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Contemporary conflict theorists are concerned with the conflict between

Conflict theory in sociology describes society's tendency to change and develop due to perpetual conflict between classes. It is one of the four paradigms of sociology, which include functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and feminism. Examples of social conflict theory can be found in a variety of situations. Women in Me too demonstration The 19th-century philosopher and revolutionary Karl Marx saw society broken into two classes: the proletariat (working class) and bourgeoisie (owners of the means of production). To Marx, societal conflicts arise due to competition for limited resources in an economy, leading to an eventual revolution and/or war. Ruling classes kept working classes in states of oppression with hegemony, which imposed dominance with social rules that all obeyed. Political economist Max Weber extended this definition to include multidimensional class levels, such as those based on race, gender, and religion. He believed that in addition to political revolution, social conflict and change can result from discourse and the exchange of ideas. Patterns of class conflict occur when one class of people is systematically empowered over another. The less empowered class demands a share of resources that the more fortunate class has in abundance, leading to social conflict. Here are some real-life examples of conflict theory in both economic and societal situations. Part of the backlash following the 2008 economic crisis, Occupy Wall Street was a two-month political protest on Wall Street. New York. Its slogan, "We Are the 99%," referred to the increasing wealth and income discrepancy between the wealthiest 1% of the population and the rest of the country. Time Magazine named "The Protester," both international protesters and those involved with Occupy Wall Street, as its 2011 Person of the Year. Internet tracking systems in the public education system create their own class stratification. Gifted and advanced students (who are more likely to be from families with time and financial resources that aid educational success) receive skills that prepare them for college and future careers. Average-performing students and struggling students do not receive these same opportunities in their classes, which are often more focused on remediation and learning trades. If these students are able to make it to college, they will be economically disadvantaged due to student loans. This conflict has led to a national conversation about the affordability of college and the feasibility of canceling student loan debt. Crimes committed by members of wealthier classes, such as powerful CEOs or celebrities, often receive less punishment than crimes committed by poorer or socioeconomic status. Marx maintained that because the definition of crime and criminality is dictated by those with societal power, the criminal justice system is another way to subjugate the working class while elevating the higher class. Another way for ruling classes to oppress others is to abuse the power they hold over women subordinate careers. The MeToo movement, which began in 2006 and had a social media resurgence in 2017 as #metoo, identified how widespread the issue of workplace sexual abuse and harassment had become. This type of social revolution reflects the inevitability that both Marx and Weber predicted when writing about conflict theory. Sociologist W.E.B. Dubois explored dualities when having two identities (in his case, an American and a black American) that are treated differently. Through his formation of Racial Formation Theory, Dubois maintained that racism in America was systemic – and that an individual racist was not needed to maintain the discriminatory system. Black Lives Matter is a social movement that protests violence against black people. It began in 2013 after George Zimmerman was acquitted in the shooting death of Trayvon Martin. The movement's supporters continue to demonstrate when black people are killed in situations that are perceived to be non-threatening. Like the civil rights movement that came more than 60 years before, Black Lives Matter is another example of a social revolution after years of unequal treatment. The fight for gay rights culminated in American politics in 2008 when Proposition 8 passed in California. It defined marriage as between a man and a woman. The proposition gained international attention as its passage seemed to indicate that the gap between gay and straight marriage rights would remain. But, proponents of gay marriage protested political donors and boycotted businesses, indicating that the conflict between the two classes was too strong. The California Supreme Court overturned the proposition, and the U.S. Supreme Court followed suit in 2015, making same-sex marriage legal in the United States. The conflict redefined the status quo in American politics. Though conflict theory is the basis of several subsequent theories in sociology, including race conflict theory and critical theory, it has its share of criticism. Modern criticisms of conflict theory include: It focuses on conflict to the exclusion of stable economies and societies. Scientific research on interpersonal conflict is lacking. There is a limited ability to extend conflict theory into a microeconomic scale, which describes the network of attributes that make up a person's identity. Conflict theory discounts positive societal trends, such as humanitarianism and acts of peace. It does not include individuals who move into upper social classes through means of merit or skill (e.g., educational advancement, sports careers, career promotion, etc.). Like other sociological perspectives, conflict theory is based on historical and societal patterns. It's not the only way to explain the way that society works. If you'd like to learn about more ways to see society and human behavior, take a look at other influential ideologies from around the world. Boost your knowledge of society further with a list of key sociology terms and concepts too. M.Ed. Education Bookmark Glossary Absolute poverty The condition of having too little income to buy the necessities– food, shelter, clothing, health care. Achieved status A social position (status) obtained through an individual's own talents and efforts. Affirmative action The requirement that employers make special efforts to recruits hire and promote qualified members of previously excluded groups including women and minorities. Aggregate A collection of unrelated people who do not know one another but who may occupy a common space–for example, a crowd of people crossing a city street. Agrarian societies Societies in which large scale cultivation using plows and draft animals is the primary means of subsistence. Alienation The separation or estrangement of individuals from themselves and from others. Amalgamation The biological as well as cultural assimilation (merging) of racial or ethnic groups. Anomalies In science observations or problems that cannot be explained or solved in terms of a prevailing paradigm. Anomie A breakdown or confusion in the norms, values, and culture of a group or a society. A condition of relative normlessness. Anomie theory The theory suggesting that deviance and crime occur when there is an acute gap between cultural norms and goals and the socially structured opportunities for individuals to achieve those goals. Anticipatory socialization The process of taking on the attitudes values and behaviors of a status or role one expects to occupy in the future. Apartheid The recent policy of racial separation in South Africa enforced by legal political and military power. Ascribed status A social position (status) such as sex, race, and social class that a person acquires at birth. Assimilation The merging of minority and majority groups into one group with a come mon culture and identity. Association A group of people bound together by common goals and rules, but