

Sociological Terms

A

- **Acculturation.** The process by which members of one culture assimilate the traits of another.
- **Achieved status.** Social position based on the action of an individual or group position based on what you do, not who you are. *See also ascribed status.*
- **Agrarian society.** A farm-based society having little or no industrialization.
- **Alienation.** A feeling of estrangement from and hostility toward society.
- **Anomie.** A term used by **Emile Durkheim** to indicate a social condition characterized by the absence or breakdown of norms that govern group and individual behavior. Sometimes used to indicate an individual's feelings of normlessness.
- **Anticipatory socialization.** The process by which an individual learns the major values and some of the behavior patterns of members of a significant reference group as preliminary to possible membership in the group.
- **Ascribed status.** Social position based on birth and determined by such factors as family, caste, race, sex, age, religion, or ethnicity. *See also achieved status.*
- **Assimilation.** The process through which one group, either voluntarily or under compulsion, adopts the styles of life, attitudes, and behaviors of politically or culturally dominant group, leading eventually to the former's disappearance as an independent, identifiable unit. *See also accommodation.*
- **Attitude.** An individual's evaluation (positive or negative) of some aspect of the world around him and predisposition to act on the basis of this evaluation. Thus, a person with negative attitudes toward blacks is predisposed to act in discriminatory ways toward blacks.

B

- **Bourgeoisie.** A term used by **Karl Marx** to denote the class that owned the means of production in capitalist societies. More generally used to denote the middle class. *See also proletariat.*
- **Bride price.** In most societies, a payment made by a man to the family of his bride, so that the marriage becomes a form of exchange of goods for a bride.

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- **Bureaucracy.** A trained and specialized permanent administrative staff responsible for devising, overseeing, and coordinating the activities of others participants in an organization.

C

- **Capitalism.** An economic institution that is characterized by private ownership and control of economic capital and production and that is guided by the economic principle of achieving maximum profits through exchange.
- **Caste system.** A type of social organization composed of ranked, mutually on exclusive units between which virtually no social mobility is permitted.
- **Census.** A periodic enumeration of a total population and some of the population's characteristics, such as age, sex, or occupation.
- **Charisma.** An extraordinary (sometimes mystical and supernatural) personal quality attributed to some leaders that causes others to accept their authority, frequently seen as the basis of trust and devotion given religious founders and prophets but also attributed to some political leaders.
- **Class.** According to **Max Weber**, a numbers of people who have a specific causal component of their life opportunities in common as a result of a common position in the labor market. *See also social class.*
- **Class consciousness.** According to **Karl Marx**, the awareness of the proletariat of its common market position and exploitation.
- **Communication.** In its broadest sense, all procedures by which one person may, through the mediation of symbols, affect or influence another.
- **Communism.** In its most basic sense, the political economic system characterized by common ownership of the means of production.
- **Concept.** A name or category used by scientists to identify some phenomenon.
- **Conflict theory.** Theory that views society as a collection of antagonistic group, institutions, and classes, each contending for dominance. *See also functionalism.*
- **Conservatism.** The ideology that sees government as an instrument for the maintenance of order and as a tool for integrating the various parts of the society into a harmonious whole. *See also liberalism, radicalism.*

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- **Conservative movement.** A social movement that works for the preservation of existing features of the society. *See also progressive movement, reactionary movement.*
- **Countermovement.** A social movement that exists solely to oppose some other movement.
- **"Crimes without victims."** Legally prohibited actions that involve no injured, unwilling, or complaining victims, for example, drug addiction, alcoholism, and prostitution.
- **Cultural diffusion.** The spread or dispersion of artifacts, beliefs or patterns of behavior from one culture to another.
- **Cultural lag.** The difference between the rate of change of a given kind of technology and of the institutions that arise in response to that technology.
- **Cultural values.** A set of ideas about which goals should be desirable or preferable within and for a culture by members of that culture. *See also instrumental values, terminal values.*
- **Culture.** The set of artifacts, interaction patterns, beliefs, symbols, values, norms, and customs distinguishing one social group from another.
- **Custom.** A norm or pattern of thought or behavior that is supported by tradition. Violation of customs is not strongly sanctioned.

D

- **Demography.** The study of population.
- **Deviant behavior.** Any behavior that does not conform to commonly accepted standards and is adversely perceived.
- **Discrimination.** A pattern of behavior that deprives the members of a social category of legal rights and social opportunities, not because of their behavior or beliefs but solely because of their membership in that category.
- **Division of labor.** The division of a social group into parts differentiated on the basis of their functional contribution.
- **Dominant groups.** Social groups that have the power to control the life chances of persons in subordinate groups.

