core nations, semi-peripheral nations, and peripheral nations. Core nations are those that we think of as highly developed or industrialized, semi-peripheral nations are those that are often called developing or newly industrialized, and peripheral nations are those that are relatively undeveloped. While the most pervasive issue in the U.S. healthcare system is affordable access to healthcare, other core countries have different issues, and semi-peripheral and peripheral nations are faced with a host of additional concerns. Reviewing the status of global health offers insight into the various ways that politics and wealth shape access to healthcare, and it shows which populations are most affected by health disparities.

Health in High-Income Nations

Obesity, which is on the rise in high-income nations, has been linked to many diseases, including cardiovascular problems, musculoskeletal problems, diabetes, and respiratory issues. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2011), obesity rates are rising in all countries, with the greatest gains being made in the highest-income countries. The United States has the highest obesity rate at 42 percent; some of these people are considered severely obese, which occurs in 9 percent of U.S. adults (Hales 2020).

Wallace Huffman and his fellow researchers (2006) contend that several factors are contributing to the rise in obesity in developed countries:

- Improvements in technology and reduced family size have led to a reduction of work to be done in household production.
- Unhealthy market goods, including processed foods, sweetened drinks, and sweet and salty snacks are replacing home-produced goods.
- Leisure activities are growing more sedentary, for example, computer games, web surfing, and television viewing.
- More workers are shifting from active work (agriculture and manufacturing) to service industries.
- Increased access to passive transportation has led to more driving and less walking.

Obesity and weight issues have significant societal costs, including lower life expectancies and higher shared healthcare costs.

While ischemic heart disease is the single most prevalent cause of death in higher-income countries, cancers of all types combine to be a higher overall cause of death. Cancer accounts for twice as many deaths as cardiovascular disease in higher-income countries (Mahase 2019).

Health in Low-Income Nations

In peripheral nations with low per capita income, it is not the cost of healthcare that is the most pressing concern. Rather, low-income countries must manage such problems as infectious disease, high infant mortality rates, scarce medical personnel, and inadequate water and sewer systems. Due to such health concerns, low-income nations have higher rates of infant mortality and

lower average life spans.

One of the biggest contributors to medical issues in low-income countries is the lack of access to clean water and basic sanitation resources. According to a 2014 UNICEF report, almost half of the developing world's population lacks improved sanitation facilities. The World Health Organization (WHO) tracks health-related data for 193 countries, and organizes them by region. In their 2011 World Health Statistics report, they document the following statistics:

- Globally in 2019, the rate of mortality for children under five was 38 per 1,000 live births, which is a dramatic change from previous decades. (In 1990, the rate was 93 deaths per 1,000 births (World Health Organization 2020.)) In low-income countries, however, that rate is much higher. The child mortality rate in low-income nations was 11 times higher than that of high-income countries—76 deaths per 1,000 births compared to 7 deaths per 1,000 births (Keck 2020). To consider it regionally, the highest under-five mortality rate remains in the WHO African Region (74 per 1000 live births), around 9 times higher than that in the WHO European Region (8 per 1000 live births) (World Health Organization 2021).
- The most frequent causes of death in children under five years old are pneumonia, diarrhea, congenital anomalies, preterm birth complications, birth asphyxia/trauma, and malaria, all of which can be prevented or treated with affordable interventions including immunization, adequate nutrition, safe water and food and quality care by a trained health provider when needed.

The availability of doctors and nurses in low-income countries is one-tenth that of nations with a high income. Challenges in access to medical education and access to patients exacerbate this issue for would-be medical professionals in low-income countries (World Health Organization 2011).

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12.4: Health in the United States

Learning Objectives

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

- Apply social epidemiology to health in the United States
- Explain disparities of health based on gender, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity
- Summarize mental health and disability issues in the United States
- Explain the terms stigma and medicalization

Health in the United States is a complex and often contradictory issue. One the one hand, as one of the wealthiest nations, the United States fares well in health comparisons with the rest of the world. However, the United States also lags behind almost every industrialized country in terms of providing care to *all* its citizens. The following sections look at different aspects of health in the United States.

Health by Race and Ethnicity

When looking at the social epidemiology of the United States, it is hard to miss the disparities among races. The discrepancy between Black and White Americans shows the gap clearly; in 2018, the average life expectancy for White males was approximately five years longer than for Black males: 78.8 compared to 74.7 (Wamsley 2021). (Note that in 2020 life expectancies of all races declined further, though the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic was a significant cause.) Other indicates show a similar disparity. The 2018 infant mortality rates for different races and ethnicities are as follows:

- Non-Hispanic Black people: 10.8
- Native Hawaiian people or other Pacific Islanders: 9.4
- Native American/Alaska Native people: 8.2
- Hispanic people: 4.9
- Non-Hispanic White people: 4.6
- Asian and Asian American people: 3.6 (Centers for Disease Control 2021)

According to a report from the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation (2007), African Americans also have higher incidence of several diseases and causes of mortality, from cancer to heart disease to diabetes. In a similar vein, it is important to note that ethnic minorities, including Mexican Americans and Native Americans, also have higher rates of these diseases and causes of mortality than White people.

Lisa Berkman (2009) notes that this gap started to narrow during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, but it began widening again in the early 1980s. What accounts for these perpetual disparities in health among different ethnic groups? Much of the answer lies in the level of healthcare that these groups receive. The National Healthcare Disparities Report shows that even after adjusting for insurance differences, racial and ethnic minority groups receive poorer quality of care and less access to care than dominant groups. The Report identified these racial inequalities in care:

- Black people, Native Americans, and Alaska Native people received worse care than Whites for about 40 percent of quality measures.
- Hispanic people, Native Hawaiian people, and Pacific Islanders received worse care than White people for more than 30 percent of quality measures.
- Asian people received worse care than White people for nearly 30 percent of quality measures but better care for nearly 30 percent of quality measures (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality 2020).

Health by Socioeconomic Status

Discussions of health by race and ethnicity often overlap with discussions of health by socioeconomic status, since the two concepts are intertwined in the United States. As the Agency for Health Research and Quality (2010) notes, “racial and ethnic

minorities are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to be poor or near poor," so much of the data pertaining to subordinate groups is also likely to be pertinent to low socioeconomic groups. Marilyn Winkleby and her research associates (1992) state that "one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of a person's morbidity and mortality experience is that person's socioeconomic status (SES). This finding persists across all diseases with few exceptions, continues throughout the entire lifespan, and extends across numerous risk factors for disease." Morbidity is the incidence of disease.

It is important to remember that economics are only part of the SES picture; research suggests that education also plays an important role. Phelan and Link (2003) note that many behavior-influenced diseases like lung cancer (from smoking), coronary artery disease (from poor eating and exercise habits), and AIDS initially were widespread across SES groups. However, once information linking habits to disease was disseminated, these diseases decreased in high SES groups and increased in low SES groups. This illustrates the important role of education initiatives regarding a given disease, as well as possible inequalities in how those initiatives effectively reach different SES groups.

Health by Gender

Women are affected adversely both by unequal access to and institutionalized sexism in the healthcare industry. According to a recent report from the Kaiser Family Foundation, women experienced a decline in their ability to see needed specialists between 2001 and 2008. In 2008, one quarter of women questioned the quality of their healthcare (Ranji and Salganico 2011). Quality is partially indicated by access and cost. In 2018, roughly one in four (26%) women—compared to one in five (19%) men—reported delaying healthcare or letting conditions go untreated due to cost. Because of costs, approximately one in five women postponed preventive care, skipped a recommended test or treatment, or reduced their use of medication due to cost (Kaiser Family Foundation 2018).

We can see an example of institutionalized sexism in the way that women are more likely than men to be diagnosed with certain kinds of mental disorders. Psychologist Dana Becker notes that 75 percent of all diagnoses of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) are for women according to the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. This diagnosis is characterized by instability of identity, of mood, and of behavior, and Becker argues that it has been used as a catch-all diagnosis for too many women. She further decries the pejorative connotation of the diagnosis, saying that it predisposes many people, both within and outside of the profession of psychotherapy, against women who have been so diagnosed (Becker).

Many critics also point to the medicalization of women's issues as an example of institutionalized sexism. Medicalization refers to the process by which previously normal aspects of life are redefined as deviant and needing medical attention to remedy. Historically and contemporaneously, many aspects of women's lives have been medicalized, including menstruation, premenstrual syndrome, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause. The medicalization of pregnancy and childbirth has been particularly contentious in recent decades, with many women opting against the medical process and choosing a more natural childbirth. Fox and Worts (1999) find that all women experience pain and anxiety during the birth process, but that social support relieves both as effectively as medical support. In other words, medical interventions are no more effective than social ones at helping with the difficulties of pain and childbirth. Fox and Worts further found that women with supportive partners ended up with less medical intervention and fewer cases of postpartum depression. Of course, access to quality birth care outside the standard medical models may not be readily available to women of all social classes.

Sociology in the Real World: Medicalization of Sleeplessness



Figure 19.4: Many people fail to get enough sleep. But is insomnia a disease that should be cured with medication? (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

How is your "sleep hygiene?" Sleep hygiene refers to the lifestyle and sleep habits that contribute to sleeplessness. Bad habits that can lead to sleeplessness include inconsistent bedtimes, lack of exercise, late-night employment, napping during the day, and sleep environments that include noise, lights, or screen time (National Institutes of Health 2011a).

According to the National Institute of Health, examining sleep hygiene is the first step in trying to solve a problem with sleeplessness.

For many people in the United States, however, making changes in sleep hygiene does not seem to be enough. According to a 2006 report from the Institute of Medicine, sleeplessness is an underrecognized public health problem affecting up to 70 million people. It is interesting to note that in the months (or years) after this report was released, advertising by the pharmaceutical companies behind Ambien, Lunesta, and Sepracor (three sleep aids) averaged $188 million weekly promoting these drugs (Gellene 2009).

According to a study in the *American Journal of Public Health* (2011), prescriptions for sleep medications increased dramatically from 1993 to 2007. While complaints of sleeplessness during doctor's office visits more than doubled during this time, insomnia diagnoses increased more than sevenfold, from about 840,000 to 6.1 million. The authors of the study conclude that sleeplessness has been medicalized as insomnia, and that "insomnia may be a public health concern, but potential overtreatment with marginally effective, expensive medications with nontrivial side effects raises definite population health concerns" (Moloney, Konrad, and Zimmer 2011). Indeed, a study published in 2004 in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* shows that cognitive behavioral therapy, not medication, was the most effective sleep intervention (Jacobs, Pace-Schott, Stickgold, and Otto 2004).

A century ago, people who couldn't sleep were told to count sheep. Now they pop a pill, and all those pills add up to a very lucrative market for the pharmaceutical industry. Is this industry behind the medicalization of sleeplessness, or is it just responding to a need?

Mental Health and Disability

The treatment received by those defined as mentally ill or disabled varies greatly from country to country. In the post-millennial United States, those of us who have never experienced such a disadvantage take for granted the rights our society guarantees for each citizen. We do not think about the relatively recent nature of the protections, unless, of course, we know someone constantly inconvenienced by the lack of accommodations or misfortune of suddenly experiencing a temporary disability.

Mental Health

People with mental disorders (a condition that makes it more difficult to cope with everyday life) and people with mental illness (a severe, lasting mental disorder that requires long-term treatment) experience a wide range of effects. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the United States has over 50 million adults with mental illness or mental disorder, or 20 percent of the total adult population. Of these, 13 million have what is considered serious mental illness or mental disorder (5 percent of the adult population); serious mental illness is that which causes impairment or disability (National Institute of Mental Health 2021). Finally, 16.5 percent of children aged 6-17 experienced mental illness or disorder (National Alliance on Mental Illness 2021).

The most common mental disorders in the United States are anxiety disorders. Almost 18 percent of U.S. adults are likely to be affected in a single year, and 28 percent are likely to be affected over the course of a lifetime (Anxiety and Depression Institute of America 2021). It is important to distinguish between occasional feelings of anxiety and a true anxiety disorder. Anxiety is a normal reaction to stress that we all feel at some point, but anxiety disorders are feelings of worry and fearfulness that last for months at a time. Anxiety disorders include obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and both social and specific phobias.

The second most common mental disorders in the United States are mood disorders; roughly 10 percent of U.S. adults are likely to be affected yearly, while 21 percent are likely to be affected over the course of a lifetime (National Institute of Mental Health 2005). Mood disorders are the most common causes of illness-related hospitalization in the U.S. (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality 2021). Major mood disorders are depression and dysthymic disorder. Like anxiety, depression might seem like something that everyone experiences at some point, and it is true that most people feel sad or “blue” at times in their lives. A true depressive episode, however, is more than just feeling sad for a short period. It is a long-term, debilitating illness that usually needs treatment to cure. Bipolar disorder is characterized by dramatic shifts in energy and mood, often affecting the individual’s ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. Bipolar disorder used to be called manic depression because of the way people would swing between manic and depressive episodes.

Depending on what definition is used, there is some overlap between mood disorders and personality disorders, which affect 9 percent of people in the United States yearly. A personality disorder is an enduring and inflexible pattern of long duration leading to significant distress or impairment, that is not due to use of substances or another medical condition. In other words, personality disorders cause people to behave in ways that are seen as abnormal to society but seem normal to them.

The diagnosis and classification regarding personality disorders has been evolving and is somewhat controversial. To guide diagnosis and potential treatments of mental disorders, the American Psychological Association publishes the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual on Mental Disorders* (DSM). Experts working on the latest version initially proposed changing the categories of personality disorders. However, the final publication retains the original ten categories, but contains an alternate/emerging approach for classifying them. This evolution demonstrates the challenges and the wide array of treating conditions, and also represents areas of difference between theorists, practitioners, governing bodies, and other stakeholders. As discussed in the Sociological Research chapter, study and investigation is a diligent and multi-dimensional process. As the diagnostic application evolves, we will see how their definitions help scholars across disciplines understand the intersection of health issues and how they are defined by social institutions and cultural norms.



Figure 19.5: Medication is a common option for children with ADHD. (Credit: Deviation56/Wikimedia Commons)

Another commonly diagnosed mental disorder is Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which affects 9 percent of U.S. children and 4 percent of adults on a lifetime basis (Danielson 2018). Since ADHD is one of the most common childhood disorders, it is often incorrectly considered only a disease found in children. But ADHD can be a serious issue for adults who either had been diagnosed as children or who are diagnosed as adults. ADHD is marked by difficulty paying attention, difficulty controlling behavior, and hyperactivity. As a result, it can lead to educational and behavioral issues in children, success issues in college, and challenges in workplace and family life. However, there is some social debate over whether such drugs are being overprescribed (American Psychological Association). A significant difficulty in diagnosis, treatment, and societal understanding of ADHD is that it changes in expression based on a wide range of factors, including age (CHADD 2020).

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) encompass a group of developmental brain disorders that are characterized by "deficits in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and engagement in repetitive behaviors or interests" (National Institute of Mental Health). As of 2021, the CDC estimates that 1 in 54 children has an autism spectrum disorder. Beyond the very high incidence, the rate of diagnosis has been increasing steadily as awareness became more widespread. In 2005, the rate was 1 in 166 children; in 2012 it was 1 in 88 children. The rate of increase and awareness has assisted diagnosis and treatment, but autism is a cause of significant fear among parents and families. Because of its impact on relationships and especially verbal communication, children with autism (and their parents) can be shunned, grossly misunderstood, and mistreated. For example, people with an autism spectrum disorder who cannot verbalize are often assumed to be unintelligent, or are sometimes left out of conversations or activities because others feel they cannot participate. Parents may be reluctant to let their children play with or associate with children with ASD. Adults with ASD go through many of the same misconceptions and mistreatments, such as being denied opportunities or being made to feel unwelcome (Applied Behavior Analysis).