not necessarily by close personal ties. Athletics A form of sport that is closer to work than to play. Authority Power regarded as legitimate. Autocracy Rule or government concentrated in a single ruler or group of leaders who are willing to use force to maintain control. Baby boom The people who were born in the United States between 1946 and 1965. This group represented a sharp increase in birth rates and in the absolute number of births compared to pre-1946 levels. Bias The influence of a scientist's personal values and attitudes on scientific observations and conclusions. Bicultural The capacity to understand and function well in more than one cultural group. Birth rate Number of births per year per 1000 women 15 to 44 years old. Bureaucracy A large-scale formal organization with centralized authority, a hierarchical chain of command, explicit rules and procedures, and an emphasis on formal positions rather than on persons. Calling The idea in certain branches of ascetic Protestantism that one can live acceptably to God by fulfilling the obligations imposed by one's secular position in the world. Capitalism A form of economic organization in which private individuals accumulate and invest capital, own the means of production, and control profits. Caste system A closed system of social stratification in which prestige and social relationships are based on hereditary position at birth. Centrally planned economy An economic system that includes public ownership of or control over all productive resources and whose activity is planned by the government. Charisma The exceptional mystical or even supernatural quality of personality attributed to a person by others. Literally, "the gift of grace." Charismatic leader An individual who enlists the strong emotional support of followers through personal and seemingly supernatural qualities. Charter The capacity of certain schools to confer special rights on their graduates. Church A formally organized, institutionalized religious organization with formal and traditional religious doctrine, beliefs, and practices. City A relatively permanent settlement of large numbers of people who do not grow or gather their own food. Civil law The branch of law that deals largely with wrongs against the individual. Civil religion The interweaving of religious and political symbols in public life. Class Position in a social hierarchy based on prestige and/or property ownership. Class conflict The struggle between competing classes, specifically between the class that owns the means of production and the class or classes that do not. Class consciousness The sense of common class position and shared interests held by members of a social class. Class system A system of stratification based primarily on the unequal ownership and control of economic resources. Closed system In organizational theory, the degree to which an organization is shut off from its environment. Coercion A form of social interaction in which one is made to do something through the use of social pressure, threats, or force. Cognitive development The systematic improvement of intellectual ability through a series of stages. Cognitive development theory Suggests that individuals try to pattern their lives and experiences to form a reasonably consistent picture of their beliefs, actions, and values. Cohort Persons who share something in common, usually being born in the same year or time period. Commitment Willingness of members of a group to do what is needed to maintain the group. Community A collection of people in a geographical area; may also include the idea that the collection has a social structure and a sense of community spirit or belonging. Comparable worth A policy of equal pay for men and women doing similar work, even if the jobs are labeled differently by sex. Competition A goal-directed form of social interaction in which the goals or objects pursued are limited, so not all competitors can attain them. Competitive behavior is governed by rules and limitations (restraints) . Complementary marriages Marriages in which husband and wife take distinctly separate family roles. Concentric-zone theory A theory of urban development holding that cities grow around a central business district in concentric zones, with each zone devoted to a different land use. Concept A formal definition of what is being studied. Conflict A form of social interaction involving direct struggle between individuals or groups over commonly valued resources or goals. Differs from competition because individuals are more interested in defeating an opponent than in achieving a goal. Conflict approach One of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology: emphasizes the importance of unequal power and conflict in society. Weberian conflict theorists stress inequality and conflict based on class, status, power; Marxian theorists emphasize conflict and inequality based on ownership of the means of production. Conformity Going along with the norms or behaviors of a group. Conjugal family A form of family organization centered around the husband-wife relationship rather than blood relationships. Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) A "supercity" with more than one million people. There were 21 such cities in the United States in 1984. Contact hypothesis The theory that people of different racial or ethnic groups who became acquainted would be less prejudiced toward one another. Contagion theory Le Bon's theory that the anonymity people feel in a crowd makes them susceptible to the suggestions of fanatical leaders, and that emotions can sweep through such a crowd like a virus. Content analysis A research method used to describe and analyze in an objective and systematic manner the content of literature, speeches, or other media presentations. The method helps to identify cultural themes or trends. Content of socialization The ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge, and so forth that are presented to people who are being socialized. Context mobility The educational pattern in which selection for academic and university education is delayed and children compete throughout their schooling for high positions. Contest mobility The selection or arena within which socialization occurs. Continued subjugation The use of force and ideology by one group to retain domination over another group. Control group A group that is not exposed to the independent variable of interest to a researcher but whose members' backgrounds and experience are otherwise like those of the experimental group that is exposed to the independent variable. Controlling for In research, the effort to hold constant factors that might be influencing observed changes in the dependent variable. Convergence theory A theory suggesting that modernizing nations tend to resemble one another over time. In collective behavior, a theory suggesting that certain crowds attract particular types of people, who may behave irrationally. Cooperation A form of social interaction involving collaborative effort among people to achieve a common goal. Cooptation A social process by which people who might otherwise threaten the stability or existence of an organization are brought into the leadership or policy-making structure of that organization. Corporation An organization's leadership controlled by individuals within an industrial society. Correlation A measure of the degree of relationship between two variables. Counterculture A subculture whose norms and values sharply contradict the dominant norms and values of the society in which it occurs. Creationism A theory that sees all major types of living things, including people, as having been made by the direct creative action of God in six days. Credential The educational degree or certificate used to determine a person's eligibility for a position. Crime A behavior prohibited by law. Criminal law Law enacted by recognized political authorities that prohibits or requires certain behaviors. Criteria for inferring causality Evidence that