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E

- **Endogamous marriage.** Marriage within the same social class or ethnic, tribal, racial, religious, or national groups. *See also exogamous marriage.*
- **Ethnic group.** A group consisting of people who conceive of themselves and are regarded by others as belonging together by virtue of a common ancestry, real or fictitious, and a common cultural background. *See also social race.*
- **Ethnocentrism.** The belief that one's ethnic group is superior to all others.
- **Exogamous marriage.** Marriage to a person outside of the group. *See also endogamous marriage.*
- **Extended family.** A family of several generations of kin living in the same household or in proximity.

F

- **Folkways.** Norms of behavior about which there is little moral concern, such as the conventions of etiquette. *See also law mores.*
- **Functionalism.** In sociology, the view of society as an interdependent set of institutions, each providing a vital need for the maintenance of the social system. *See also conflict theory.*

G

- **Gemeinschaft.** According to **Ferdinand Tonnies**, a type of community in which there is a high degree of social cohesion based on value and normative consensus and a high degree of commitment to the community. Social bonds are natural rather than voluntary. *See also Gesell schaft.*
- **Gesellschft.** According to **Ferdinand Tonnies**, a type of society in which social bonds are deliberately created on the basis of mutual interests and exchange. *See also Geineinschaft.*
- **Ghetto.** Ecological unit in which suppressed minorities, such as blacks in America, are forced to live through legal, social, or economic constraints. Originally the term referred to the separate sections of European cities in which Jews were forced to live.
- **Group.** A set of individuals who are bound by a set of social relations that differentiate these individuals from others. *See also dominant groups; ethnic group, primary groups, reference groups, secondary groups, subordinate groups.*

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H

- **Horticultural society.** A society whose economy is based on gardening or primitive farming and the domestication of animals.
- **Hunting and gathering society.** A society whose economy is based on the killing of wild animals and the gathering of wild food.
- **Hypothesis.** A statement, usually derived from a theory, that predicts an empirical relationship between two or more variables.

I

- **Imperialism.** The practice of extending the controlled sphere of a nation by military, political, economic, or legal means.
- **Incest taboo.** The prohibition against sexual relationships between primary relatives (such as between parent and child or between siblings).
- **Institutions.** Relatively permanent patterns of specialized roles; groups and procedures through which major social functions are performed.

L

- **Latent change.** Social change that is not apparent to most members of the society in which it is occurring. *See also manifest change.*
- **Latent function.** Unintended, and often unnoticed, consequences of some social arrangement(s). A latent function of intermarriage among the royal houses of Europe was to greatly increase the incidence of genetic defects among royalty. *See also manifest function.*
- **Liberalism.** The ideology that supports change within gradual and orderly limits and sees government as a neutral instrument responding to the many and various demands placed upon it. *See also conservatism, radicalism.*
- **Life style.** A person's life style includes the kinds of goods and services he consumes, the way in which they are consumed, and the way in which his time is spent.

M

- **Malthusian theory.** The idea, originated by **Thomas Robert Malthus**, that human populations increase geometrically (2, 4, 8, 16, 32 . . .) and are dependent ultimately on the means of subsistence, which increase arithmetically (2, 4, 6, 8, 10 . . .).

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- **Manifest change.** Social change that is obvious to the members of a society in which it is occurring. *See also latent change.*
- **Mass communication.** Rapid and frequent communication of information to significantly large portions of the society.
- **Mass media.** Centralized media of mass communication, including the press, radio, television, and motion pictures.
- **Matrilineal system.** The system of determining descent through the female line. *See also patrilineal system.*
- **Matrilocal residence.** The sharing of residence, by the nuclear family, with the bride's parents. *See also neolocal residence, patrilocal residence.*
- **Mechanical solidarity.** **Emile Durkheim's** term for the binding together of human groups by their similarities. *See also organic solidarity.*
- **Mobility.** The movement of people in a population, as from place to place, from job to job, or from one social position to another.
- **Modernization.** The process by which agrarian societies are transformed into industrial or modern societies. It involves not only technological changes but also changes in political, social, and economic arrangements.
- **Monogamy.** Marriage involving only one husband and one wife.