Disability



Figure 19.6: The accessibility sign indicates that people with disabilities can access the facility. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that access be provided to everyone. (Credit: Ltljltlj/Wikimedia Commons)

Disability refers to a reduction in one's ability to perform everyday tasks. The World Health Organization makes a distinction between the various terms used to describe disabilities. They use the term impairment to describe the physical limitations, while reserving the term disability to refer to the social limitation.

Before the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, people in the United States with disabilities were often excluded from opportunities and social institutions many of us take for granted. This occurred not only through employment and other kinds of discrimination but also through casual acceptance by most people in the United States of a world designed for the convenience of the able-bodied. Imagine being in a wheelchair and trying to use a sidewalk without the benefit of wheelchair-accessible curbs. Imagine as a blind person trying to access information without the widespread availability of Braille. Imagine having limited motor control and being faced with a difficult-to-grasp round door handle. Issues like these are what the ADA tries to address. Ramps on sidewalks, Braille instructions, and more accessible door levers are all accommodations to help people with disabilities.

People with disabilities can be stigmatized by their illnesses. Stigmatization means their identity is spoiled; they are labeled as different, discriminated against, and sometimes even shunned. They are labeled (as an interactionist might point out) and ascribed a master status (as a functionalist might note), becoming "the blind girl" or "the boy in the wheelchair" instead of someone afforded a full identity by society. This can be especially true for people who are disabled due to mental illness or disorders.

As discussed in the section on mental health, many mental health disorders can be debilitating and can affect a person's ability to cope with everyday life. This can affect social status, housing, and especially employment. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), people with a disability had a higher rate of unemployment than people without a disability in 2010: 14.8 percent to 9.4 percent. This unemployment rate refers only to people actively looking for a job. In fact, eight out of ten people with a disability are considered "out of the labor force;" that is, they do not have jobs and are not looking for them. The combination of this population and the high unemployment rate leads to an employment-population ratio of 18.6 percent among those with disabilities. The employment-population ratio for people without disabilities was much higher, at 63.5 percent (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011).

Sociology in the Real World: Obesity: The Last Acceptable Prejudice?

Many people who see a person with obesity may make negative assumptions about them based on their size. According to a study from the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, large people are the object of “widespread negative stereotypes that overweight and obese persons are lazy, unmotivated, lacking in self-discipline, less competent, noncompliant, and sloppy” (Puhl and Heuer 2009).

Historically, both in the United States and elsewhere, it was considered acceptable to discriminate against people based on prejudiced opinions. Even after slavery was abolished through the 13th Amendment in 1865, institutionalized racism and prejudice against Black people persisted. In an example of stereotype interchangeability, the same insults that are flung today at the overweight and obese population (lazy, for instance) have been flung at various racial and ethnic groups in earlier history.

Why is it considered acceptable to feel prejudice toward—even to hate—people with obesity? Puhl and Heuer suggest that these feelings stem from the perception that obesity is preventable through self-control, better diet, and more exercise. Highlighting this contention is the fact that studies have shown that people’s perceptions of obesity are more positive when they think the obesity was caused by non-controllable factors like biology (a thyroid condition, for instance) or genetics.

Health experts emphasize that obesity is a disease, and that it is not the result of simple overeating. There are often a number of contributing factors that make it more difficult to avoid. Even with some understanding of non-controllable factors that might affect obesity, people with obesity are still subject to stigmatization. Puhl and Heuer’s study is one of many that document discrimination at work, in the media, and even in the medical profession. Large people are less likely to get into college than thinner people, and they are less likely to succeed at work.

Stigmatization of people with obesity comes in many forms, from the seemingly benign to the potentially illegal. In movies and television shows, overweight people are often portrayed negatively, or as stock characters who are the butt of jokes. One study found that in children’s movies “obesity was equated with negative traits (evil, unattractive, unfriendly, cruel) in 64 percent of the most popular children's videos. In 72 percent of the videos, characters with thin bodies had desirable traits, such as kindness or happiness” (Hines and Thompson 2007). In movies and television for adults, the negative portrayal is often meant to be funny. Think about the way you have seen obese people portrayed in movies and on television; now think of any other subordinate group being openly denigrated in such a way. It is difficult to find a parallel example.

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12.5: Comparative Health and Medicine

Learning Objectives

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

- Explain the different types of health care available in the United States
- Compare the health care system of the United States with that of other countries

There are broad, structural differences among the healthcare systems of different countries. In core nations, those differences might arise in the administration of healthcare, while the care itself is similar. In peripheral and semi-peripheral countries, a lack of basic healthcare administration can be the defining feature of the system. Most countries rely on some combination of modern and traditional medicine. In core countries with large investments in technology, research, and equipment, the focus is usually on modern medicine, with traditional (also called alternative or complementary) medicine playing a secondary role. In the United States, for instance, the American Medical Association (AMA) resolved to support the incorporation of complementary and alternative medicine in medical education. In developing countries, even quickly modernizing ones like China, traditional medicine (often understood as "complementary" by the western world) may still play a larger role.

U.S. Healthcare

U.S. healthcare coverage can broadly be divided into two main categories: public healthcare (government-funded) and private healthcare (privately funded).

The two main publicly funded healthcare programs are Medicare, which provides health services to people over sixty-five years old as well as people who meet other standards for disability, and Medicaid, which provides services to people with very low incomes who meet other eligibility requirements. Other government-funded programs include service agencies focused on Native Americans (the Indian Health Service), Veterans (the Veterans Health Administration), and children (the Children's Health Insurance Program).

Private insurance is typically categorized as either employment-based insurance or direct-purchase insurance. Employment-based insurance is health plan coverage that is provided in whole or in part by an employer or union; it can cover just the employee, or the employee and their family. Direct purchase insurance is coverage that an individual buys directly from a private company.

Even with all these options, a sizable portion of the U.S. population remains uninsured. In 2019, about 26 million people, or 8 percent of U.S. residents, had no health insurance. 2020 saw that number go up to 31 million (Keith 2020). Several more million had health insurance for part of the year (Keisler-Starkey 2020). Uninsured people are at risk of both severe illness and also chronic illnesses that develop over time. Fewer uninsured people engage in regular check-ups or preventative medicine, and rely on urgent care for a range of acute health issues.

The number of uninsured people is far lower than in previous decades. In 2013 and in many of the years preceding it, the number of uninsured people was in the 40 million range, or roughly 18 percent of the population. The Affordable Care Act, which came into full force in 2014, allowed more people to get affordable insurance. The uninsured number reached its lowest point in 2016, before beginning to climb again (Garfield 2019).

People having some insurance may mask the fact that they could be underinsured; that is, people who pay at least 10 percent of their income on healthcare costs not covered by insurance or, for low-income adults, those whose medical expenses or deductibles are at least 5 percent of their income (Schoen, Doty, Robertson, and Collins 2011).

Why are so many people uninsured or underinsured? Skyrocketing healthcare costs are part of the issue. While most people get their insurance through their employer, not all employers offer it, especially retail companies or small businesses in which many of the workers may be part time. Finally, for many years insurers could deny coverage to people with pre-existing conditions--previous illnesses or chronic diseases.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (often abbreviated ACA or nicknamed Obamacare) was a landmark change in U.S. healthcare. Passed in 2010 and fully implemented in 2014, it increased eligibility to programs like Medicaid, helped guarantee insurance coverage for people with pre-existing conditions, and established regulations to make sure that the premium funds collected by insurers and care providers go directly to medical care. It also included an individual mandate, which requires everyone to have insurance coverage by 2014 or pay a penalty. A series of provisions, including significant subsidies, are intended to address the discrepancies in income that are currently contributing to high rates of uninsurance and underinsurance. In 2012 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the ACA's individual mandate. 29 million people in the United States have gained health insurance under ACA (Economic Policy Institute 2021).



Figure 19.7: The Affordable Care Act has been a savior for some and a target for others. As Congress and various state governments sought to have it overturned with laws or to have it diminished by the courts, supporters took to the streets to express its importance to them. (Credit: Molly Adams)

The ACA remains contentious. The Supreme Court ruled in the case of *National Federation of Independent Businesses v. Sebelius* in 2012, that states cannot be forced to participate in the PPACA's Medicaid expansion. This ruling opened the door to further challenges to the ACA in Congress and the Federal courts, some state governments, conservative groups and independent businesses. The ACA has been a driving factor in elections and public opinion. In 2010 and 2014, many Republican gains in Congressional seats were related to fierce concern about Obamacare. However, once millions of people were covered by the law and the economy continued to improve, public sentiment and elections swung the other way. Healthcare was the top issue for voters, and desire to preserve the law was credited for many of the Democratic gains in the election, which carried over to 2020.

Healthcare Elsewhere

Clearly, healthcare in the United States has some areas for improvement. But how does it compare to healthcare in other countries? Many people in the United States are fond of saying that this country has the best healthcare in the world, and while it is true that the United States has a higher quality of care available than many peripheral or semi-peripheral nations, it is not necessarily the “best in the world.” In a report on how U.S. healthcare compares to that of other countries, researchers found that the United States does “relatively well in some areas—such as cancer care—and less well in others—such as mortality from conditions amenable to prevention and treatment” (Docteur and Berenson 2009).

One critique of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is that it will create a system of socialized medicine, a term that for many people in the United States has negative connotations lingering from the Cold War era and earlier. Under a socialized medicine system, the government owns and runs the system. It employs the doctors, nurses, and other staff, and it owns and runs the hospitals (Klein 2009). The best example of socialized medicine is in Great Britain, where the National Health System (NHS) gives free healthcare to all its residents. And despite some U.S. citizens’ knee-jerk reaction to any healthcare changes that hint of socialism, the United States has one socialized system with the Veterans Health Administration.

It is important to distinguish between socialized medicine, in which the government owns the healthcare system, and universal healthcare, which is simply a system that guarantees healthcare coverage for everyone. Germany, Singapore, and Canada all have

universal healthcare. People often look to Canada's universal healthcare system, Medicare, as a model for the system. In Canada, healthcare is publicly funded and is administered by the separate provincial and territorial governments. However, the care itself comes from private providers. This is the main difference between universal healthcare and socialized medicine. The Canada Health Act of 1970 required that all health insurance plans must be "available to all eligible Canadian residents, comprehensive in coverage, accessible, portable among provinces, and publicly administered" (International Health Systems Canada 2010).

Heated discussions about socialization of medicine and managed-care options seem frivolous when compared with the issues of healthcare systems in developing or underdeveloped countries. In many countries, per capita income is so low, and governments are so fractured, that healthcare as we know it is virtually non-existent. Care that people in developed countries take for granted—like hospitals, healthcare workers, immunizations, antibiotics and other medications, and even sanitary water for drinking and washing—are unavailable to much of the population. Organizations like Doctors Without Borders, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization have played an important role in helping these countries get their most basic health needs met.

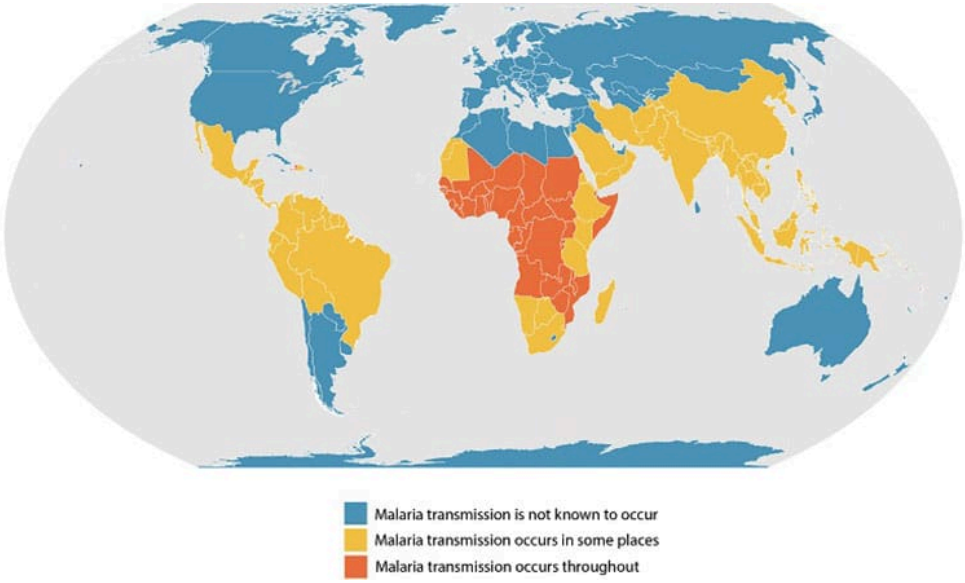


Figure 19.8: This map shows the countries where malaria is known to occur. In low-income countries, malaria is still a common cause of death. (Credit: CDC/Wikimedia Commons)

WHO, which is the health arm of the United Nations, set eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 with the aim of reaching these goals by 2015. Some of the goals deal more broadly with the socioeconomic factors that influence health, but MDGs 4, 5, and 6 all relate specifically to large-scale health concerns, the likes of which most people in the United States will never contemplate. MDG 4 is to reduce child mortality, MDG 5 aims to improve maternal health, and MDG 6 strives to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases. The goals may not seem particularly dramatic, but the numbers behind them show how serious they are.

For MDG 4, the WHO reports that 2009 infant mortality rates in "children under 5 years old in the WHO African Region (127 per 1000 live births) and in low-income countries (117 per 1000 live births) [had dropped], but they were still higher than the 1990 global level of 89 per 1000 live births" (World Health Organization 2011). The fact that these deaths could have been avoided through appropriate medicine and clean drinking water shows the importance of healthcare.

Much progress has been made on MDG 5, with maternal deaths decreasing by 34 percent. However, almost all maternal deaths occurred in developing countries, with the African region still experiencing high numbers (World Health Organization 2011).

On MDG 6, the WHO is seeing some decreases in per capita incidence rates of malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases. However, the decreases are often offset by population increases (World Health Organization 2011). Again, the lowest-income countries, especially in the African region, experience the worst problems with disease. An important component of disease prevention and control is epidemiology, or the study of the incidence, distribution, and possible control of diseases. Fear of Ebola contamination, primarily in Western Africa but also to a smaller degree in the United States, became national news in the summer and fall of 2014.

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12.6: Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

Learning Objectives

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

- Apply functionalist, conflict theorist, and interactionist perspectives to health issues

Each of the three major theoretical perspectives approaches the topics of health, illness, and medicine differently. You may prefer just one of the theories that follow, or you may find that combining theories and perspectives provides a fuller picture of how we experience health and wellness.

Functionalism

According to the functionalist perspective, health is vital to the stability of the society, and therefore sickness is a sanctioned form of deviance. Talcott Parsons (1951) was the first to discuss this in terms of the sick role: patterns of expectations that define appropriate behavior for the sick and for those who take care of them.

According to Parsons, the sick person has a specific role with both rights and responsibilities. To start with, the sick person has not chosen to be sick and should not be treated as responsible for her condition. The sick person also has the right of being exempt from normal social roles; they are not required to fulfill the obligation of a well person and can avoid her normal responsibilities without censure. However, this exemption is temporary and relative to the severity of the illness. The exemption also requires legitimation by a physician; that is, a physician must certify that the illness is genuine.

The responsibility of the sick person is twofold: to try to get well and to seek technically competent help from a physician. If the sick person stays ill longer than is appropriate (malingers), they may be stigmatized.

Parsons argues that since the sick are unable to fulfill their normal societal roles, their sickness weakens the society. Therefore, it is sometimes necessary for various forms of social control to bring the behavior of a sick person back in line with normal expectations. In this model of health, doctors serve as gatekeepers, deciding who is healthy and who is sick—a relationship in which the doctor has all the power. But is it appropriate to allow doctors so much power over deciding who is sick? And what about people who are sick, but are unwilling to leave their positions for any number of reasons (personal/social obligations, financial need, or lack of insurance, for instance).