two variables are correlated and that the hypothesized cause preceded the hypothesized effect in time, as well as evidence eliminating rival hypotheses. Crude birth rate The total number of live births per 1000 persons in a population within a particular year. Crude death rate The number of deaths per 1000 persons occurring within a one-year period in a particular population. Cult An organized group of people who together act out religious feelings, attitudes, and relationships; may focus on an unusual form of worship or belief. Cultural capital Symbolic wealth socially defined as worthy of being sought and possessed. Cultural change Modifications or transformations of a culture's customs, values, ideas, or artifacts. Cultural determinism The view that the nature of a society is shaped primarily by the ideas and values of the people living in it. Cultural division of labor A person's place in the occupational world is determined by his or her cultural markers (such as ethnicity). Cultural imposition The forcing of members of one culture to adopt the practices of another culture. Cultural relativism The view that the customs and ideas of a society must be viewed within the context of that society. Cultural revolution The repudiation of many existing cultural elements and the substitution of new ones. Cultural universals Cultural features, such as the use of language, shared by all human societies. Culture The common heritage shared by the people of a society, consisting of customs, values, language, ideas, and artifacts. Culture lag The time difference between the introduction of material innovations and resulting changes in cultural practices. Culture of poverty A distinctive culture thought to develop among poor people and characterized by failure to delay gratification, fatalism, and weak family and community ties. Culture pattern theory In the sociology of sport, a theory that explains aggression and violence in sport as learned behavior that mirrors the degree of aggression and violence in the society. Cyclical theories Theories of social change suggesting that societies follow a certain life course, from vigorous and innovative youth to more materialistic maturity and then to decline. Deduction Reasoning from the general to the specific. Democratic-collective organization An organization in which authority is placed in the group as a whole, rather than in any one position. Democracy A form of political organization in which power resides with the people and is exercised by them. Democratic-collective organization An organization in which authority is placed in the group as a whole, rules are minimized, members have considerable control over their work, and job differentiation is minimized. Demographic transition The demographic change experienced in Western Europe and North America since the industrial revolution in which the birth rate has declined so that it is about equal to the death rate. Demography The scientific study of population size, composition, and distribution as well as patterns of change in those features. Denomination One of a number of religious organizations in a society with no official state church. Has some formal doctrines, beliefs, and practices, but tolerates diverse religious views. Dependency theory A theory about the place of developing nations in the world economy suggesting that major industrial nations take advantage of the cheap labor and raw materials of developing nations and hence are reluctant to see them become industrialized. Dependent variable The variable that occurs or changes in a patterned way with the presence of, or changes in, another variable or variables. Descriptive study A research study whose goal is to describe the social phenomenon being studied. Deskilling The process of breaking down jobs into less complex segments that require less knowledge and judgment on the part of workers. Deterrence theory The view that certain qualities of punishment– such as certainty, swiftness, and severity– will help prevent others from committing crimes that have been so punished. Deviance Behaviors or characteristics that violate important social norms. Deviant career The regular pursuit of activities regarded by the individual and by others as deviant. Differential association A theory that attributes the existence of deviant behavior to learning from friends or associates. Differentiation, functional The division of labor or of social tasks within a society or an organization. Differentiation, rank The unequal placement and evaluation of various social positions. Diffusion The spread of inventions and discoveries from one group or culture to another on a voluntary basis; a source of cultural change. Discovery The uncovering of something that existed but was unknown; a source of cultural change. Discrimination The unequal and unfair treatment of individuals or groups based on some irrelevant characteristic, such as race, ethnicity, religion, sex, or social class. Division of labor The assignment of specialized tasks to various members of a group or society. Dominant status One social position that overshadows the other social positions an individual occupies. Domination The control of one group or individual by another. Double standard A set of social norms that allows males greater freedom of sexual expression, particularly before marriage, than females. Dramaturgical analysis An approach to social situations developed by Erving Goffman in which they are examined as though they were theatrical productions. Dual-career families Families in which both husband and wife have careers. Dual-career responsibilities The responsibilities of women who are wives as well as workers– often used to explain why women earn less. Dual economy The conceptual division of the private sector of the economy into monopoly (core) and competitive (periphery) sectors. Dyad A group composed of two people. Dysfunction Any consequence of a social system that disturbs or hinders the integration, adjustment, or stability of the system. Ecological paradigm A theory of land use and living patterns that examines the interplay among economic functions, geographical factors, demography, and the replacement of one group by another over time. Ecological succession In urban sociology, the replacement of one group by another over time. Ecological view An approach to the study of culture or other social phenomena that emphasizes the importance of examining climate, food and water supplies, and existing enemies in the environments. Ecology The scientific study of how organisms relate to one another and to their environments. Economic core The sector of the economy characterized by large, generally very profitable, oligopolistic firms that are national or multinational in scope; also called the monopoly sector. Economic growth An increase in the amount of goods and services produced with the same amount of labor and resources. Economic institution The pattern of roles, norms, and activities organized around the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services in a society. Economic periphery The sector of the economy characterized by small, local, barely profitable firms; also called the competitive sector. Ecosystem A system formed by the interaction of a community of organisms with its environment. Education The process, in school or beyond, of transmitting a society's knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors. Egalitarian marriage A family in which husband and wife share equally in family decision making. Ego In Freudian theory, a concept referring to the conscious, rational part of the personality structure, which mediates between the impulses of the id and the rules of society. Elderly dependency ratio The ratio between the number of the elderly (65 and over) and the number of working-age people (ages 18 to 64). Emergent norm theory A theory of collective behavior suggesting that people desire to form a shared definition of the situation in relatively normless situations. Emotion work An individual's effort