N

- **Natural selection.** Any environmental force that promotes reproduction of certain members of the population who carry certain genes.
- **Nuclear family.** A married couple and their children. Also known as the conjugal family

O

- **Organic solidarity.** **Emile Durkheim's** term for the binding together of human groups through their functional differences in the cooperative division of labor. *See also mechanical solidarity.*

P

- **Patrilineal system.** The system of determining descent through the male line. *See also matrilineal system.*

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- **Patrilocal residence.** The sharing of residence, by the nuclear family, with the groom's parents. *See also matrilocality, neolocal residence.*
- **Polyandry.** A marriage pattern in which women have two or more husbands.
- **Polygamy.** Marriage involving multiple spouses. A generic term that includes the forms known as polygyny and polyandry.
- **Polygyny.** A marriage pattern in which men have two or more wives.
- **Primary groups.** Small, face-to-face groups with a degree of permanence, such as the family, children's play groups, peer and friendship groups, and the "old-fashioned" community. *See also reference groups, secondary groups.*
- **Proletariat.** The class of people in a society that does not own or control the process of producing goods. *See also bourgeoisie.*
- **Puberty rite.** A ceremony or ritual that serves to ease the transition from childhood to adulthood.

R

- **Racism.** Invidious judgments of, and discriminatory behavior toward, others based on racial differences.
- **Radicalism.** The ideology that rejects most of the premises upon which the institutions of the existing society are based and sees the government as an instrument of domination over the people. *See also conservatism, liberalism.*
- **Reactionary movement.** A social movement that advocates the restoration of a real or imagined preexisting and presumably superior state of affairs. *See also conservation movement, progressive movement.*
- **Reference groups.** Groups to which the individual refers for comparative self-judgments. He evaluates himself relative to the values and standards of his reference groups and his behavior is oriented toward them. *See also negative reference groups, positive reference groups, primary groups.*
- **Revolutionary change.** The model of social change based on the idea that societies tend to develop modes of resistance to change and vested interests in the maintenance of a given form of society and that only through overt conflict can society move to new and valuable forms of social structure. *See also evolutionary change.*

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- **Revolutionary movement.** A social movement that advocates comprehensive changes in all social institutions and the substitution of new values and social relationships for the old. *See also reform movement.*
- **Rite of passage.** A ceremony or ritual that serves to ease the transition of individuals from one status to another.

S

- **Secondary groups.** Groups in which relations are impersonal, as opposed to the personal relations of primary groups. The distinguishing feature of secondary relations is that interaction tends to be stereotyped, involving only specialized segments of the individual, as, for example, in the relation between clerk and customer or between coworkers who know little of each other's lives outside of the work place. *See also primary groups.*
- **Secular society.** A society characterized by change, science, innovation, and a lack of sacred, traditional values. *See also sacred society.*
- **Social change.** Change in the structure of a society, primarily but not exclusively in its institutional structure.
- **Social class.** A social stratum or category differentiated from other strata on the basis of such economic considerations as wealth, occupation, and property ownership.
- **Social control.** Any social arrangement that acts to enforce conformity to norms and thus to curtail deviance.
- **Social mobility.** An individual's movement from one occupation to another or from one social position to another. *See also intergenerational mobility, intragenerational mobility, vertical mobility.*
- **Social movement.** An organized aggregate of people who have joined together to bring about certain alterations in the social order.
- **Social system.** Any group of two or more individuals interacting with each other with regard to a common focus.
- **Socialism.** The political-economic system characterized by government ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of the products.
- **Socialization.** The process through which persons learn the culture and social roles of their society and come to perform the roles expected of them. *See also anticipatory socialization, norms, values.*

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- **Socioeconomic status.** A general estimate of position within the system of social stratification. Often measured by combining education, income, and occupational prestige. Frequently abbreviated as SES.
- **Stereotyping.** The categorization of people on the basis of general beliefs and feelings rather than on the basis of accurate information or firsthand experience.
- **Subculture.** A group within a culture that either does not hold all the beliefs of the larger culture or gives them a very different emphasis.
- **Subordinate groups.** Social groups that lack effective power and are therefore controlled by dominant groups.

T

- **Taboo.** A strongly proscriptive norm, usually infused with supernatural prohibitions.
- **Third world.** A political term referring to the developing nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Sometimes applied to coalitions of nonwhite minority members. The term designates those who are not members of either the developed capitalist or communist "worlds" of nations.
- **Totalitarianism.** Social organization characterized by a centralized power having absolute or near absolute control. Usually all sectors of the society are utilized to achieve ends determined by those in control.

U

- **Urbanization.** The process of changing from a rural to an urban mode of living. This process includes industrialization, population increases, and complex division of labor.

V

- **Values.** General standards about what is desirable, how things should be, the ultimate goals to be pursued. Democracy is a value in American society, as are justice and economic well-being.
- **Vertical mobility.** The upward or downward occupational movement of an individual. See also *intergenerational mobility*, *intragenerational mobility*.

Good luck everyone.. ☺

GHAB