Conflict Perspective

Theorists using the conflict perspective suggest that issues with the healthcare system, as with most other social problems, are rooted in capitalist society. According to conflict theorists, capitalism and the pursuit of profit lead to the commodification of health: the changing of something not generally thought of as a commodity into something that can be bought and sold in a marketplace. In this view, people with money and power—the dominant group—are the ones who make decisions about how the healthcare system will be run. They therefore ensure that they will have healthcare coverage, while simultaneously ensuring that subordinate groups stay subordinate through lack of access. This creates significant healthcare—and health—disparities between the dominant and subordinate groups.

Alongside the health disparities created by class inequalities, there are a number of health disparities created by racism, sexism, ageism, and heterosexism. When health is a commodity, the poor are more likely to experience illness caused by poor diet, to live and work in unhealthy environments, and are less likely to challenge the system. In the United States, a disproportionate number of racial minorities also have less economic power, so they bear a great deal of the burden of poor health. It is not only the poor who suffer from the conflict between dominant and subordinate groups. For many years now, same-sex couples have been denied spousal benefits, either in the form of health insurance or in terms of medical responsibility. Further adding to the issue, doctors hold a disproportionate amount of power in the doctor/patient relationship, which provides them with extensive social and economic benefits.

While conflict theorists are accurate in pointing out certain inequalities in the healthcare system, they do not give enough credit to medical advances that would not have been made without an economic structure to support and reward researchers: a structure dependent on profitability. Additionally, in their criticism of the power differential between doctor and patient, they are perhaps dismissive of the hard-won medical expertise possessed by doctors and not patients, which renders a truly egalitarian relationship more elusive.

Symbolic Interactionism

According to theorists working in this perspective, health and illness are both socially constructed. As we discussed in the beginning of the chapter, interactionists focus on the specific meanings and causes people attribute to illness. The term medicalization of deviance refers to the process that changes "bad" behavior into "sick" behavior. A related process is demedicalization, in which "sick" behavior is normalized again. Medicalization and demedicalization affect who responds to the patient, how people respond to the patient, and how people view the personal responsibility of the patient (Conrad and Schneider 1992).



Figure 19.9: In this engraving from the nineteenth century, "King Alcohol" is shown with a skeleton on a barrel of alcohol. The words "poverty," "misery," "crime," and "death" hang in the air behind him. (Credit: Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons)

An example of medicalization is illustrated by the history of how our society views alcohol and alcoholism. During the nineteenth century, people who drank too much were considered bad, lazy people. They were called drunks, and it was not uncommon for them to be arrested or run out of a town. Drunks were not treated in a sympathetic way because, at that time, it was thought that it was their own fault that they could not stop drinking. During the latter half of the twentieth century, however, people who drank too much were increasingly defined as alcoholics: people with a disease or a genetic predisposition to addiction who were not responsible for their drinking. With alcoholism defined as a disease and not a personal choice, alcoholics came to be viewed with more compassion and understanding. Thus, "badness" was transformed into "sickness."

There are numerous examples of demedicalization in history as well. During the Civil War era, enslaved people who escaped from their enslavers were diagnosed with a mental disorder called drapetomania. This has since been reinterpreted as a completely appropriate response to being enslaved. A more recent example is homosexuality, which was labeled a mental disorder or a sexual orientation disturbance by the American Psychological Association until 1973.

While interactionism does acknowledge the subjective nature of diagnosis, it is important to remember who most benefits when a behavior becomes defined as illness. Pharmaceutical companies make billions treating illnesses such as fatigue, insomnia, and hyperactivity that may not actually be illnesses in need of treatment, but opportunities for companies to make more money.

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12.7: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
anxiety disorders	feelings of worry and fearfulness that last for months at a time				
commodification	the changing of something not generally thought of as a commodity into something that can be bought and sold in a marketplace				
contested illnesses	illnesses that are questioned or considered questionable by some medical professionals				
demedicalization	the social process that normalizes “sick” behavior				
disability	a reduction in one’s ability to perform everyday tasks; the World Health Organization notes that this is a social limitation				
epidemiology	the study of the incidence, distribution, and possible control of diseases				
impairment	the physical limitations a less-able person faces				
individual mandate	a government rule that requires everyone to have insurance coverage or they will have to pay a penalty				
legitimation	the act of a physician certifying that an illness is genuine				
medical sociology	the systematic study of how humans manage issues of health and illness, disease and disorders, and healthcare for both the sick and the healthy				
medicalization	the process by which aspects of life that were considered bad or deviant are redefined as sickness and needing medical attention to remedy				
medicalization of deviance	the process that changes “bad” behavior into “sick” behavior				
mood disorders	long-term, debilitating illnesses like depression and bipolar disorder				
morbidity	the incidence of disease				
mortality	the number of deaths in a given time or place				
personality disorders	disorders that cause people to behave in ways that are seen as abnormal to society but seem normal to them				
private healthcare	health insurance that a person buys from a private company; private healthcare can either be employer-sponsored or direct-purchase				
public healthcare	health insurance that is funded or provided by the government				
sick role	the pattern of expectations that define appropriate behavior for the sick and for those who take care of them				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
social epidemiology	the study of the causes and distribution of diseases				
socialized medicine	when the government owns and runs the entire healthcare system				
stereotype interchangeability	stereotypes that don't change and that get recycled for application to a new subordinate group				
stigmatization	the act of spoiling someone's identity; they are labeled as different, discriminated against, and sometimes even shunned due to an illness or disability				
stigmatization of illness	illnesses that are discriminated against and whose sufferers are looked down upon or even shunned by society				
underinsured	people who spend at least 10 percent of their income on healthcare costs that are not covered by insurance				
universal healthcare	a system that guarantees healthcare coverage for everyone				

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12.8: Section Summary

12.2 The Social Construction of Health

Medical sociology is the systematic study of how humans manage issues of health and illness, disease and disorders, and healthcare for both the sick and the healthy. The social construction of health explains how society shapes and is shaped by medical ideas.

12.3 Global Health

Social epidemiology is the study of the causes and distribution of diseases. From a global perspective, the health issues of high-income nations tend toward diseases like cancer as well as those that are linked to obesity, like heart disease, diabetes, and musculoskeletal disorders. Low-income nations are more likely to contend with cardiovascular disease, infectious disease, high infant mortality rates, scarce medical personnel, and inadequate water and sanitation systems.

12.4 Health in the United States

Although people in the United States are generally in good health compared to less developed countries, the United States is still facing challenging issues such as a prevalence of obesity and diabetes. Moreover, people in the United States of historically disadvantaged racial groups, ethnicities, socioeconomic status, and gender experience lower levels of healthcare. Mental health and disability are health issues that are significantly impacted by social norms.

12.5 Comparative Health and Medicine

There are broad, structural differences among the healthcare systems of different countries. In core nations, those differences include publicly funded healthcare, privately funded healthcare, and combinations of both. In peripheral and semi-peripheral countries, a lack of basic healthcare administration can be the defining feature of the system.

12.6 Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

While the functionalist perspective looks at how health and illness fit into a fully functioning society, the conflict perspective is concerned with how health and illness fit into the oppositional forces in society. The interactionist perspective is concerned with how social interactions construct ideas of health and illness.

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12.9: Section Quiz

12.2 The Social Construction of Health

1.

Who determines which illnesses are stigmatized?

a. Therapists
b. The patients themselves
c. Society
d. All of the above

2.

Chronic fatigue syndrome is an example of _____.

a. a stigmatized disease
b. a contested illness
c. a disability
d. demedicalization

3.

The Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) is an example of _____

a. the social construction of health
b. medicalization
c. disability accommodations
d. a contested illness

12.3 Global Health

4.

What is social epidemiology?

a. The study of why some diseases are stigmatized and others are not
b. The study of why diseases spread
c. The study of the mental health of a society
d. The study of the causes and distribution of diseases

5.

Core nations are also known as _____

a. high-income nations
b. newly industrialized nations
c. low-income nations
d. developing nations

6.

Many deaths in high-income nations are linked to _____

a. cancer
b. obesity

c. mental illness
d. lack of clean water

7.

According to the World Health Organization, what was the most frequent cause of death for children under five in low-income countries?

a. Starvation
b. Thirst
c. Pneumonia and diarrheal diseases
d. All of the above

12.4 Health in the United States

8.

Which of the following statements is *not* true?

a. The life expectancy of Black males in the United States is approximately five years shorter than for White males.
b. The infant mortality rate for Black people in the United States is almost double than it is for White people
c. Black people have lower cancer rates than White people.
d. Hispanic people have worse access to care than non-Hispanic White people.

9.

The process by which aspects of life that were considered bad or deviant are redefined as sickness and needing medical attention to remedy is called:

a. deviance
b. medicalization
c. demedicalization
d. intersection theory

10.

What are the most commonly diagnosed mental disorders in the United States?

a. ADHD
b. Mood disorders
c. Autism spectrum disorders
d. Anxiety disorders

11.

Sidewalk ramps and Braille signs are examples of _____.

a. disabilities
b. accommodations required by the Americans with Disabilities Act
c. forms of accessibility for people with disabilities
d. both b and c

12.

The high unemployment rate among people with disabilities may be a result of _____.

a. medicalization
b. obesity
c. stigmatization
d. all of the above

12.5 Comparative Health and Medicine

13.

Which public healthcare system offers insurance primarily to people over sixty-five years old?

a. Medicaid
b. Medicare
c. Veterans Health Administration
d. All of the above

14.

Which program is an example of socialized medicine?

a. Canada's system
b. The United States' Veterans Health Administration
c. The United States' new system under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
d. Medicaid

15.

What does the individual mandate provision of the 2010 U.S. healthcare reform do?

a. Requires everyone to buy insurance from the government
b. Requires everyone to sign up for Medicaid
c. Requires everyone to have insurance or pay a penalty
d. None of the above

16.

Great Britain's healthcare system is an example of _____

a. socialized medicine
b. private healthcare
c. single-payer private healthcare
d. universal private healthcare

17.

What group created the Millennium Development Goals?

a. UNICEF
b. The Kaiser Family Foundation
c. Doctors Without Borders
d. The World Health Organization

12.6 Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

18.

Which of the following is *not* part of the rights and responsibilities of a sick person under the functionalist perspective?

a. The sick person is not responsible for his condition.
b. The sick person must try to get better.
c. The sick person can take as long as she wants to get better.
d. The sick person is exempt from the normal duties of society.

19.

The class, race, and gender inequalities in our healthcare system support the _____ perspective.

a. conflict
b. interactionist
c. functionalist
d. all of the above

20.

The removal of homosexuality from the *DSM* is an example of _____.

a. medicalization
b. deviance
c. interactionist theory
d. demedicalization

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12.10: Short Answer

12.2 The Social Construction of Health

1.

Pick a common illness and describe which parts of it are medically constructed, and which parts are socially constructed.

2.

What diseases are the most stigmatized? Which are the least? Is this different in different cultures or social classes?

12.3 Global Health

3.

If social epidemiologists studied the United States in the colonial period, what differences would they find between now and then?

4.

What do you think are some of the contributing factors to obesity-related diseases in the United States?

12.4 Health in the United States

5.

What factors contribute to the disparities in health among racial, ethnic, and gender groups in the United States?

6.

Do you know anyone with a mental disorder? How does it affect his or her life?

12.5 Comparative Health and Medicine

7.

What do you think are the best and worst parts of the PPACA? Why?

8.

Compare and contrast the healthcare system of the United States with the WHO's Millennium Development Goals.

12.6 Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

9.

What do you think are the best and worst parts of the PPACA? Why?

10.

Compare and contrast the healthcare system of the United States with the WHO's Millennium Development Goals.

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12.11: Further Research

12.2 The Social Construction of Health

Read this article, which discusses the measures nations and people may take to prevent or manage future pandemics. It contains many links to international efforts and studies. What do you think about our commitment to these steps?

12.3 Global Health

Study this map on global life expectancies. What trends do you notice?

12.4 Health in the United States

People with disabilities, disorders, and neurodiversity are often mistreated even by others who do not know the best way to act around them. Children with autism experience this continually. Evaluate this guide from parents of children with autism to learn more about how to treat and think about people with autism.

12.5 Comparative Health and Medicine

Project Mosquito Net says that mosquito nets sprayed with insecticide can reduce childhood malaria deaths by half.

12.6 Theoretical Perspectives on Health and Medicine

A massive surge in substance use disorders and overdoses occurred in the United States based on usage of prescription drugs. The causes were widespread and were rooted in pharmaceutical company approaches, medical policies, and social causes. Read more in article about the causes of the U.S. opioid crisis.

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13: POPULATION, URBANIZATION, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

13.1: Introduction
13.2: Demography and Population
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13.1: Introduction



Figure 20.1: A view from space makes it easy to see differences in population. Lighted areas are urban centers, containing larger and larger portions of the world's population. Darker areas are sparsely populated. Beyond the global scale, the differences within regions is notable. Africa is mostly empty of lights with the exception of a few densely populated areas to the south, west, and north. India is almost clearly outlined by its lights, showing a stark contrast with the nations to its north and west, with a line of light indicating the cities along the Indus River in Pakistan. The United States almost seems to be split in half at the line formed by Dallas, Oklahoma City, and Wichita. (Credit NASA Goddard Space Flight Center)

Chapter Outline

20.1 Demography and Population
20.2 Urbanization
20.3 The Environment and Society

Fracking, another word for hydraulic fracturing, is a method used to recover gas and oil from shale by drilling down into the earth and directing a high-pressure mixture of water, sand, and proprietary chemicals into the rock. While energy companies view fracking as a profitable revolution in the industry, there are a number of concerns associated with the practice.

First, fracking requires huge amounts of water. Water transportation comes at a high environmental cost. Once mixed with fracking chemicals, water is unsuitable for human and animal consumption, though it is estimated that between 10 percent and 90 percent of the contaminated water is returned to the water cycle. Second, the chemicals used in a fracking mix are potentially carcinogenic. These chemicals may pollute groundwater near the extraction site (Colborn, Kwiatkowski, Schultz, and Bachran 2011; United States 2011). Industry leaders suggest that such contamination is unlikely, and that when it does occur, it is incidental and related to unavoidable human error rather than an expected risk of the practice, but the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's study of fracking is ongoing (Environmental Protection Agency 2014). The third concern is that fracking causes minor earthquakes by undermining the seismic stability of an area, though far more induced earthquakes are caused by traditional oil and gas production (USGS n.d.) Finally, gas is not a renewable source of energy; this is a negative in the eyes of those who oppose continued reliance on fossil fuels.

Fracking is not without its advantages. Its supporters offer statistics that suggest it reduces unemployment and contributes to economic growth (IHS Global Insights 2012). Since it allows energy companies access to previously nonviable and completely untapped oil and gas reserves, fracking boosts domestic oil production and lowers energy costs (IHS Global Insights 2012). Finally, since natural gas is a lower-emission fuel than coal, fracking reduces the airborne environmental impacts of industrial energy.

One complexity of lower-priced natural gas production is that demand for coal has plummeted. Coal is both more expensive to produce and more environmentally damaging than natural gas, and the coal industry is concentrated in a few areas, such

as Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Kentucky. Automation had already depleted the employment opportunities in the industry; decades before fracking became widespread, coal companies began widespread replacement of people with machines (Vavra 2017). Although the U.S. was producing more coal than it had in previous decades, it was doing so with fewer workers than it ever had. At its peak, the coal industry employed nearly a million people, and its thriving towns drove other businesses. By 2015, the industry employs about 50,000 people (Money Illusion 2016). Inexpensive natural gas is just another factor that is contributing to the industry's continued issues. Coal companies continually shutter, and entire regions are full of newly laid off workers who cannot find employment.

As you read this chapter, consider how an increasing global population can balance environmental concerns with opportunities for industrial and economic growth. Think about how much water pollution can be justified by the need to lower U.S. dependence of foreign energy supplies. Is the economic growth associated with fracking worth some environmental degradation? As we see a related industry – coal – further diminished due to fracking, do we owe its workers some compensation or additional support?