to change an emotion or feeling to one that seems to be more appropriate to a given situation. Equilibrium In functionalist theory, the view that the parts of a society act together to keep a balanced whole. Ethnic group A group that shares a common cultural tradition and sense of identity. Ethnocentrism The tendency to see one's own culture as superior to all others. Ethnography A detailed study based on actual observation of the way of life of a human group or society. Ethnomethodology The study of the methods used by individuals to communicate and make sense of their everyday lives as members of society. Many ethnomethodologists focus on the study of language and everyday conversation. Evangelicalism A form of Protestantism that stresses the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the validity of personal conversion, the Bible as the basis for belief, and active preaching of the faith. Evolutionary theories Theories of social change that see societies as evolving from simpler forms to more complex ones. In biology, the theory that living organisms develop new traits that may aid their adaptation or survival. Exchange A form of social interaction involving the transfer of tangibles (objects) or intangibles (sentiments) between individuals. Exchange theory An interpretive perspective that explains social interaction on the basis of the exchange of various tangible or intangible social rewards. Experiment A carefully controlled situation where the independent variable is manipulated while everything else remains the same; the aim is to see whether the dependent variable will change. Experimental group In research, the group of individuals exposed to the independent variable that is being studied by the experimenter. Explanatory study A research study with the goal of explaining how or why things happen the way they do in the social world. Expressive A type of role that involves the showing of emotional feelings or preferences in interpersonal relationships. Expressive leader A group leader whose role in the group is to help maintain stability through joking, mediating conflicts, and otherwise reducing tension. Extended family A family in which relatives from several generations live together. Face-work A term used by Goffman to refer to the actions taken by individuals to make their behavior appear consistent with the image they want to present. Fads Striking behaviors that spread rapidly and that, even though embraced enthusiastically, remain popular for only a short time. Family Two or more persons who are related by blood, marriage, adoption, or serious long-term commitment to each other, and who live together. They usually form an economic unit, and adult members care for the dependent children. Fashion A socially approved but temporary style of appearance or behavior. Flow An experience of total involvement in one's present activity. Folkways Social norms to which people generally conform, although they receive little pressure to do so. Formal organizations Highly structured groups with specific objectives and usually clearly stated rules and regulations. Formal sanction A social reward or punishment that is administered in an organized, systematic way, such as receiving a diploma or getting a fine. Functional approach A theoretical approach that analyzes social phenomena in terms of their functions in a social system. Functional equivalent A feature or process in society that has the same function (consequence) as some other feature or process. Functions The consequences of social phenomena for other parts of society or for society as a whole. Fundamentalism A form of religious traditionalism characterized by the literal interpretation of religious texts, a conception of an active supernatural, and clear distinctions between sin and salvation. Game A form of play involving competitive or cooperative interaction in which the outcome is determined by physical skill, strength, strategy, or chance. Gemeinschaft A term used by Tonnies to describe a small, traditional, community-centered society in which people have close, personal, face-to-face relationships and value social relationships as ends in themselves. Gender The traits and behaviors that are socially designated as "masculine" or "feminine" in a particular society. Gender differences Variations in the social positions, roles, behaviors, attitudes, and personalities of men and women in a society. Gender gap Differences in the way men and women vote. Gender-role expectations People's beliefs about how men and women should behave. Gender stratification The hierarchical ranking of men and women and their roles in terms of unequal ownership, power, social control, prestige, and social rewards. Generalized other A general conception of the attitudes, values, and expectations, attitudes, and values of a group or community. Genocide The destruction of an entire population. Gentrification The movement of middle-class and upper-middle-class persons (usually white) into lower-income, sometimes minority urban areas. Gesellschaft A term used by Tonnies to describe an urban industrial society in which people have impersonal, formal, contractual, and specialized relationships and tend to use social relationships as a means to an end. Global economy An economy in which the economic life and health of one nation depends on what happens in other nations. Green revolution The improvement in agricultural production based on higher-yielding grains and increased use of fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation. Groups Collections of people who share some common goals and norms and whose relationships are usually based on interactions. Groupthink The tendency of individuals to follow the ideas or actions of a group. Health maintenance organizations (HMOs) Organizations that people pay a fee to join in return for access to a range of health services. Heterosexual A person whose preferred partner for erotic, emotional, and sexual interaction is someone of the opposite sex. Hierarchy The arrangement of positions in a rank order, with those below reporting to those above. Hispanics A general term referring to Spanish-speaking persons. It includes many distinct ethnic groups. Homosexual Someone who is emotionally, erotically, and physically attracted to persons of his or her own sex. Horizontal mobility Movement from one social status to another of about equal rank in the social hierarchy. Horticultural Societies in which the cultivation of plants with hoes is the primary means of subsistence. Hospice An organization designed to provide care and comfort for terminally ill persons and their families. Human capital The idea that the earnings of different workers vary because of differences in their education or experience. Hunting and gathering Societies that obtain food by hunting animals, fishing, and gathering fruits, nuts, and grains. These societies do not plant crops or have domesticated animals. Hybrid economy An economic system that blends features of both centrally planned and capitalist (market) economies. Hyperinflation Anextreme form of inflation. Hypothesis A tentative statement asserting a relationship between one factor and something else (based on theory, prior research, or general observation). Id In Freudian theory, a concept referring to the unconscious instinctual impulses– for instance, sexual or aggressive impulses. Ideal values Values that people say are important to them, whether or not their behavior supports those values. Identification theories Views suggesting that children learn gender roles by identifying with and copying the same-sex parent. Ideology A system of ideas that reflects, rationalizes, and defends the interests of those who believe in it. Impression management A term used by Goffman to describe the efforts of individuals to influence how others perceive them. Incest Sexual intercourse with close family members. Incest taboo The prohibition of sexual intercourse between fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, and brothers and sisters. Income The sum of money wages and salaries (earnings) plus income from other sources such as interest on savings or stocks. Independent variable The variable whose occurrence or change of another variable; the hypothesized cause of something else. Individualism A belief in individual rights and responsibilities. Induction Reasoning from the particular to the general. Industrialization The shift within a nation's economy from a primarily agricultural base to a manufacturing base. Industrialized societies Societies that rely on mechanized production, rather than on human or animal labor, as the primary means of subsistence. Inflation An increase in the supply of money in circulation that exceeds the rate of economic growth, making money worth less in relation to the goods and services it can buy. Informal sanction A social reward or punishment that is given informally through social interaction, such as an approving smile or a disapproving frown. Innovation The discovery or invention of new ideas, things, or methods; a source of cultural change. Instinct A genetically determined behavior triggered by specific conditions or events. Institution of science The social communities that share certain theories and methods aimed at understanding the physical and social worlds. Institutionalization of science The establishment of careers for producing scientists in major social institutions. Institutionalized Social practices that have become established, patterned, and predictable and that are supported by custom, tradition, and/or law. Institutions The patterned and enduring roles, statuses, and norms that have formed around successful strategies for meeting basic social needs. Instrumental A type of role that involves problem-solving or task-oriented behavior in group or interpersonal relationships. Instrumental leader A group leader whose role is to keep the group's attention directed to the task being performed. Interest group A group of people who work to influence political decisions affecting them. Intergenerational mobility A vertical change of social status from one generation to the next. Interlocking directorates The practice of overlapping memberships on corporate boards of directors. Intermittent reinforcement In learning theory, the provision of a reward sometimes but not always when a desired behavior is shown. Internalization The process of taking social norms, roles, and values into one's own mind. Interpretive approach One of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology; focuses on how individuals make sense of the world and react to the symbolic meanings attached to social life. Intragenerational mobility A vertical change of social status experienced by an individual within his or her own lifetime. Invention An innovation in material or nonmaterial culture, often produced by combining existing cultural elements in new ways; a source of cultural change. "I" portion of the self In George Herbert Mead's view, the spontaneous or impulsive portion of the self. IQ (intelligence quotient) test A standardized set of questions or problems designed to measure verbal and numerical knowledge and reasoning. "Iron law of oligarchy" In Robert Michels' view, the idea that power in an organization tends to become concentrated in the hands of a small group of leaders. Keynesian economics The economic theory advanced by John Maynard Keynes, which holds that government intervention, through deficit spending, may be necessary to maintain high levels of employment. Kinship Socially defined family relationships, including those based on common parentage, marriage, or adoption. Labeling theory A theory of deviance that focuses on the process by which some people are labeled deviant by other people (and thus take on deviant identities) rather than on the nature of the behavior itself. Labor-market segmentation The existence of two or more distinct labor markets, one of which is open only to individuals of a particular gender or ethnicity. Laissez-faire economics The economic theory advanced by Adam Smith, which holds that the economic system develops and functions best when left to market forces, without government intervention. Language Spoken or written symbols combined into a system and governed by rules. Latent function The unintended and/or unrecognized function or consequence of something. Law The system of formalized rules established by political authorities and backed by the power of the state for the purpose of controlling or regulating social behavior. Learning theory In psychology, the theory that specific human behaviors are acquired or forgotten as a result of the rewards or punishments associated with them. Legal protection The protection of minority-group members through the official policy of a government unit. Legitimate In reference to power, the sense by people in a situation that those who are exercising power have the right to do so. Lesbian A woman who is emotionally, erotically, and physically attracted to other women. Life course The biological and social sequence of birth, growing up, maturity, aging, and death. Life-course analysis An examination of the ways in which different stages of life influence different facets of life. Life expectancy The average years of life anticipated for people born in a particular year. Life-style Family, child-bearing, and educational attitudes and practices; personal values; type of residence; consumer, political, and civic behavior; religion. Life table A statistical table that presents the death rate and life expectancy of an age group at each age of an individual's life. Location In Kanter's view, a person's position in an organization with respect to having control over decision making. Looking-glass self The sense of self an individual derives from the way others view and treat him or her. Macro level An analysis of societies that focuses on large-scale institutions, structures, and processes. Magic According to Malinowski, "a practical consisting of acts which are categories for a particular population. Line job A job that is part of the central operations of an organization rather than one that provides support services for the operating structure. Lobbying The effort to influence political decisions to which it may be favorable to one's interests and goals. only means to a definite end expected to follow." Manifest function The intended function or consequence of some thing or process in a social system. Marriage A social institution that recognizes and approves the sexual union of two or more individuals and includes a set of mutual rights and obligations. Marriage rate Number of marriages in a year per 1000 single women 15 to 44 years old. Marriage squeeze A situation in which the eligible individuals of one sex outnumber the supply of potential marriage partners of the other sex. Marxian approach A theory that uses the ideas of Karl Marx and stresses the importance of class struggle centered around the social relations of production. Mass hysteria Widely felt fear and anxiety. Mass media Widely disseminated forms of communication, such as books, magazines, radio, television, and movies. Matthew effect The advantage an individual has is likely to lead to additional advantages. Mean, arithmetic The sum of a set of measurement values divided by the number of values; a measure of central tendency in a series of data. Median The number that cuts a distribution of figures in half; a positional measure of central tendency in a series of data. Medicaid A federal-state matching program that provides medical assistance to certain low income persons. Medicare A federal health insurance program. Individuals are eligible if they receive Social Security benefits, federal disability benefits, or sometimes if they have end-stage kidney disease. "Me" portion of the self In George Herbert Mead's view, the portion of the self that brings the influence of others into the individual's consciousness. Method of comparison An approach that compares one subgroup or society with another one for the purpose of understanding social differences. Methodology The rules, principles, and practices that guide the collection of data drawn from it. Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) A geographical area containing either one city with 50,000 or more residents or an urban area of at least 50,000 inhabitants and a total population of at least 100,000 (except in New England where the required total is 75,000). Micro level An analysis of societies that focuses on small-scale process, such as how individuals interact and how they attach meanings to the social actions of others. Migration The relatively permanent movement of people from one area to another. Millenarian movements Social movements based on the expectation that society will be suddenly transformed through supernatural intervention. Minority group Any recognizable racial, religious, ethnic, or social group that suffers from some disadvantage resulting from the action of a dominant group with higher social status and greater privileges. Mode The value that occurs most often in a series of mathematical values. Modeling Copying the behavior of admired people. Modernization The social and cultural transformation that occurs when a traditional agricultural society becomes highly industrialized. Monopoly The exclusive control of a particular industry, market, service, or commodity by a single organization. Mores Strongly held social norms, a violation of which causes a sense of moral outrage. Mortality rate The number of deaths per thousand in a population. Multinational corporation A corporation that locates its operations in a variety of nations. Multiple-nuclei theory A theory of urban development holding that cities develop around a number of different centers, each with its own special activity. Nation A relatively autonomous political grouping that usually shares a common language and a cultural and geographical community. Negative sanctions Actions intended to deter or punish unwanted social behaviors. Negotiation A form of social interaction in which two or more parties in conflict or competition arrive at a mutually satisfactory agreement. Network See Social network. Nomadic Societies that move their residences from place to place. Nonverbal communication Visual and other meaningful symbols that do not use language. Norm A shared rule about acceptable or unacceptable social behavior. Normal science A term used by Kuhn to describe research based on one or more past scientific achievements that are accepted as a useful foundation for further study. Nuclear family A family form consisting of a married couple and their children. Objectivity Procedures researchers follow to minimize distortions in observation or interpretation due to personal or value factors. Occupation A position in the world of work that involves specialized knowledge and activities. Occupational segregation The concentration of workers by gender or ethnicity into certain jobs but not others. Oligarchy The rule of the many by the few. Oligopoly The control of a particular industry, market, service, or commodity by a few large organizations. Open system In organizational theory, the degree to which an organization is open to and dependent on its environment. Operationalization In research, the actual procedures or operations conducted to measure a variable. Opportunity In an organization, the potential that a particular position contains for the expansion of work responsibilities and rewards. Organization A social group deliberately formed to pursue certain values and goals. Organizational ritualism A form of behavior in organizations, particularly in bureaucracies, in which people follow the rules and regulations so closely that they forget the purpose of those rules and regulations. Organizational waste The inefficient use of ideas, expertise, money, or material in an organization. Panic A frightened response by an aggregate of people to an immediate threat. Paradigm In the sociology of science, a coherent tradition of scientific law, theory, and assumptions that forms a distinct approach to problems. Parallel marriage When husband and wife both work and share household tasks. Participant observation A research method in which the researcher does observation while taking part in the activities of the social group being studied. Pastoral societies Societies in which the raising and herding of animals such as sheep, goats, and cows is the primary means of subsistence. Patriarchal family A form of family organization in which the father is the formal head of the family. Peer group Friends and associates of about the same age and social status that are of the same value of the same age and social status. Friends and associates of about the same age and social status that are governed by rules and others each characterized by an element of make-believe. Pluralism In ethnic relations, the condition that exists when both majority and minority groups value their cultural identities, and at the same time seek economic and political unity. In political sociology, the view that society is composed of competing interest groups, power diffused among them. Policy research Research designed to assess alternative possibilities for public or social action, in terms of their costs and/or consequences. Political economy A theory of land use that emphasizes the role of political and economic interests. Political order The institutionalized system of acquiring and exercising power. Political party An organized group that seeks to control or influence political decisions. Population In demography, all the people living in a given geographic area. In research, the total number of cases with a particular characteristic. Population Exclusion The efforts of a society to prevent ethnically different groups from joining it. Population transfer The efforts of a dominant ethnic group to move or remove members of a minority ethnic group from a particular area. Positive sanctions Rewards for socially desired behavior. Positivist An approach to explaining human action that does not take into account the subjective interpretation of the situation. Postindustrial society A term used by Daniel Bell to refer to societies organized around knowledge and planning rather than around industrial production. Power The capacity of an individual group to control or influence the behavior of others, even in the face of opposition. Power elite According to Mills, a closely connected group of the corporate rich, political leaders, and military commanders who decide most key social and political issues. Prejudice A "prejudged" unfavorable attitude toward the members of a particular group, who are assumed to possess negative traits. Prestige A social recognition, respect, and deference accorded members of a particular group based on their social status. Primary deviance Deviant behavior that is invisible to others, short- lived, or unimportant, and therefore does not contribute to the public labeling of an individual as being deviant. Primary economic sector The sector of an economy in which natural resources are generated or extracted. Primary group A social group characterized by frequent face-to-face interaction, the commitment and emotional ties members feel for one another, and relative permanence. Principle of cumulative advantage A process whereby some institutions help to generate further benefits for them. Privatization The tendency of families in industrial societies to turn away from the community and workplace toward a primary focus on privacy, domesticity, and intimacy. Processes of socialization Those interactions that convey specialized knowledge and thus requires specialized training usually recognized by the granting of a degree or credential. Projection A psychological process of attributing ones own unacceptable feelings or desires to other people to avoid guilt and self-blame. Property The rights and obligations a group or individual has in relation to an object, resource, or activity. Proposition A statement about