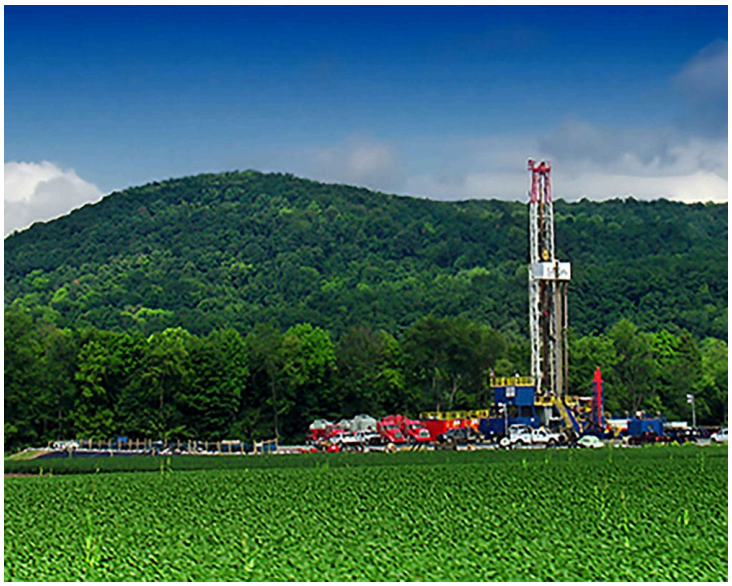


Figure 20.2: This is a Marcellus shale gas-drilling site in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania. (Credit: Nicholas A. Tonelli/flickr)

As the discussion of fracking illustrates, there are important societal issues connected to the environment and how and where people live. Sociologists begin to examine these issues through demography, or the study of population and how it relates to urbanization, the study of the social, political, and economic relationships in cities. Environmental sociologists look at the study of how humans interact with their environments. Today, as has been the case many times in history, we are at a point of conflict in a number of these areas. The world's population reached seven billion between 2011 and 2012. When will it reach eight billion? Can our planet sustain such a population? We generate more trash than ever, from Starbucks cups to obsolete cell phones containing toxic chemicals to food waste that could be composted. You may be unaware of where your trash ends up. And while this problem exists worldwide, trash issues are often more acute in urban areas. Cities and city living create new challenges for both society and the environment that make interactions between people and places of critical importance.

How do sociologists study population and urbanization issues? Functionalist sociologists might focus on the way all aspects of population, urbanization, and the environment serve as vital and cohesive elements, ensuring the continuing stability of society. They might study how the growth of the global population encourages emigration and immigration, and how emigration and immigration serve to strengthen ties between nations. Or they might research the way migration affects environmental issues; for example, how have forced migrations, and the resulting changes in a region's ability to support a new group, affected both the displaced people and the area of relocation? Another topic a functionalist might research is the way various urban neighborhoods specialize to serve cultural and financial needs.

A conflict theorist, interested in the creation and reproduction of inequality, might ask how peripheral nations' lack of family planning affects their overall population in comparison to core nations that tend to have lower fertility rates. Or, how do inner cities become ghettos, nearly devoid of jobs, education, and other opportunities? A conflict theorist might also study environmental racism and other forms of environmental inequality. For example, which parts of New Orleans society were the most responsive to the evacuation order during Hurricane Katrina? Which area was most affected by the flooding? And where (and in what conditions) were people from those areas housed, both during and before the evacuation?

A symbolic interactionist interested in the day-to-day interaction of groups and individuals might research topics like the way family-planning information is presented to and understood by different population groups, the way people experience and understand urban life, and the language people use to convince others of the presence (or absence) of global climate change. For example, some politicians wish to present the study of global warming as junk science, and other politicians insist it is a proven fact.

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13.2: Demography and Population

Learning Objectives

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

- Explain demographic measurements like fertility and mortality rates
- Describe a variety of demographic theories, such as Malthusian, cornucopian, zero population growth, and demographic transition theories
- Evaluate current population trends and patterns
- Differentiate between an internally displaced person, an asylum-seeker, and a refugee



Figure 20.3: At nearly 8 billion, Earth's population is always on the move, but the methods vary. As you see here, bicycles, motorcycles, and scooters are more common in Vietnam than they are in many U.S. cities. And in some countries, masks were common well before COVID-19. (Credit: Esin Üstün/flickr)

Between 2011 and 2012, we reached a population milestone of 7 billion humans on the earth's surface. The rapidity with which this happened demonstrated an exponential increase from the time it took to grow from 5 billion to 6 billion people. In short, the planet is filling up. We'll have 8 billion people in this decade. While the population is increasing overall, there are certain countries and regions where growth is slowing. Relocation and migration also change the makeup and quantity of people in an area. In order to properly understand these dynamics and make decisions regarding them, we turn to demography, or the study of populations. Three critical aspects of demography are fertility, mortality, and migration.

The fertility rate of a society is a measure noting the number of children born. The fertility number is generally lower than the fecundity number, which measures the potential number of children that could be born to women of childbearing age. Sociologists measure fertility using the crude birthrate (the number of live births per 1,000 people per year). Just as fertility measures childbearing, the mortality rate is a measure of the number of people who die. The crude death rate is a number derived from the number of deaths per 1,000 people per year. When analyzed together, fertility and mortality rates help researchers understand the overall growth occurring in a population.

Another key element in studying populations is the movement of people into and out of an area. Migration may take the form of immigration, which describes movement into an area to take up permanent residence, or emigration, which refers to movement out of an area to another place of permanent residence. Migration might be voluntary (as when college students study abroad), involuntary (as when Syrians evacuated war-torn areas), or forced (as when many Native American tribes were removed from the lands they'd lived in for generations).

Big Picture: Mass Migration Crises



Figure 20.4: This March 2021 image of dozens of children in plastic-lined holding areas was one of a group of photos that sparked public outcry in the early days of the Biden administration, years after similar scenes and situations in the 2014 and 2018 border crises. (Credit: Defense Visual Information Distribution Service)

At least once during each of the last three Presidential administrations, the United States has faced a crisis at its southern border. While images of children in crowded holding areas, covered in piles of shiny plastic emergency blankets, were often associated with the Trump Presidency, Presidents Obama and Biden saw children in the same conditions. The holding facilities, described as cages by some and often referred to as “perreras” (dog kennels) or “hieleras” (ice boxes) by the migrating people, are meant to be temporary stopovers while people await hearings or related refugee processes. But during a number of occasions, the number of people crossing the border was so large – including, at times, tens of thousands of children – that the system became overwhelmed. The conditions are deplorable. The outcomes are uncertain. But the people cross the border anyway.

How did we get here? Bipartisan legislation passed in 2008 guarantees unaccompanied minors a hearing with an immigration judge where they may request asylum based on a “credible” fear of persecution or torture (U.S. Congress 2008). In some cases, these children are looking for relatives and can be placed with family while awaiting a hearing on their immigration status; in other cases, they become involved with the foster system or are placed in of the 170 housing facilities run by nonprofit or for-profit groups. Finally, for people who turn 18 while still in the process, they may be transferred to detention centers, sometimes on their birthday (Montoya-Galvez 2021). Many people in America were either accepting or unaware of these policies and situations until crises occurred in 2014 and 2018-19. At those points of incredible influxes of migrant children, border control, refugee services, and advocacy organizations were overwhelmed by the surge. Both the Obama and Trump administrations pushed for changes in laws or guidelines for enforcement (Gomez 2014 and Kanno-Youngs 2020).

The Obama administration sought to make the decision process faster. In 2014, over 50,000 unaccompanied minors were taken into custody, creating the backlog discussed above. The Trump administration sought to discourage immigration through policies such as separating parents and children who arrived together. The policy was decried by members of Trump's own party, as well as many other organizations, and was eventually dealt a series of legal blows before the President reversed it. Later investigations determined that hundreds, if not thousands, of children remained separated from their parents for extended periods of time (Spagat 2019).

While the situations at the border are extremely threatening to children's health and safety, people and policymakers in the United States are divided on how to address the situation. In many cases, these children are fleeing various kinds of violence and extreme poverty. The U.S. government has repeatedly indicated that the best way to avoid these crises is to address those conditions in the migrants' home countries. But even with financial aid for those nations and pressure on their governments to crack down on illegal activity, it is unlikely that the situation will change quickly or consistently. The Biden administration may not be the last to face a surge of immigrant children at its border.

A functional perspective theorist might focus on the dysfunctions caused by the sudden influx of underage asylum seekers, while a conflict perspective theorist might look at the way social stratification influences how the members of a developed country are treating the lower-status migrants from less-developed countries in Latin America. An interactionist theorist might see significance in the attitude of those protesting the presence of migrant children. Which theoretical perspective makes the most sense to you?

Population Growth

Changing fertility, mortality, and migration rates make up the total population composition, a snapshot of the demographic profile of a population. This number can be measured for societies, nations, world regions, or other groups. The population composition includes the sex ratio, the number of men for every hundred women, as well as the population pyramid, a picture of population distribution by sex and age (Figure 20.5).

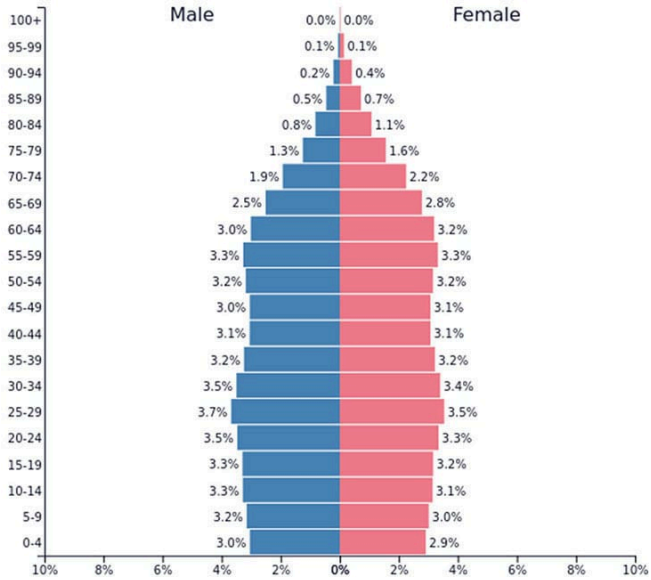


Figure 20.5: This population pyramid shows the breakdown of the 2019 U.S. population according to age and sex. (Credit: Populationpyramid.net)

Table 20.1 Varying Fertility and Mortality Rated by Country : As the table illustrates, countries vary greatly in fertility rates and mortality rates—the components that make up a population composition. This data is from 2018, and changes occur continually. For example, in 2014, the number of children per adult woman in Afghanistan was 5.4 – generally an average of one more child per family. And the U.S. was slightly higher at 2.0 (World Bank 2019)

Country	Population (in millions)	Fertility Rate (number of children per adult women)	Mortality Rate (per 1,000 births)	Sex Ratio Male to Female
Afghanistan	38.4	4.4	48	1.05
Finland	5.52	1.4	2.0	1.04
United States of America	32.8	1.7	5.7	0.97

Comparing the three countries in Table 20.1 reveals that there are more men than women in Afghanistan and Finland, whereas the reverse is true in the United States. Afghanistan also has significantly higher fertility and mortality rates than either of the other two countries. In all three cases, the fertility rates have dropped in recent years, but Afghanistan's drop (from 5.4 children per woman to 4.4) will likely be the most impactful (World Bank 2019). Do these statistics surprise you? How do you think the population makeup affects the political climate and economics of the different countries?

Demographic Theories

Sociologists have long looked at population issues as central to understanding human interactions. Below we will look at four

theories about population that inform sociological thought: Malthusian, zero population growth, cornucopian, and demographic transition theories.

Malthusian Theory

Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) was an English clergyman who made dire predictions about earth's ability to sustain its growing population. According to Malthusian theory, three factors would control human population that exceeded the earth's carrying capacity, or how many people can live in a given area considering the amount of available resources. Malthus identified these factors as war, famine, and disease (Malthus 1798). He termed them "positive checks" because they increase mortality rates, thus keeping the population in check. They are countered by "preventive checks," which also control the population but by reducing fertility rates; preventive checks include birth control and celibacy. Thinking practically, Malthus saw that people could produce only so much food in a given year, yet the population was increasing at an exponential rate. Eventually, he thought people would run out of food and begin to starve. They would go to war over increasingly scarce resources and reduce the population to a manageable level, and then the cycle would begin anew.

Of course, this has not exactly happened. The human population has continued to grow long past Malthus's predictions. So what happened? Why didn't we die off? There are three reasons sociologists believe we are continuing to expand the population of our planet. First, technological increases in food production have increased both the amount and quality of calories we can produce per person. Second, human ingenuity has developed new medicine to curtail death from disease. Finally, the development and widespread use of contraception and other forms of family planning have decreased the speed at which our population increases. But what about the future? Some still believe Malthus was correct and that ample resources to support the earth's population will soon run out.

Zero Population Growth

A neo-Malthusian researcher named Paul Ehrlich brought Malthus's predictions into the twentieth century. However, according to Ehrlich, it is the environment, not specifically the food supply, that will play a crucial role in the continued health of the planet's population (Ehrlich 1968). Ehrlich's ideas suggest that the human population is moving rapidly toward complete environmental collapse, as privileged people use up or pollute a number of environmental resources such as water and air. He advocated for a goal of zero population growth (ZPG), in which the number of people entering a population through birth or immigration is equal to the number of people leaving it via death or emigration. While support for this concept is mixed, it is still considered a possible solution to global overpopulation.

Cornucopian Theory

Of course, some theories are less focused on the pessimistic hypothesis that the world's population will meet a detrimental challenge to sustaining itself. Cornucopian theory scoffs at the idea of humans wiping themselves out; it asserts that human ingenuity can resolve any environmental or social issues that develop. As an example, it points to the issue of food supply. If we need more food, the theory contends, agricultural scientists will figure out how to grow it, as they have already been doing for centuries. After all, in this perspective, human ingenuity has been up to the task for thousands of years and there is no reason for that pattern not to continue (Simon 1981).

Demographic Transition Theory

Whether you believe that we are headed for environmental disaster and the end of human existence as we know it, or you think people will always adapt to changing circumstances, we can see clear patterns in population growth. Societies develop along a predictable continuum as they evolve from unindustrialized to postindustrial. Demographic transition theory (Caldwell and Caldwell 2006) suggests that future population growth will develop along a predictable four-stage model.

In Stage 1, birth, death, and infant mortality rates are all high, while life expectancy is short. An example of this stage is the 1800s in the United States. As countries begin to industrialize, they enter Stage 2, where birth rates are higher while infant mortality and the death rates drop. Life expectancy also increases. Afghanistan is currently in this stage. Stage 3 occurs once a society is thoroughly industrialized; birth rates decline, while life expectancy continues to increase. Death rates continue to decrease. Mexico's population is at this stage. In the final phase, Stage 4, we see the postindustrial era of a society. Birth and death rates are low, people are healthier and live longer, and society enters a phase of population stability. Overall population may even decline. For example, Sweden is considered to be in Stage 4.

The United Nations Population Fund (2008) categorizes nations as high fertility, intermediate fertility, or low fertility. The United Nations (UN) anticipates the population growth will triple between 2011 and 2100 in high-fertility countries, which are currently concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa. For countries with intermediate fertility rates (the United States, India, and Mexico all fall into this category), growth is expected to be about 26 percent. And low-fertility countries like China, Australia, and most of Europe will actually see population declines of approximately 20 percent. The graphs below illustrate this trend.