how variables are related to each other. Prostitution The selling of sexual favors. Race A classification of humans into groups based on distinguishable physical characteristics that may form the basis for significant social inequalities. Racism The institutionalized domination of one racial group by another. Random sample A sample of units drawn from a larger population in such a way that every unit has a known and equal chance of being selected. Range The total spread of values in a set of figures . Rank Place in a social hierarchy. Rank differentiation See Differentiation, rank. Rape A forced sexual assault by a male, usually upon a female, although sometimes upon another male. Rate of natural increase The difference between birth and death rates, excluding immigration. Rationalization The process of subjecting social relationships to calculation and administration. Real values The values people consider truly important, as evident in their behavior and how they spend their time and money. Rebellion In anomie theory, a form of deviance that occurs when individuals reject culturally valued means and goals and substitute new means and goals. In political sociology, the expression of opposition to an established authority. Reference group A social group whose standards and opinions are used by an individual to help define or evaluate beliefs, values, and behaviors. Reform movement A type of social movement that accepts the status quo but seeks certain specific social reforms. Regressive movement A type of social movement whose aim is to move the social world back to where members believe it was at an earlier time. Relative poverty The condition of having much less income than the average person in society, even if one can afford the necessities of life. Religion A set of shared beliefs and rituals common to a special community and focusing on the sacred and supernatural. Religious movement An organized religious group with the range of changing existing religious institutions. Research and development (R&D) Investments in basic research and in the practical application of basic research discoveries. Research design The specific plan for conducting a research study, including sampling, measurement, and data analysis. Resocialization The process of socializing people away from a group or activity in which they are involved. Resource mobilization theory The theory that social movements are affected by their ability to marshal various key resources. Retreatism In anomie theory, a form of deviance that occurs when individuals abandon culturally valued means and goals. Revolution A large-scale change in the political leadership of a society and the restructuring of major features of that society. Revolutionary movement A type of social movement whose aim is to reorganize existing society completely. Riot A destructive and sometimes violent collective outburst. Rising expectations A situation in which people find that past hardships should not have to be suffered in the future. Ritual In the sociology of religion, the rules of conduct governing behavior in the presence of the sacred. Intended to produce feelings of reverence, awe, and group identity. Ritualism In anomie theory, a form of deviance in which individuals lose sight of socially valued goals but conform closely to socially prescribed means. Role A set of expected behaviors associated with particular social positions. For interactionists, the effort to mesh the demands of a social position with one's own identity. Role accumulation Adding more statuses and roles to the ones an individual already has. Role conflict A situation in which two or more social roles make incompatible demands on a person. Role exit The process of leaving a role that is central to one's identity and building an identity in a new role while also taking into account one's prior role. Role expectations Commonly shared norms about how a person is supposed to behave in a particular role. Role performance The behaviors of a person performing a certain social role. Role set The cluster of roles that accompanies a particular status. Rowdyism Generalized interpersonal violence or property destruction occurring at spectator events. Ruling class A small class that controls the means of economic production and dominates political decisions. Rumor A report that is passed informally from one person to another without firm evidence. Sample survey A systematic method of collecting information from respondents, using personal interviews or written questionnaires. Sanction A social reward or punishment for approved or disapproved behavior; can be positive, formal or informal. Scapegoating Blaming a convenient but innocent person or group for one's trouble or guilt. Schooling Formal education. Science An approach used to obtain reliable knowledge about the physical and social worlds, based on systematic empirical observations; the knowledge so obtained. Scientific productivity Making new discoveries, confirming or disconfirming hypotheses through experimentation and other types of research, and publishing the results of that research. Scientific revolution The dramatic overthrow of one intellectual paradigm by another. Secondary deviance Behavior discovered by others and publicly labeled by them as deviant. Secondary economic sector The sector of an economy in which raw materials are turned into manufactured goods. Secondary group A social group bound together for the accomplishment of common tasks, with few emotional ties among members. Sect An exclusive, highly cohesive group of religious believers. Sects usually last longer and are more institutionalized than cults. Sector theory A theory of urban development develop in wedge-shaped patterns following transportation systems. Secularization The erosion of belief in the supernatural. Includes a growing respect for rationality, cultural and religious pluralism, tolerance of moral ambiguity, faith in education, and belief in civil rights, the rule of law, and due process. Self-fulfilling prophecy A belief or prediction about a person or situation that influences that person or situation in such a way that the belief or prediction comes true. Sex The biological distinction of being male or female. Sibling A brother or sister. Social categories Groups of people who may not interact but who share certain social characteristics or statuses. Social change A modification or transformation in the way society is organized. Social class A group's position in a social hierarchy based on prestige and/or property ownership. Social construction of reality The process of socially creating definitions of situations so that they appear to be natural. Social control The relatively patterned and systematic ways in which society guides and restrains individual behaviors so that people act in predictable and desirable ways. Social forces The social structures and culture individuals face in a society. Social inequality The existence of unequal opportunities or rewards for people in different social positions. Social interaction The ways people behave in relation to one another by means of language, gestures, and symbols. Social isolates Societies in which productive resources are owned and controlled by the state rather than by individuals. Socialization The process of preparing newcomers to become members of an existing social group by helping them to learn the attitudes and behaviors that are considered appropriate. Social learning theory A form of learning theory suggesting that people learn through observation and imitation, even though they are not rewarded or punished for certain behaviors. Social mobility The movement from one status to another within a stratified society. Social movement A group of people who work together to guide or suppress particular changes in the way society is organized. Social network A set of interdependent relations or links between individuals. Social psychology The scientific study of how individual behavior is socially influenced. Social relations of production