Changes in U.S. Immigration Patterns and Attitudes

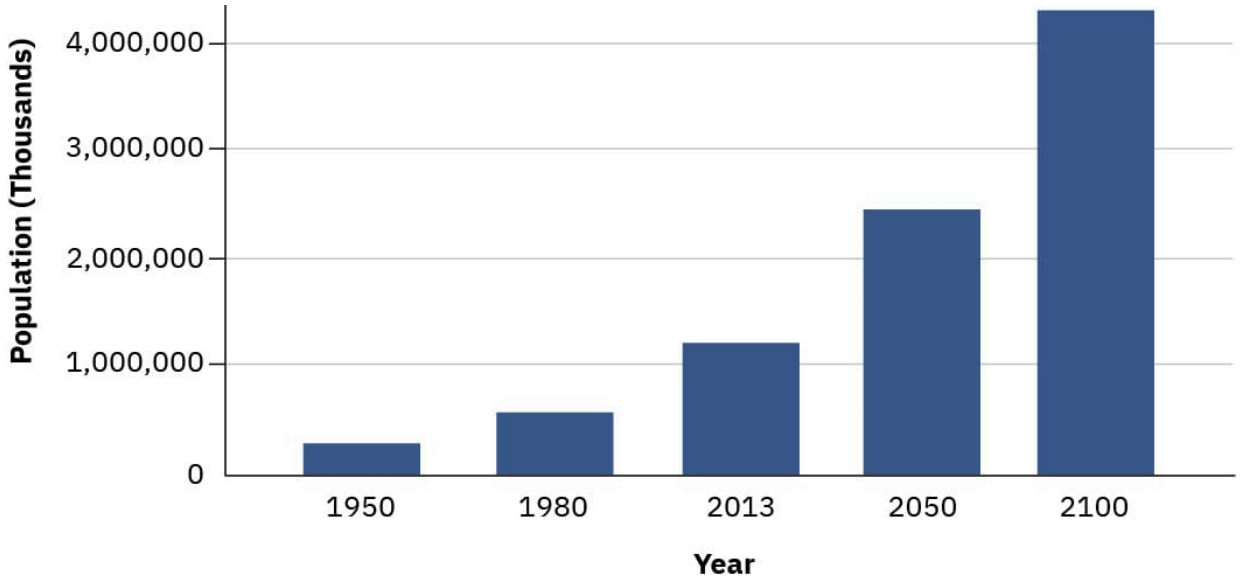


Figure 20.6 Projected Population in Africa : This graph shows the population growth of countries located on the African continent, many of which have high fertility rates. (Credit: USAID)

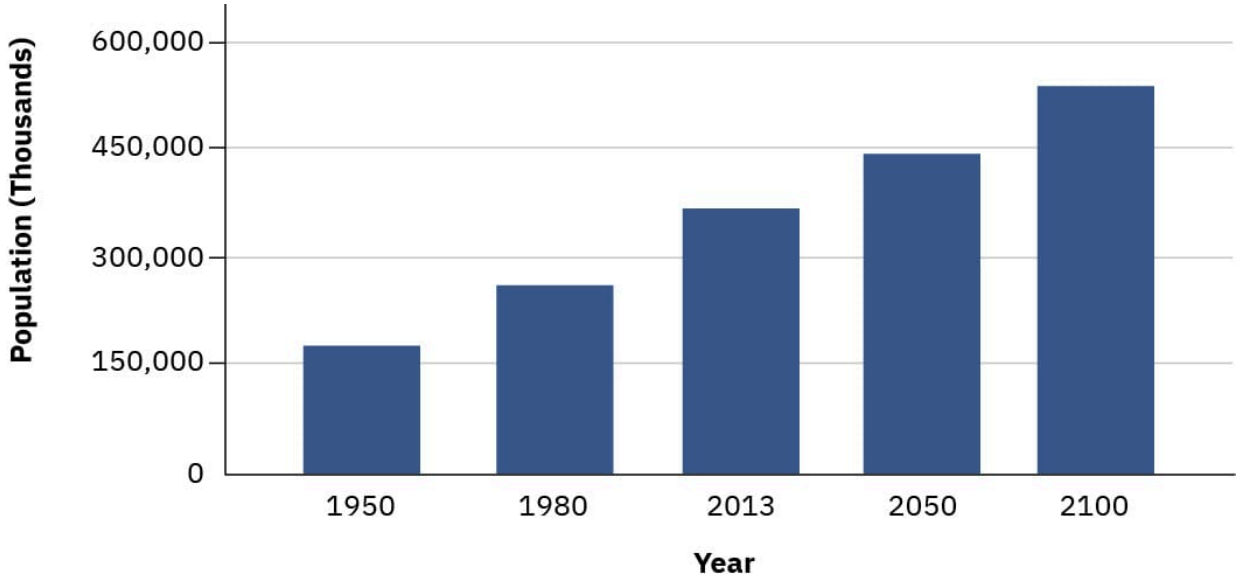


Figure 20.7 Projected Population in the United States : The United States has an intermediate fertility rate, and therefore, a comparatively moderate projected population growth. (Credit: USAID)

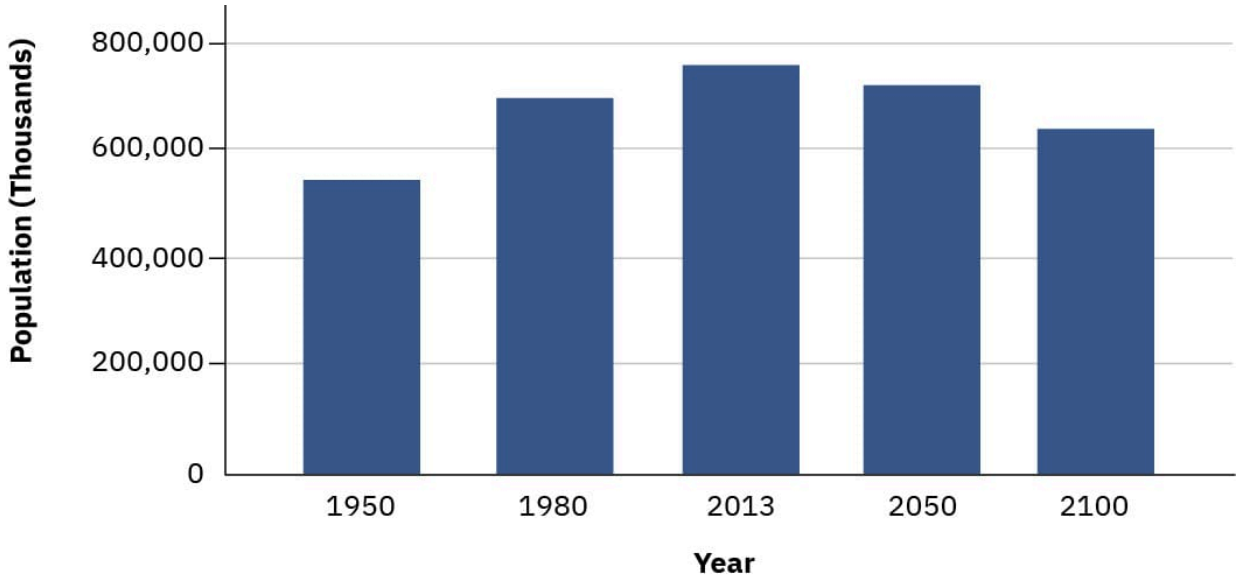


Figure 20.8 Projected Population in Europe : This chart shows the projected population growth of Europe for the remainder of this century. (Credit: USAID)

Worldwide patterns of migration have changed, though the United States remains the most popular destination. From 1990 to 2013, the number of migrants living in the United States increased from one in six to one in five (The Pew Research Center 2013). Overall, the United States is home to about 45 million foreign-born people, while only about 3 million U.S. citizens lived abroad. Of foreign-born citizens emigrating to the United States, 55 percent originated in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, over the past few years, more people from Asian countries have entered than from Latin American ones (Budiman 2020).

While there are more foreign-born people residing in the United States legally, as of 2017 about 10.5 million resided here without legal status (Budiman 2020). Most immigrants in the U.S. live in either Texas, Florida, or California.

Even before policy changes and COVID-19 affected refugee admittance, a relatively small number of people formally entered the country as refugees. In 2016, about 85,000 refugees were admitted to the U.S. (of over one million total immigrants), with the largest portion arriving from the Democratic Republic of Congo; in 2020, the number of refugees was reduced to 18,000.

Most citizens agree that our national immigration policies are need adjustment. More than two-thirds (69 percent) of those in a recent national survey believed illegal immigrants should have a path to citizenship provided they meet other requirements, such as paying taxes and passing a background check. Even more people (72 percent) supported passing a DREAM Act, which would allow people who immigrated as children to earn citizenship. In both parts of the survey, majorities of both Republicans and Democrats as well as independents supported the pathway to citizenship (Vox and Data for Progress 2021).

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13.3: Urbanization

Learning Objectives

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

- Describe the process of urbanization in the United States and the growth of urban populations worldwide
- Analyze the function of suburbs, exurbs, and concentric zones
- Discuss urbanization from various sociological perspectives



Figure 20.9: The lights of New York City are an iconic image of city life. (Credit: Jauher Ali Nasir/flickr)

Urbanization is the study of the social, political, and economic relationships in cities, and someone specializing in urban sociology studies those relationships. In some ways, cities can be microcosms of universal human behavior, while in others they provide a unique environment that yields its own brand of human behavior. There is no strict dividing line between rural and urban; rather, there is a continuum where one bleeds into the other. However, once a geographically concentrated population has reached approximately 100,000 people, it typically behaves like a city regardless of what its designation might be.

The Growth of Cities

According to sociologist Gideon Sjoberg (1965), there are three prerequisites for the development of a city: First, good environment with fresh water and a favorable climate; second, advanced technology, which will produce a food surplus to support nonfarmers; and third, strong social organization to ensure social stability and a stable economy. Most scholars agree that the first cities were developed somewhere in ancient Mesopotamia, though there are disagreements about exactly where. Most early cities were small by today's standards, and the largest was most likely Rome, with about 650,000 inhabitants (Chandler and Fox 1974). The factors limiting the size of ancient cities included lack of adequate sewage control, limited food supply, and immigration restrictions. For example, serfs were tied to the land, and transportation was limited and inefficient. Today, the primary influence on cities' growth is economic forces. Since the recent economic recession reduced housing prices, researchers have been waiting to see what happens to urban migration patterns in response.

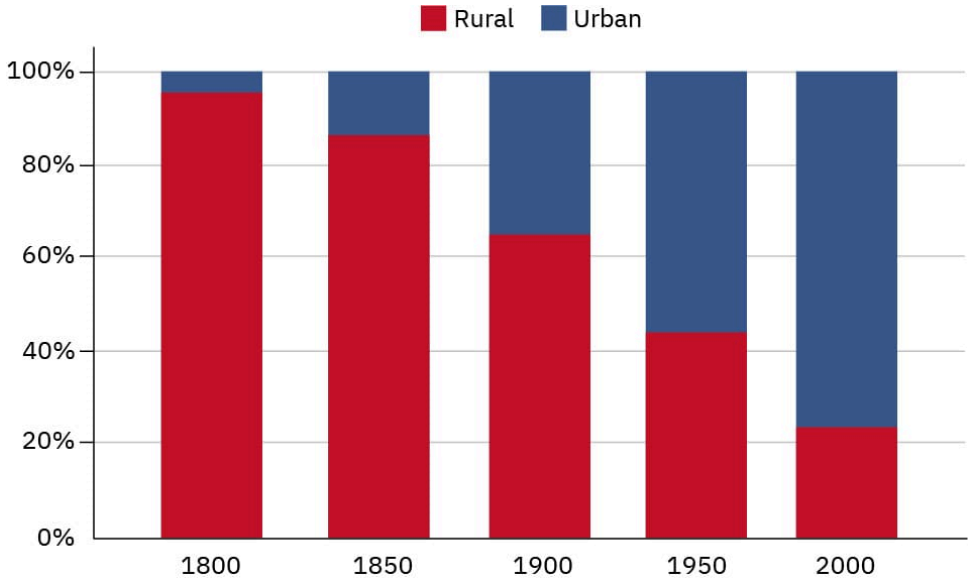


Figure 20.10: Percent of U.S. Population. As this chart illustrates, the shift from rural to urban living in the United States has been dramatic and continuous. (Credit: the U.S. Census Bureau)

Urbanization in the United States

Urbanization in the United States proceeded rapidly during the Industrial Era. As more and more opportunities for work appeared in factories, workers left farms (and the rural communities that housed them) to move to the cities. From mill towns in Massachusetts to tenements in New York, the industrial era saw an influx of poor workers into U.S. cities. At various times throughout the country's history, certain demographic groups, from post-Civil War southern Black people to more recent immigrants, have made their way to urban centers to seek a better life in the city.

Sociology in the Real World: Managing Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in the Modern World

In 2013, the number of refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced people worldwide exceeded 50 million people for the first time since the end of World War II. Half these people were children. A refugee is defined as an individual who has been forced to leave his or her country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster, while asylum-seekers are those whose claim to refugee status has not been validated. An internally displaced person, on the other hand, is neither a refugee nor an asylum-seeker. Displaced persons have fled their homes while remaining inside their country's borders.

The war in Syria caused most of the 2013 increase, forcing 2.5 million people to seek refugee status while internally displacing an additional 6.5 million. Violence in Central African Republic and South Sudan also contributed a large number of people to the total (The United Nations Refugee Agency 2014).

The refugees need help in the form of food, water, shelter, and medical care, which has worldwide implications for nations contributing foreign aid, the nations hosting the refugees, and the non-government organizations (NGOs) working with individuals and groups on site (The United Nations Refugee Agency 2014). Where will this large moving population, including sick, elderly, children, and people with very few possessions and no long-term plan, go?

Suburbs and Exurbs

As cities grew more crowded, and often more impoverished and costly, more and more people began to migrate back out of them. But instead of returning to rural small towns (like they'd resided in before moving to the city), these people needed close access to the cities for their jobs. In the 1850s, as the urban population greatly expanded and transportation options improved, suburbs developed. Suburbs are the communities surrounding cities, typically close enough for a daily commute in, but far enough away to allow for more space than city living affords. The bucolic suburban landscape of the early twentieth century has largely disappeared due to sprawl. Suburban sprawl contributes to traffic congestion, which in turn contributes to commuting time. And

commuting times and distances have continued to increase as new suburbs developed farther and farther from city centers. Simultaneously, this dynamic contributed to an exponential increase in natural resource use, like petroleum, which sequentially increased pollution in the form of carbon emissions.

As the suburbs became more crowded and lost their charm, those who could afford it turned to the exurbs, communities that exist outside the ring of suburbs and are typically populated by even wealthier families who want more space and have the resources to lengthen their commute. Together, the suburbs, exurbs, and metropolitan areas all combine to form a metropolis. New York was the first U.S. megalopolis, a huge urban corridor encompassing multiple cities and their surrounding suburbs. These metropolises use vast quantities of natural resources and are a growing part of the U.S. landscape.

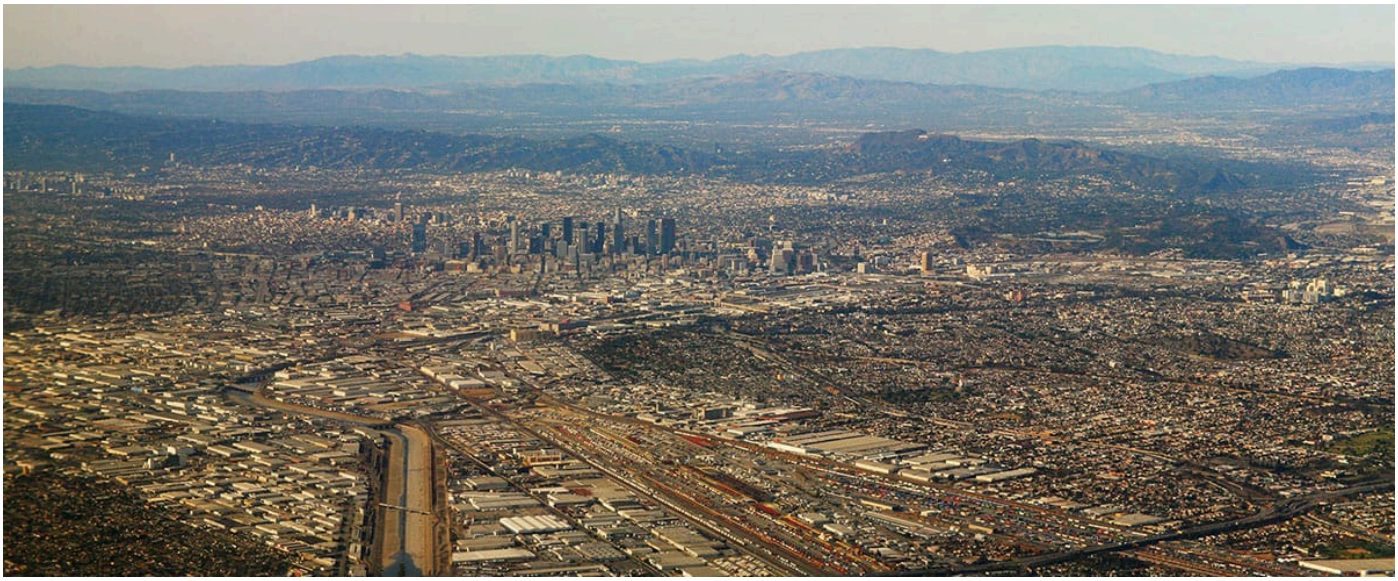


Figure 20.11: The sprawl in Los Angeles means long commutes and traffic congestion. (Credit: Doc Searles/flickr)

Social Policy and Debate: Suburbs Are Not All White Picket Fences: The Banlieues of Paris

What makes a suburb a suburb? Simply, a suburb is a community surrounding a city. But when you picture a suburb in your mind, your image may vary widely depending on which nation you call home. In the United States, most consider the suburbs home to upper— and middle—class people with private homes. In other countries, like France, the suburbs––or "banlieues"–– are synonymous with housing projects and impoverished communities. In fact, the banlieues of Paris are notorious for their ethnic violence and crime, with higher unemployment and more residents living in poverty than in the city center. Further, the banlieues have a much higher immigrant population, which in Paris is mostly Arabic and African immigrants. This contradicts the clichéd U.S. image of a typical white-picket-fence suburb.

In 2005, serious riots broke out in the banlieue of Clichy-sous-Bois after two boys were electrocuted while hiding from the police. They were hiding, it is believed, because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, near the scene of a break-in, and they were afraid the police would not believe in their innocence. Only a few days earlier, interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy (who later became president), had given a speech touting new measures against urban violence and referring to the people of the banlieue as "rabble" (BBC 2005). After the deaths and subsequent riots, Sarkozy reiterated his zero-tolerance policy toward violence and sent in more police. Ultimately, the violence spread across more than thirty towns and cities in France. Thousands of cars were burned, many hundreds of people were arrested, and both police and protesters suffered serious injuries.

Then-President Jacques Chirac responded by pledging more money for housing programs, jobs programs, and education programs to help the banlieues solve the underlying problems that led to such disastrous unrest. But none of the newly launched programs were effective. Sarkozy ran for president on a platform of tough regulations toward young offenders, and in 2007 the country elected him. More riots ensued as a response to his election. In 2010, Sarkozy promised "war without mercy" against the crime in the banlieues (France24 2010). Six years after the Clichy-sous-Bois riot, circumstances are no better for those in the banlieues.

As the Social Policy & Debate feature illustrates, the suburbs also have their share of socio-economic problems. In the United

States, White flight refers to the migration of economically secure White people from racially mixed urban areas and toward the suburbs. This occurred throughout the twentieth century, due to causes as diverse as the legal end of racial segregation established by *Brown v. Board of Education* to the Mariel boatlift of people fleeing Cuba for Miami. Current trends include middle-class African-American families following White flight patterns out of cities, while affluent White people return to cities that have historically had a majority of Black people. The result is that the issues of race, socio-economics, neighborhoods, and communities remain complicated and challenging.

Urbanization around the World

During the Industrial Era, there was a growth spurt worldwide. The development of factories brought people from rural to urban areas, and new technology increased the efficiency of transportation, food production, and food preservation. For example, from the mid-1670s to the early 1900s, London's population increased from 550,000 to 7 million (Old Bailey Proceedings Online 2011). Global favorites like New York, London, and Tokyo are all examples of postindustrial cities. As cities evolve from manufacturing-based industrial to service- and information-based postindustrial societies, gentrification becomes more common. Gentrification occurs when members of the middle and upper classes enter and renovate city areas that have been historically less affluent while the poor urban underclass are forced by resulting price pressures to leave those neighborhoods for increasingly decaying portions of the city.

Globally, 55 percent of the world's people currently reside in urban areas, with the most urbanized region being North America (82 percent), followed by Latin America/the Caribbean (81 percent), with Europe coming in third (74 percent). In comparison, Africa is only 40 percent urbanized, though one of its nations, Nigeria, is projected to significantly urbanize in the coming years. With 37 million people, Tokyo is the world's largest city by population, and New Delhi is the second largest with 29 million. The world's most densely populated cities are now largely concentrated in the global south, a marked change from several decades ago when the biggest cities were found in the global north. In the next forty years, the biggest global challenge for urbanized populations, particularly in less developed countries, will be to achieve development that occurs without depleting or damaging the natural environment, also called sustainable development (United Nations 2018).

Theoretical Perspectives on Urbanization

The issues of urbanization play significant roles in the study of sociology. Race, economics, and human behavior intersect in cities. Let's look at urbanization through the sociological perspectives of functionalism and conflict theory. Functional perspectives on urbanization generally focus on the ecology of the city, while conflict perspective tends to focus on political economy.

Human ecology is a functionalist field of study that looks at the relationship between people and their built and natural physical environments (Park 1915). Generally speaking, urban land use and urban population distribution occur in a predictable pattern once we understand how people relate to their living environment. For example, in the United States, we have a transportation system geared to accommodate individuals and families in the form of interstate highways built for cars. In contrast, most parts of Europe emphasize public transportation such as high-speed rail and commuter lines, as well as walking and bicycling. The challenge for a human ecologist working in U.S. urban planning is to design landscapes and waterscapes with natural beauty, while also figuring out how to provide for free-flowing transport of innumerable vehicles, not to mention parking!

The concentric zone model (Burgess 1925) is perhaps the most famous example of human ecology. This model views a city as a series of concentric circular areas, expanding outward from the center of the city, with various "zones" invading adjacent zones (as new categories of people and businesses overrun the edges of nearby zones) and succeeding (then after invasion, the new inhabitants repurpose the areas they have invaded and push out the previous inhabitants). In this model, Zone A, in the heart of the city, is the center of the business and cultural district. Zone B, the concentric circle surrounding the city center, is composed of formerly wealthy homes split into cheap apartments for new immigrant populations; this zone also houses small manufacturers, pawn shops, and other marginal businesses. Zone C consists of the homes of the working class and established ethnic enclaves. Zone D holds wealthy homes, white-collar workers, and shopping centers. Zone E contains the estates of the upper class (in the exurbs) and the suburbs.

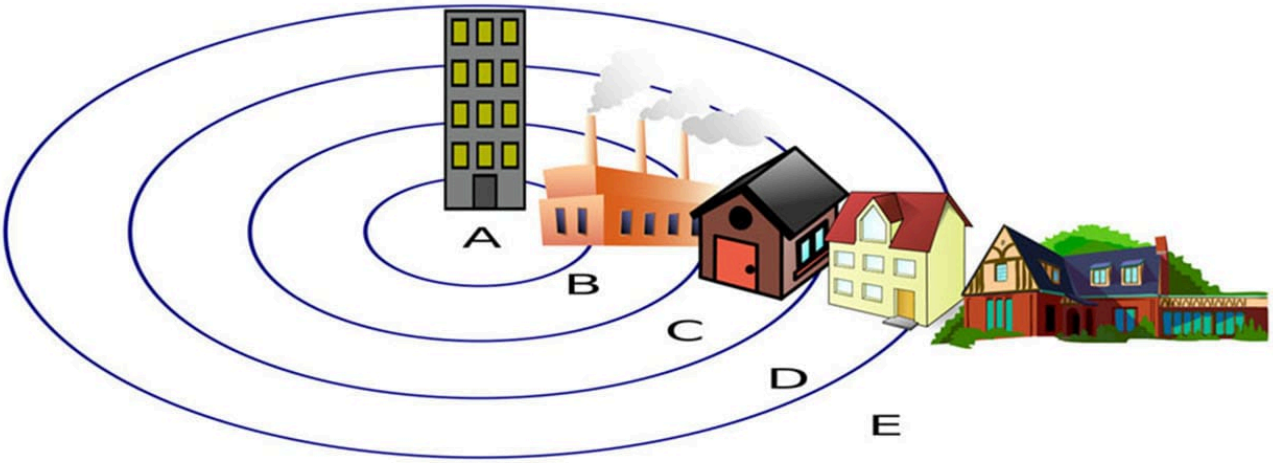


Figure 20.12: This illustration depicts the zones that make up a city in the concentric zone model. (Credit: Zeimusu/Wikimedia Commons)

In contrast to the functionalist approach, theoretical models in the conflict perspective focus on the way urban areas change according to specific decisions made by political and economic leaders. These decisions generally benefit the middle and upper classes while exploiting the working and lower classes.

For example, sociologists Feagin and Parker (1990) suggested three factors by which political and economic leaders control urban growth. First, these leaders work alongside each other to influence urban growth and decline, determining where money flows and how land use is regulated. Second, exchange value and use value of land are balanced to favor the middle and upper classes so that, for example, public land in poor neighborhoods may be rezoned for use as industrial land. Finally, urban development is dependent on both structure (groups such as local government) and agency (individuals including businessmen and activists), and these groups engage in a push-pull dynamic that determines where and how land is actually used. For example, Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) movements are more likely to emerge in middle and upper-class neighborhoods as engaged citizens protest poor environmental practices they fear will affect them, so these groups have more control over the use of local land.

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13.4: The Environment and Society

Learning Objectives

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

- Describe climate change and its importance
- Apply the concept of carrying capacity to environmental concerns
- Explain the challenges presented by pollution, garbage, e-waste, and toxic hazards
- Discuss real-world instances of environmental racism

The subfield of environmental sociology studies the way humans interact with their environments. This field is closely related to human ecology, which focuses on the relationship between people and their built and natural environment. This is an area that is garnering more attention as extreme weather patterns and policy battles over climate change dominate the news. A key factor of environmental sociology is the concept of carrying capacity, which describes the maximum amount of life that can be sustained within a given area. While this concept can refer to grazing lands or to rivers, we can also apply it to the earth as a whole.



Figure 20.13: Too little land for grazing means starving cattle. (Credit: newbeatphoto/flickr)

Big Picture: The Tragedy of the Commons

You might have heard the expression “the tragedy of the commons.” In 1968, an article of the same title written by Garrett Hardin described how a common pasture was ruined by overgrazing. But Hardin was not the first to notice the phenomenon. Back in the 1800s, Oxford economist William Forster Lloyd looked at the devastated public grazing commons and the unhealthy cattle subject to such limited resources, and saw, in essence, that the carrying capacity of the commons had been exceeded. However, since no one was held responsible for the land (as it was open to all), no one was willing to make sacrifices to improve it. Cattle grazers benefitted from adding more cattle to their herds, but they did not have to take on the responsibility of the lands that were being damaged by overgrazing. So there was an incentive for them to add more head of cattle, and no incentive for restraint.

Satellite photos of Africa taken in the 1970s showed this practice to dramatic effect. The images depicted a dark irregular area of more than 300 square miles. There was a large fenced area, where plenty of grass was growing. Outside the fence, the ground was bare and devastated. The reason was simple: the fenced land was privately owned by informed farmers who

carefully rotated their grazing animals and allowed the fields to lie fallow periodically. Outside the fence was land used by nomads. Like the herdsmen in 1800s Oxford, the nomads increased their heads of cattle without planning for its impact on the greater good. The soil eroded, the plants died, then the cattle died, and, ultimately, some of the people died.

How does this lesson affect those of us who don't need to graze our cattle? Well, like the cows, we all need food, water, and clean air to survive. With the increasing world population and the ever-larger megalopolises with tens of millions of people, the limit of the earth's carrying capacity is called into question. When too many take while giving too little thought to the rest of the population, whether cattle or humans, the result is usually tragedy.

Climate Change

While you might be more familiar with the phrase "global warming," climate change is the term now used to refer to long-term shifts in temperatures due to human activity and, in particular, the release of greenhouse gases into the environment. The planet as a whole is warming, but the term climate change acknowledges that the short-term variations in this process can include both higher and lower temperatures, despite the overarching trend toward warmth.

Climate change is a deeply controversial subject, despite decades of scientific research and a high degree of scientific consensus that supports its existence. For example, according to NASA scientists, 2020 essentially tied with 2016 as the warmest year on record, continuing the overall trend of increasing worldwide temperatures (NASA 2021). One effect of climate change is more extreme weather. There are increasingly more record-breaking weather phenomena, from the number of Category 4 hurricanes to the amount of snowfall in a given winter. These extremes, while they make for dramatic television coverage, can cause immeasurable damage to crops, property, and lives.

So why is there a controversy? Until relatively recently, the United States was very divided on the existence of climate change as an immediate threat, as well as whether or not human activity causes or contributes to it. But now it appears that the U.S. has joined the ranks of many countries where citizens are concerned about climate change; the nation is divided on what to do about it.

Research conducted in 2020 and 2021 indicated that at least 60 percent of Americans believe climate change is a real and immediate threat (UNDP 2021 and Global Strategy Group 2021). Citizens are also more supportive of clean energy and taking part in international efforts, such as the Paris Climate Accord, which is intended to engage countries in actions to limit the activity that leads to climate change. What's changed these opinions? It may be that younger people are more represented in these polls, and they tend to support climate change initiatives more consistently. It may be that the continued severity of weather and the costly and widespread impact is more difficult to ignore than it was previously. And part of the changing opinions might be driven by the prevalence of green energy sources, from wind power to solar power to electric cars, which are more evident to people across the country. However, deep divides remain. The addition of clean energy producers, such as offshore wind farms, typically meet stiff local opposition (similar to the "not in my backyard" discussion earlier in the chapter). And any punitive or price-raising methods of controlling emissions are unlikely to be welcome by U.S. citizens. Finally, global agreements like the Paris Accord will have limited impact because they are not strictly enforceable.

World systems analysis suggests that while, historically, core nations (like the United States and Western Europe) were the greatest source of greenhouse gases, they have now evolved into postindustrial societies. Industrialized semi-peripheral and peripheral nations are releasing increasing quantities of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide. The core nations, now post-industrial and less dependent on greenhouse-gas-causing industries, wish to enact strict protocols regarding the causes of global warming, but the semi-peripheral and peripheral nations rightly point out that they only want the same economic chance to evolve their economies. Since they were unduly affected by the progress of core nations, if the core nations now insist on "green" policies, they should pay offsets or subsidies of some kind. There are no easy answers to this conflict. It may well not be "fair" that the core nations benefited from ignorance during their industrial boom.

Pollution

Pollution describes what happens when contaminants are introduced into an environment (water, air, land) at levels that are damaging. Environments can often sustain a limited amount of contaminants without marked change, and water, air, and soil can "heal" themselves to a certain degree. However, once contaminant levels reach a certain point, the results can be catastrophic.

Water

Typhoid, cholera, and diarrhea from unsafe water kill hundreds of thousands of children each year, and over 160 million children suffer from malnutrition and growth issues due to water issues. An estimated 3 billion people do not have access to clean water at home for hand-washing (CDC 2016). Consider the impact of that, knowing that many of those without water for hand-washing live in agricultural societies in which they work with animals or live in cities with many other people.