The organization of economic life on the basis of who owns the means of production, purchasing or selling labor power, and controlling or not controlling other people's labor power. Social sciences Disciplines related to sociology that study human activity and communication, including psychology, anthropology, economics, political science. Social stratification The fairly permanent ranking of positions in a society in terms of unequal power, prestige, or privilege. Social structure Recurrent and patterned relationships among individuals, organizations, nations, or other social units. Society A group of people with a shared and somewhat distinct culture who live in a defined territory, feel some unity as a group, and see themselves as distinct from other peoples. Sociobiology The scientific study of the biological basis for human behavior. Socioeconomic status (SES) An index of social status that considers a person's occupation, education, and income as measures of social status. Sociology The study and analysis of patterned social relationships in modern societies. Sovereignty The authority claimed by a state to maintain a legal system, use coercive power to secure obedience, and maintain its independence from other states. Sponsored mobility A pattern in which certain children are selected at an early age for academic and university education and are thus helped to achieve higher social status. Sport A form of game in which the outcome is affected by physical skill. Staff job In an organization, an advisory or administrative job that supports the manufacturing, production, selling, or other primary activities of the organization. Stage theory A theory suggesting that nations go through various systematic stages of development. State The institutionalized, legal, personification of power within territorial limits. State sector The sector of the economy controlled by local, state, or federal governments that supplies goods and services under direct control of the government. Status A socially defined position in society that carries with it certain prescribed rights, obligations, and expected behaviors. Status-attainment model A view of social mobility suggesting the importance of father's occupation, father's occupation, son's education, and son's first job for a man's adult status. (Early research was based only on men.) Status group People who share a social identity based on similar values and life-styles. Status inconsistency May occur when an individual occupies two or more unequal statuses in a society. Structural Demographic, economic, and rank-order changes in a society. Structural-functional perspective One of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology, developed by Talcott Parsons: focuses on how the various parts of society fit together to maintain the equilibrium of the whole. Subculture A distinguishable group that shares a number of features with the dominant culture within which it exists while also having unique features such as language, customs, or values. Subjective meanings The values and interpretations that individuals place on their life situations and experiences; may vary from person to person. Subjective social class A person's own perception of his or her class position. Subnet A family created south of the 37th parallel in the United States, inside of Clark County in Nevada. Superego In Freudian theory, that part of the personality structure that upholds the norms of society. Symbol Any object or sign that evokes a shared social meaning. Symbolic interaction An interpretive perspective, inspired by the work of George Herbert Mead, saying that individuals learn meanings through interaction with others and then organize their lives around these socially created meanings. Taboo A strongly prohibited social practice; the strongest form of social norm. Technological determinism The belief that technological development shapes social life in rather fixed ways. Technology The practical applications of scientific knowledge. Tension theory A theory suggesting that sport serves as a form of social safety valve, allowing individuals to vent their seething aggressions. Terrorism An attack on people designed to frighten society and force it to meet the terrorists' demands. Tertiary economic sector The sector of the economy controlled by local, state, or federal governments that supplies goods and services other than the provision of services to individuals such as health care. Theoretical approach A set of guiding ideas. Theory A system of defining ideas, concepts, and relationships that provides a way of organizing the observable world. Theory X A view of organizational behavior suggesting that people dislike work, seek to avoid responsibility, resist change, and do not care about organizational needs. Theory Y A view of organizational behavior suggesting that people have the desire to work, to be creative, and to take responsibility for their jobs and for the organization. Theory Z A form of organizational culture that values long-term employment, trust, and close personal relationships between workers and managers. Total fertility rate An estimate of the average number of children that would be born to each woman over her reproductive life if current age-specific birth rates remained constant. Total institution A place where people spend 24 hours of every day for an extended part of their lives, cut off from the rest of society and tightly controlled by the people in charge. Totalitarianism A form of autocracy that involves the use of state power to control and regulate all phases of life. Tournament selection An educational pattern in which a continual process of selection serves to weed out candidates; winners move on to the next round of selection and losers are eliminated from the competition. Tracking The practice of grouping students by ability, curriculum, or both. Triad A group composed of three people. Underemployment The hiring of people in jobs that are not customarily filled by individuals with their relatively high levels of experience or education. Underground economy Exchanges of goods and services that escape detection and are therefore not taxed or regulated economy and therefore escape official record keeping. Unit of analysis Who or what is being studied in a piece of social research. Urbanization The growth of cities. Value-added theory A theory suggesting that many instances of collective behavior must progress through a series of stages. Value-free research A position in social science that carries with it certain prescribed rights, obligations, and expected behaviors. Values Strongly held general ideas that people desire and that is good and bad, desirable or undesirable; values provide yardsticks for judging specific acts and goals. Variable A logical set of attributes with different degrees of magnitude or different categories. For example, age is a variable on which people can be classified according to the number of years they have lived. Verstehen The effort to understand social behavior in terms of the motives individuals bring to it. Vertical integration A form of business organization that attempts to control the business environment by assuming control of one or more of its resources or business outlets. Vertical mobility Movement of an individual or a group upward or downward, from one social status to another. Wealth The total value (minus debts) of what is owned. Weberian approach The views held by conflict theorists who, using the ideas of Max Weber, stress the significance of conflict in social life, especially conflict among status groups rather than social classes. White ethnics White Americans who value and preserve aspects of their ethnic heritage. World systems analysis A form of sociological analysis that stresses understanding national behavior in terms of historical and contemporary relationships among nations and societies . Zero population growth (ZPG) The situation that occurs when the population of a nation or the world remains stable from one year to the next.