The water crisis is exacerbated by many of the other issues we've discussed. Global pandemics, pollution, and climate change all have more severe impacts when coupled with lack of access to clean water. Finally, the cost of obtaining that clean water can interfere with other important aspects of survival and social mobility. Children serve as water haulers, traveling long distances on foot to collect potable water for their family. Those same children (as well as those who similarly collect firewood) are less able to focus on their education, either missing school or not completing the associated work (Water.org 2021). Regular water hauling–which for some people involves carrying 20 kilograms (40 pounds) for 30 minutes or more–also has negative effects on people's bodies, especially pregnant women who often undertake the task. The situation is only getting more dire as the global population increases. Water is a key resource battleground in the twenty-first century.

As every child learns in school, 70 percent of earth is made of water. Despite that figure, there is a finite amount of water usable by humans and it is constantly used and reused in a sustainable water cycle. The way we use this abundant natural resource, however, renders much of it unsuitable for consumption and unable to sustain life. Oil and natural gas production, discussed at the beginning of the chapter, require so much water that there's no safe place to put the wastewater other than deep underground. But more common activities use far more water than many people understand. The immense amount of water to produce almonds (8 percent of California's water supply, equating to roughly one gallon per individual almond) has made headlines, as have the 37 gallons that it takes to produce a cup of coffee. But all crops and livestock have a "water footprint." Dairy milk is actually known to take more water to produce than does almond milk, for example. And steak may take up to 900 gallons of water to produce (WaterCalculuator.org 2020).

Those water costs are important to consider, particularly if the crops are produced in a part of the world where access to safe water is also an issue. But reducing irrigation water usage for U.S. crops would have very limited effects in sub-Saharan Africa. Most experts focus on improving water quality and sanitation in general, as well as reducing the distance people need to travel in order to obtain safe water.

Water pollution has always been a byproduct of industrialization, increased population, and urbanization. Cleveland's Cuyahoga River caught fire several times due to pollution, and was part of what inspired the United States' turn to cleaner water. Other countries are currently undergoing the same crises. As a consequence of population concentrations, water close to human settlements is frequently polluted with untreated or partially treated human waste (sewage), chemicals, radioactivity, and levels of heat sufficient to create large “dead zones” incapable of supporting aquatic life. The methods of food production used by many core nations rely on liberal doses of nitrogen and pesticides, which end up back in the water supply. In some cases, water pollution affects the quality of the aquatic life consumed by water and land animals. As we move along the food chain, the pollutants travel from prey to predator. Since humans consume at all levels of the food chain, we ultimately consume the carcinogens, such as mercury, accumulated through several branches of the food web.

Soil

You might have read *The Grapes of Wrath* in English class at some point in time. Steinbeck’s tale of the Joads, driven out of their home by the Dust Bowl, is still playing out today. In China, as in Depression-era Oklahoma, over-tilling soil in an attempt to expand agriculture has resulted in the disappearance of large patches of topsoil.

Soil erosion and desertification are just two of the many forms of soil pollution. In addition, all the chemicals and pollutants that harm our water supplies can also leach into soil with similar effects. Brown zones where nothing can grow are common results of soil pollution. One demand the population boom makes on the planet is a requirement for more food to be produced. The so-called “Green Revolution” in the 1960s saw chemists and world aid organizations working together to bring modern farming methods, complete with pesticides, to developing countries. The immediate result was positive: food yields went up and burgeoning populations were fed. But as time has gone on, these areas have fallen into even more difficult straits as the damage done by modern methods leave traditional farmers with less than they had to start.

Dredging certain beaches in an attempt to save valuable beachfront property from coastal erosion has resulted in greater storm impact on shorelines, and damage to beach ecosystems (Turneffe Atoll Trust 2008). These dredging projects have damaged reefs, sea grass beds, and shorelines and can kill off large swaths of marine life. Ultimately, this damage threatens local fisheries,

tourism, and other parts of the local economy.

Garbage



Figure 20.14: Where should garbage go when you've run out of room? This is a question that is increasingly pressing the planet. (Credit: Department of Environmental Protection Recycling/flickr)

Where is your last cell phone? What about the one before that? Or the huge old television set your family had before flat screens became popular? For most of us, the answer is a sheepish shrug. We don't pay attention to the demise of old items, and since electronics drop in price and increase in innovation at an incredible clip, we have been trained by their manufacturers to upgrade frequently.

Garbage creation and control are major issues for most core and industrializing nations, and it is quickly becoming one of the most critical environmental issues faced in the United States. People in the United States buy products, use them, and then throw them away. Did you dispose of your old electronics according to government safety guidelines? Chances are good you didn't even know there are guidelines. Multiply your electronics times a few million, take into account the numerous toxic chemicals they contain, and then imagine either burying those chemicals in the ground or lighting them on fire.

Those are the two primary means of waste disposal in the United States: landfill and incineration. When it comes to getting rid of dangerous toxins, neither is a good choice. Styrofoam and plastics that many of us use every day do not dissolve in a natural way. Burn them, and they release carcinogens into the air. Their improper incineration (intentional or not) adds to air pollution and increases smog. Dump them in landfills, and they do not decompose. As landfill sites fill up, we risk an increase in groundwater contamination.

Big Picture: What Should Apple (and Friends) Do about E-Waste?



Figure 20.15: A parking lot filled with electronic waste, known as e-waste. (Credit: U.S. Army Environmental Command/flickr)

The mountains of broken plastic and rusty metal that plague the environment are not the most problematic types of garbage. E-waste or obsolete, broken, and worn-out electronics is the fastest growing segment of garbage production in the world. It is made up of household appliances, batteries, control devices, computers, phones, and similar products. Ironically, one of the largest potential e-waste problems will come from expended solar panels, which, although only a fraction of total waste, will require a complex recycling process (Stone 2020). All of these products have toxic chemicals and dangerous metals in them, as well as a significant amount of plastic that does not biodegrade.

So where do they go? Many companies ship their e-waste to developing nations in Africa and Asia to be "recycled." While they are, in some senses, recycled, the result is not exactly clean. In fact, it is one of the dirtiest jobs around. Overseas, without the benefit of environmental regulation, e-waste dumps become a kind of boomtown for entrepreneurs willing to sort through endless stacks of broken-down electronics for tiny bits of valuable copper, silver, and other precious metals. Unfortunately, in their hunt, these workers are exposed to deadly toxins.

Governments are beginning to take notice of the impending disaster, and the European Union, as well as the state of California, put stricter regulations in place. These regulations both limit the amount of toxins allowed in electronics and address the issue of end-of-life recycling. But not surprisingly, corporations, while insisting they are greening their process, often fight stricter regulations. Meanwhile, many environmental groups, including the activist group Greenpeace, have taken up the cause. Greenpeace states that it is working to get companies to:

1. measure and reduce emissions with energy efficiency, renewable energy, and energy policy advocacy
2. make greener, efficient, longer lasting products that are free of hazardous substances
3. reduce environmental impacts throughout company operations, from choosing production materials and energy sources right through to establishing global take-back programs for old products (Greenpeace 2011). Companies like Amazon, Samsung, Canon, Sprint, and Dell are noted for effective and forward-thinking programs (Sadoff 2019).

Air

China's fast-growing economy and burgeoning industry have translated into notoriously poor air quality. Smog hangs heavily over the major cities, sometimes grounding aircraft that cannot navigate through it. Pedestrians and cyclists wear air-filter masks to protect themselves. In Beijing, citizens are skeptical that the government-issued daily pollution ratings are trustworthy. Increasingly, they are taking their own pollution measurements in the hopes that accurate information will galvanize others to action. Given that some days they can barely see down the street, they hope action comes soon (Papenfuss 2011).

Humanity, with its growing numbers, use of fossil fuels, and increasingly urbanized society, is putting too much stress on the

earth's atmosphere. The amount of air pollution varies from locale to locale, and you may be more personally affected than you realize. How often do you check air quality reports before leaving your house? Depending on where you live, this question can sound utterly strange or like an everyday matter. Along with oxygen, most of the time we are also breathing in soot, hydrocarbons, carbon, nitrogen, and sulfur oxides.

Much of the pollution in the air comes from human activity. How many college students move their cars across campus at least once a day? Who checks the environmental report card on how many pollutants each company throws into the air before purchasing a cell phone? Many of us are guilty of taking our environment for granted without concern for how everyday decisions add up to a long-term global problem. How many minor adjustments can you think of, like walking instead of driving, that would reduce your overall carbon footprint?

Remember the "tragedy of the commons." Each of us is affected by air pollution. But like the herder who adds one more head of cattle to realize the benefits of owning more cows but who does not have to pay the price of the overgrazed land, we take the benefit of driving or buying the latest cell phones without worrying about the end result. Air pollution accumulates in the body, much like the effects of smoking cigarettes accumulate over time, leading to more chronic illnesses. And in addition to directly affecting human health, air pollution affects crop quality as well as heating and cooling costs. In other words, we all pay a lot more than the price at the pump when we fill up our tank with gas.

Toxic and Radioactive Waste

Radioactivity is a form of air pollution. While nuclear energy promises a safe and abundant power source, increasingly it is looked upon as a danger to the environment and to those who inhabit it. We accumulate nuclear waste, which we must then keep track of long term and ultimately figure out how to store the toxic waste material without damaging the environment or putting future generations at risk.

The 2011 earthquake in Japan illustrates the dangers of even safe, government-monitored nuclear energy. When disaster occurs, how can we safely evacuate the large numbers of affected people? Indeed, how can we even be sure how far the evacuation radius should extend? Radiation can also enter the food chain, causing damage from the bottom (phytoplankton and microscopic soil organisms) all the way to the top. Once again, the price paid for cheap power is much greater than what we see on the electric bill.



Figure 20.16: An aerial view of the Gulf Coast, taken in May 2010, illustrates the damage done by the BP *Deep Water Horizon* spill. (Credit: Jeff Warren/flickr)

The enormous oil disaster that hit the Louisiana Gulf Coast in 2010 is just one of a high number of environmental crises that have led to toxic residue. They include the pollution of the Love Canal neighborhood of the 1970s to the Exxon *Valdez* oil tanker crash of 1989, the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, and Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant incident following the earthquake in 2011. Often, the stories are not newsmakers, but simply an unpleasant part of life for the people who live near toxic sites such as Centralia, Pennsylvania and Hinkley, California. In many cases, people in these neighborhoods can be part of a cancer cluster

without realizing the cause.



Figure 20.17: Oil on the gulf shore beaches caused great destruction, killing marine and land animals and devastating local business. (Credit: AV8ter/flickr)

Sociology in the Real World: The Fire Burns On: Centralia, Pennsylvania

There used to be a place called Centralia, Pennsylvania. The town incorporated in the 1860s and once had several thousand residents, largely coal workers. But the story of its demise begins a century later in 1962. That year, a trash-burning fire was lit in the pit of the old abandoned coal mine outside of town. The fire moved down the mineshaft and ignited a vein of coal. It is still burning.

For more than twenty years, people tried to extinguish the underground fire, but no matter what they did, it returned. There was little government action, and people had to abandon their homes as toxic gases engulfed the area and sinkholes developed. The situation drew national attention when the ground collapsed under twelve-year-old Todd Domboski in 1981. Todd was in his yard when a sinkhole four feet wide and 150 feet deep opened beneath him. He clung to exposed tree roots and saved his life; if he had fallen a few feet farther, the heat or carbon monoxide would have killed him.

In 1983, engineers studying the fire concluded that it could burn for another century or more and could spread over nearly 4,000 acres. At this point, the government offered to buy out the town's residents and wanted them to relocate to nearby towns. A few determined Centralians refused to leave, even though the government bought their homes, and they are the only ones who remain. In one field, signs warn people to enter at their own risk, because the ground is hot and unstable. And the fire burns on (DeKok 1986).

Environmental Racism

Environmental racism refers to the way in which minority group neighborhoods (populated primarily by people of color and members of low socioeconomic groups) are burdened with a disproportionate number of hazards, including toxic waste facilities, garbage dumps, and other sources of environmental pollution and foul odors that lower the quality of life. All around the globe, members of minority groups bear a greater burden of the health problems that result from higher exposure to waste and pollution. This can occur due to unsafe or unhealthy work conditions where no regulations exist (or are enforced) for poor workers, or in neighborhoods that are uncomfortably close to toxic materials.

The statistics on environmental racism are shocking. Research shows that it pervades all aspects of African Americans' lives: environmentally unsound housing, schools with asbestos problems, facilities and playgrounds with lead paint. A twenty-year comparative study led by sociologist Robert Bullard determined "race to be more important than socioeconomic status in predicting the location of the nation's commercial hazardous waste facilities" (Bullard et al. 2007). His research found, for example, that Black children are five times more likely to have lead poisoning (the leading environmental health threat for

children) than their White counterparts, and that a disproportionate number of people of color reside in areas with hazardous waste facilities (Bullard et al. 2007). Sociologists with the project are examining how environmental racism is addressed in the long-term cleanup of the environmental disasters caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Sociology in the Real World: Native American Tribes and Environmental Racism

Native Americans are unquestionably victims of environmental racism. The Commission for Racial Justice found that about 50 percent of all Native Americans live in communities with uncontrolled hazardous waste sites (Asian Pacific Environmental Network 2002). There's no question that, worldwide, indigenous populations are suffering from similar fates.

For Native American tribes, the issues can be complicated—and their solutions hard to attain—because of the complicated governmental issues arising from a history of institutionalized disenfranchisement. Unlike other racial minorities in the United States, Native American tribes are sovereign nations. However, much of their land is held in "trust," meaning that "the federal government holds title to the land in trust on behalf of the tribe" (Bureau of Indian Affairs 2012). Some instances of environmental damage arise from this crossover, where the U.S. government's title has meant it acts without approval of the tribal government. Other significant contributors to environmental racism as experienced by tribes are forcible removal and burdensome red tape to receive the same reparation benefits afforded to non-Indians.

To better understand how this happens, let's consider a few example cases. The home of the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians was targeted as the site for a high-level nuclear waste dumping ground, amid allegations of a payoff of as high as $200 million (Kamps 2001). Keith Lewis, an indigenous advocate for Native American rights, commented on this buyout, after his people endured decades of uranium contamination, saying that "there is nothing moral about tempting a starving man with money" (Kamps 2001). In another example, the Western Shoshone's Yucca Mountain area has been pursued by mining companies for its rich uranium stores, a threat that adds to the existing radiation exposure this area suffers from U.S. and British nuclear bomb testing (Environmental Justice Case Studies 2004). In the "four corners" area where Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico meet, a group of Hopi and Navajo families have been forcibly removed from their homes so the land could be mined by the Peabody Mining Company for coal valued at $10 billion (American Indian Cultural Support 2006). Years of uranium mining on the lands of the Navajo of New Mexico have led to serious health consequences, and reparations have been difficult to secure; in addition to the loss of life, people's homes and other facilities have been contaminated (Frosch 2009). In yet another case, members of the Chippewa near White Pine, Michigan, were unable to stop the transport of hazardous sulfuric acid across reservation lands, but their activism helped bring an end to the mining project that used the acid (Environmental Justice Case Studies 2004).

These examples are only a few of the hundreds of incidents that Native American tribes have faced and continue to battle against. Sadly, the mistreatment of the land's original inhabitants continues via this institution of environmental racism. How might the work of sociologists help draw attention to—and eventually mitigate—this social problem?

Why does environmental racism exist? The reason is simple. Those with resources can raise awareness, money, and public attention to ensure that their communities are unsullied. This has led to an inequitable distribution of environmental burdens. Another method of keeping this inequity alive is NIMBY protests. Chemical plants, airports, landfills, and other municipal or corporate projects are often the subject of NIMBY demonstrations. And equally often, the NIMBYists win, and the objectionable project is moved closer to those who have fewer resources to fight it.

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13.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
sustainable development	development that occurs without depleting or damaging the natural environment				
asylum-seekers	those whose claim to refugee status have not been validated				
cancer cluster	a geographic area with high levels of cancer within its population				
carrying capacity	the amount of people that can live in a given area considering the amount of available resources				
climate change	long-term shifts in temperature and climate due to human activity				
concentric zone model	a model of human ecology that views cities as a series of circular rings or zones				
cornucopian theory	a theory that asserts human ingenuity will rise to the challenge of providing adequate resources for a growing population				
demographic transition theory	a theory that describes four stages of population growth, following patterns that connect birth and death rates with stages of industrial development				
demography	the study of population				
e-waste	the disposal of broken, obsolete, and worn-out electronics				
environmental racism	the burdening of economically and socially disadvantaged communities with a disproportionate share of environmental hazards				
environmental sociology	the sociological subfield that addresses the relationship between humans and the environment				
exurbs	communities that arise farther out than the suburbs and are typically populated by residents of high socioeconomic status				
fertility rate	a measure noting the actual number of children born				
fracking	hydraulic fracturing, a method used to recover gas and oil from shale by drilling down into the earth and directing a high-pressure mixture of water, sand, and proprietary chemicals into the rock				
gentrification	the entry of upper- and middle-class residents to city areas or communities that have been historically less affluent				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
human ecology	a functional perspective that looks at the relationship between people and their built and natural environment				
internally displaced person	someone who fled his or her home while remaining inside the country's borders				
Malthusian theory	a theory asserting that population is controlled through positive checks (war, famine, disease) and preventive checks (measures to reduce fertility)				
megalopolis	a large urban corridor that encompasses several cities and their surrounding suburbs and exurbs				
metropolis	the area that includes a city and its suburbs and exurbs				
mortality rate	a measure of the number of people in a population who die				
NIMBY	"Not In My Back Yard," the tendency of people to protest poor environmental practices when those practices will affect them directly				
pollution	the introduction of contaminants into an environment at levels that are damaging				
population composition	a snapshot of the demographic profile of a population based on fertility, mortality, and migration rates				
population pyramid	a graphic representation that depicts population distribution according to age and sex				
refugee	an individual who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster				
sex ratio	the ratio of men to women in a given population				
suburbs	the communities surrounding cities, typically close enough for a daily commute				
urban sociology	the subfield of sociology that focuses on the study of urbanization				
urbanization	the study of the social, political, and economic relationships of cities				
white flight	the migration of economically secure white people from racially mixed urban areas toward the suburbs				
zero population growth	a theoretical goal in which the number of people entering a population through birth or immigration is equal to the number of people leaving it via death or emigration				

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13.6: Section Summary

13.2 Demography and Population

Scholars understand demography through various analyses. Malthusian, zero population growth, cornucopian theory, and demographic transition theories all help sociologists study demography. The earth's human population is growing quickly, especially in peripheral countries. Factors that impact population include birthrates, mortality rates, and migration, including immigration and emigration. There are numerous potential outcomes of the growing population, and sociological perspectives vary on the potential effect of these increased numbers. The growth will pressure the already taxed planet and its natural resources.

13.3 Urbanization

Cities provide numerous opportunities for their residents and offer significant benefits including access to goods to numerous job opportunities. At the same time, high population areas can lead to tensions between demographic groups, as well as environmental strain. While the population of urban dwellers is continuing to rise, sources of social strain are rising along with it. The ultimate challenge for today's urbanites is finding an equitable way to share the city's resources while reducing the pollution and energy use that negatively impacts the environment.

13.4 The Environment and Society

The area of environmental sociology is growing as extreme weather patterns and concerns over climate change increase. Human activity leads to pollution of soil, water, and air, compromising the health of the entire food chain. While everyone is at risk, poor and disadvantaged neighborhoods and nations bear a greater burden of the planet's pollution, a dynamic known as environmental racism.

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13.7: Section Quiz

13.2 Demography and Population

1.

The population of the planet doubled in fifty years to reach _____ in 1999?

a. 6 billion
b. 7 billion
c. 5 billion
d. 10 billion

2.

A functionalist would address which issue?

a. The way inner-city areas become ghettoized and limit availability to jobs
b. The way immigration and emigration trends strengthen global relationships
c. The way racism and sexism impact the population composition of rural communities
d. The way humans interact with environmental resources on a daily basis

3.

What does carrying capacity refer to?

a. The ability of a community to welcome new immigrants
b. The capacity for globalism within a given ethnic group
c. The amount of life that can be supported sustainably in a particular environment
d. The amount of weight that urban centers can bear if vertical growth is mandated

4.

What three factors did Malthus believe would limit human population?

a. Self-preservation, old age, and illness
b. Natural cycles, illness, and immigration
c. Violence, new diseases, and old age
d. War, famine, and disease

5.

What does cornucopian theory believe?

a. That human ingenuity will solve any issues that overpopulation creates
b. That new diseases will always keep populations stable
c. That the earth will naturally provide enough for whatever number of humans exist
d. That the greatest risk is population reduction, not population growth

13.3 Urbanization

6.

In the concentric zone model, Zone B is likely to house what?

a. The city's industrial center
b. Wealthy commuter homes

c. Formerly wealthy homes split into cheap apartments
d. Rural outposts

7.

What are the prerequisites for the existence of a city?

a. Good environment with water and a favorable climate
b. Advanced agricultural technology
c. Strong social organization
d. All of the above

8.

In 2014, what was the largest city in the world?

a. Delhi
b. New York
c. Shanghai
d. Tokyo

9.

What led to the creation of the exurbs?

a. Urban sprawl and crowds moving into the city
b. The high cost of suburban living
c. The housing boom of the 1980s
d. Gentrification

10.

How are the suburbs of Paris different from those of most U.S. cities?

a. They are connected by public transportation.
b. There are more industrial and business opportunities there.
c. They are synonymous with housing projects and urban poor.
d. They are less populated.

11.

How does gentrification affect cities?

a. They become more crowded.
b. Less affluent residents are pushed into less desirable areas.
c. Traffic issues, including pollution, become worse.
d. All of the above

12.

What does human ecology theory address?

a. The relationship between humans and their environments
b. The way humans affect technology
c. The way the human population reduces the variety of nonhuman species
d. The relationship between humans and other species

13.

Urbanization includes the sociological study of what?

a. Urban economics
b. Urban politics
c. Urban environments
d. All of the above

13.4 The Environment and Society

14.

The “tragedy of the commons” is a reference to what?

a. Global warming
b. African landowners
c. The common grazing lands in Oxford
d. The misuse of private space

15.

What are ways that human activity impacts the water supply?

a. Creating sewage
b. Spreading chemicals
c. Increasing radioactivity
d. All of the above

16.

Which is an example of environmental racism?

a. The fact that a disproportionate percentage of people of color live in environmentally hazardous areas
b. Greenpeace protests
c. The prevalence of asbestos in formerly “whites only” schools
d. Prejudice similar to racism against people with different environmental views than one’s own

17.

What is *not* a negative outcome of shoreline dredging?

a. Damaged coral reefs
b. Death of marine life
c. Ruined sea grass beds
d. Reduction of human population

18.

What are the two primary methods of waste disposal?

a. Landfill and incineration
b. Incineration and compost
c. Decomposition and incineration
d. Marine dumping and landfills

19.

Where does a large percentage of e-waste wind up?

a. Incinerators
b. Recycled in peripheral nations
c. Repurposed into new electronics
d. Dumped into ocean repositories

20.

What types of municipal projects often result in environmental racism?

a. Toxic dumps or other objectionable projects
b. The location of schools, libraries, and other cultural institutions
c. Hospitals and other health and safety sites
d. Public transportation options

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13.8: Short Answer

13.2 Demography and Population

1.

Given what we know about population growth, what do you think of China's policy that limits the number of children a family can have? Do you agree with it? Why, or why not? What other ways might a country of over 1.3 billion people manage its population?

2.

Describe the effect of immigration or emigration on your life or in a community you have seen. What are the positive effects? What are the negative effects?

3.

What responsibility does the United States have toward underage asylum-seekers?

13.3 Urbanization

4.

What are the differences between the suburbs and the exurbs, and who is most likely to live in each?

5.

How will the growth in urban populations affect the world over the next ten years?

6.

Considering the concentric zone model, what type of zone were you raised in? Is this the same or different as that of earlier generations in your family? What type of zone do you reside in now? Do you find that people from one zone stereotype those from another? If so, how?

13.4 The Environment and Society

7.

After reading this section, will you change the way you treat your household waste? Explain.

8.

How do you think the issue of e-waste should be dealt with? Should the responsibility fall to the companies that make the products or the consumer who buys them? Would your buying habits be different if you had to pay to recycle old electronics?

9.

Can you think of a modern example of the tragedy of the commons, where public use without accountability has created a negative outcome?

10.

NIMBY protests occur when concerned citizens band together to speak up against something that will impact them negatively. Is this a positive or negative trend? Give an example of a NIMBY protest and whether you support it or not.

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13.9: Further Research

13.2 Demography and Population

To learn more about population concerns, from the new-era ZPG advocates to the United Nations reports, check out the Population Connection web site.

Explore an interactive version of the population pyramid for each country, and to see updates and changes over time: at this website.

13.3 Urbanization

Interested in learning more about the latest research in the field of human ecology? Visit the Society for Human Ecology web site to discover what's emerging in this field.

Getting from place to place in urban areas might be more complicated than you think. Read the latest on pedestrian-traffic concerns at the Streetsblog web site.

13.4 The Environment and Society

Visit the Cleanups in My Community web site to see where environmental hazards have been identified in your backyard, and what is being done about them.

What is your carbon footprint? Find out using the carbon footprint calculator.

Find out using the water footprint calculator.

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14: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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14.2: Collective Behavior
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14.1: 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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14.2: 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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14.3: 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?

Social Media and Social Movements



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.

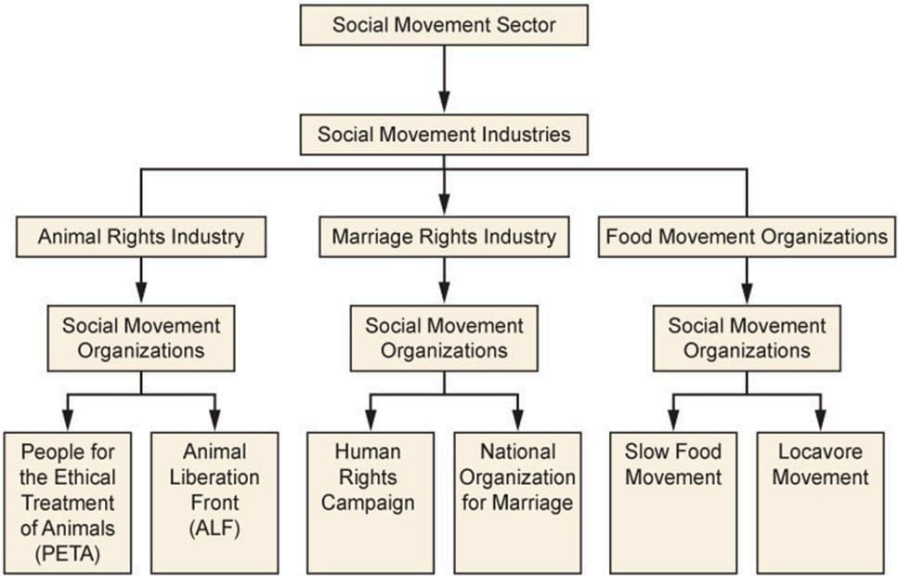


Figure 21.9: Multiple social movement organizations concerned about the same issue form a social movement industry. A society's many social movement industries comprise its social movement sector. With so many options, to whom will you give your time and money?

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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14.4: 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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14.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
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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14.6: Section Summary

14.2 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.

14.3 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.

14.4 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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14.7: Section Quiz

14.2 Collective Behavior

1.

Which of the following organizations is *not* an example of a social movement?

a. National Football League
b. Tea Party
c. Greenpeace
d. NAACP

2.

Sociologists using conflict perspective might study what?

a. How social movements develop
b. What social purposes a movement serves
c. What motivates inequitably treated people to join a movement
d. What individuals hope to gain from taking part in a social movement

3.

Which of the following is an example of collective behavior?

a. A soldier questioning orders
b. A group of people interested in hearing an author speak
c. A class going on a field trip
d. Going shopping with a friend

4.

The protesters at the Egypt uprising rally were:

a. a casual crowd
b. a conventional crowd
c. a mass
d. an acting crowd

5.

According to emergent-norm theory, crowds are:

a. irrational and impulsive
b. often misinterpreted and misdirected
c. able to develop their own definition of the situation
d. prone to criminal behavior

6.

A boy throwing rocks during a demonstration might be an example of _____.

a. structural conduciveness
b. structural strain
c. precipitating factors
d. mobilization for action

14.3 Social Movements

7.

If we divide social movements according to their positions among all social movements in a society, we are using the _____ theory to understand social movements.

a. framing
b. new social movement
c. resource mobilization
d. value-added

8.

While PETA is a social movement organization, taken together, the animal rights social movement organizations PETA, ALF, and Greenpeace are a _____.

a. social movement industry
b. social movement sector
c. social movement party
d. social industry

9.

Social movements are:

a. disruptive and chaotic challenges to the government
b. ineffective mass movements
c. the collective action of individuals working together in an attempt to establish new norms beliefs, or values
d. the singular activities of a collection of groups working to challenge the status quo

10.

When the League of Women Voters successfully achieved its goal of women being allowed to vote, they had to undergo frame _____, a means of completely changing their goals to ensure continuing relevance.

a. extension
b. amplification
c. bridging
d. transformation

11.

If a movement claims that the best way to reverse climate change is to reduce carbon emissions by outlawing privately owned cars, “outlawing cars” is the _____.

a. prognostic framing
b. diagnostic framing
c. motivational framing
d. frame transformation

14.4 Social Change

12.

Children in peripheral nations have little to no daily access to computers and the Internet, while children in core nations are constantly exposed to this technology. This is an example of:

a. the digital divide
b. human ecology

c. modernization theory
d. dependency theory

13.

When sociologists think about technology as an agent of social change, which of the following is *not* an example?

a. Population growth
b. Medical advances
c. The Internet
d. Genetically engineered food

14.

China is undergoing a shift in industry, increasing labor specialization and the amount of differentiation present in the social structure. This exemplifies:

a. human ecology
b. dependency theory
c. modernization
d. conflict perspective

15.

Core nations that work to propel peripheral nations toward modernization need to be aware of:

a. preserving peripheral nation cultural identity
b. preparing for pitfalls that come with modernization
c. avoiding hegemonistic assumptions about modernization
d. all of the above

16.

In addition to social movements, social change is also caused by technology, social institutions, population and _____.

a. the environment
b. modernization
c. social structure
d. new social movements

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14.8: Short Answer

14.2 Collective Behavior

1.

Discuss the differences between a mass and a crowd. What is an example of each? What sets them apart? What do they share in common?

2.

Can you think of a time when your behavior in a crowd was dictated by the circumstances? Give an example of emergent-norm perspective, using your own experience.

3.

Discuss the differences between an acting crowd and a collective crowd. Give examples of each.

4.

Imagine you are at a rally protesting nuclear energy use. Walk us through the hypothetical rally using the value-added theory, imagining it meets all the stages.

14.3 Social Movements

5.

Think about a social movement industry dealing with a cause that is important to you. How do the different social movement organizations of this industry seek to engage you? Which techniques do you respond to? Why?

6.

Do you think social media is an important tool in creating social change? Why, or why not? Defend your opinion.

7.

Describe a social movement in the decline stage. What is its issue? Why has it reached this stage?

14.4 Social Change

8.

Consider one of the major social movements of the twentieth century, from civil rights in the United States to Gandhi's nonviolent protests in India. How would technology have changed it? Would change have come more quickly or more slowly? Defend your opinion.

9.

Discuss the digital divide in the context of modernization. Is there a real concern that poorer communities are lacking in technology? Why, or why not?

10.

Which theory do you think better explains the global economy: dependency theory (global inequity is due to the exploitation of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by core nations) or modernization theory? Remember to justify your answer and provide specific examples.

11.

Do you think that modernization is good or bad? Explain, using examples.

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GLOSSARY

S

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