

## GLOSSARY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

By Frank W. Elwell

Consistent with the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (look it up) I am a great believer in the importance of vocabulary in learning any new area of study. I began my Glossary of the Social Sciences while studying and teaching in Australia in 1996 and have periodically updated it. It has been on the Internet off of my site (and several others) ever since.

A little about the process of creation: I began by consulting numerous glossaries in social problems and introductory texts in sociology. Rather than copying somebody else's definition I would read the definitions from several sources and, combined with my own understanding and use of the terms, create my own definition. (I have noticed, by the way, that in recent years many of my definitions have made it into other glossaries.) I continue adding to the glossary when I encounter a term that is especially useful, newly coined, or that I have missed in the past. Those who use the glossary extensively (and this would mainly be my students as all my classes must master some basic terminology), will note that there is some bias toward macrosociological terms in general, and ecological-evolutionary terms in particular.

The Glossary is in a PDF format which means that there is a search box for a particular term at the top center of the page. I hope you find the glossary useful. If you have any suggestions for additional social science terminology (or corrections to what I already have) I hope you will take the time to submit your suggestion to me at [felwell@rsu.edu](mailto:felwell@rsu.edu)

--Frank W. Elwell (December, 2010)

### A

**Absolute poverty.** Poverty as defined in terms of the minimal requirements necessary to afford minimal standards of food, clothing, health care and shelter.

**Achieved status.** A position attained through personal ability and effort.

**Acid rain.** The increased acidity of rainfall which is caused by emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from power plants and automobiles.

**Acquired Immune Deficiency (AIDS).** A disease that attacks the immune system of the body that is often passed on through sexual contact.

**Acute disease.** A short-term disease (such as influenza or pneumonia) from which a person either dies or recovers.

**Adaptation.** Refers to the ability of a sociocultural system to change with the demands of a changing physical or social environment. The process by which cultural elements undergo change in form and/or function in response to change in other parts of the system.

**Adult socialization.** The process of learning new roles in maturity.

**Affirmative action.** Government programs intended to assure minorities and women of equal

hiring or admission opportunities.

**Affective action.** Part of Weber's action typology that refers to individual action motivated by emotions.

**Age cohort.** A group of people born around the same time.

**Age discrimination.** The differential treatment of people based solely on their age.

**Age grades.** System found in some traditional cultures which group the population by sex and age. Age grades go through rites of passage, hold similar rights and have similar obligations.

**Age-sex structure** (Age-sex pyramid). The relative proportions of different age/sex categories in a population.

**Ageism.** Prejudice against a person on the grounds of age in the belief that the age category is inferior to other age categories and that unequal treatment is therefore justified.

**Agencies of socialization.** Groups or institutions within which processes of socialization take place (see also Social reproduction).

**Agrarian societies.** Societies whose mode of production is based on agriculture (crop-growing) primarily through the use of human and animal energy. Also referred to as agricultural societies. (See also Traditional states.)

**Agribusiness.** The mass production of agricultural goods through mechanization, and rationalization.

**Air pollution.** Refers to the contamination of the atmosphere by noxious substances. (See also Depletion, Environment, and Pollution.)

**Alienation.** The sense that we have lost control over social institutions that we have created. Often characterized as estrangement from the self and from the society as a whole. Marx believed that general alienation was rooted in the loss of control on the part of workers over the nature of the labor task, and over the products of their labor.

**Altruistic suicide.** Durkheim's concept for suicide that is performed for the good of a group or for accomplishing a political or social cause.

**Americanization.** The spread of American cultural elements—products, lifestyles, customs, institutions, and ideologies—around the globe.

**Androgyny.** The blending of traditional feminine and masculine traits.

**Anomia.** A condition of anxiety and confusion that exists in individuals who are not given clear social guidance through social norms.

**Anomic suicide.** Durkheim's concept for suicide that is performed because the egoistic individual is not given clear guidance from the social order.

**Anomie.** A structural condition in which social norms are weak or conflicting.

**Anomie theory.** Robert K. Merton's theory of deviance which holds that many forms of deviance are caused by a disjunction between society's goals and the approved means to achieve these goals; also called "structural strain theory."

**Animism.** A type of religion that believes that events in the world are often caused by the activities of spirits.

**Anthropology.** A social science, closely linked to sociology, which concentrates (though not exclusively) on the study of traditional cultures--particularly hunting and gathering and horticultural societies--and the evolution of the human species.

**Anticipatory socialization.** Learning new roles and attitudes in preparation to joining a group.

**Anti-Semitism.** Prejudice or discrimination against Jews. It defines the Jewish people as inferior and targets them for stereotyping, mistreatment, and acts of hatred.

**Apartheid.** Until recently, the system of strict racial segregation established in South Africa.

**Applied sociology.** The use of sociology--both theory and methods--in solving social problems.

**Appropriate technology.** Technology that is designed with the needs, values, and capabilities of the user in mind.

**Arms race.** A competition between nations in which each side attempt to achieve or maintain military superiority.

**Arms trade.** The international selling of armaments for profit, carried on by governments and by private contractors around the world.

**Arranged marriage.** Marriage based on the family ties rather than the couple's personal preferences.

**Artisans.** A skilled manual worker.

**Ascribed status.** A social position that is given at birth such as race or sex.

**Assimilation.** A minority group's internalization of the values and norms of the dominant culture, they become socially, economically, and politically absorbed into the wider culture.

**Authoritarian personality.** A set of distinctive personality traits, including conformity, intolerance, and an inability to accept ambiguity.

**Authority.** Power that is attached to a position that others perceive as legitimate.

**Autocratic rule.** Rule by a specific leader, who concentrates power in his own hands.

**Automation.** The replacement of many workers by machines, as well as the monitoring and coordination of workers by machines with only minimal supervision from human beings.

## **B**

**Balance of power.** The theory that military conflict can be avoided if both sides have roughly equivalent military power.

**Beliefs.** Shared ideas held by a collective of people within a sociocultural system.

**Bilateral kinship.** Tracing descent through both the mother and father (as in present day America).

**Bioethics.** Ethical questions relating to life and the biological well-being of the planet.

**Biological determinism.** The view that biology (nature, genetics) determines complex social behavior.

**Bioterrorism.** The threat or the actual dispersal of biological or chemical agents to cause widespread disease or death in order to further a group's political, economic, or social

agenda.

**Blended family.** A family consisting of two previously married people plus their children. Also called step family.

**Bourgeoisie.** Historically they were the merchant class in feudal societies. Today the term is often used as a synonym for middle class.

**Bureaucracy.** A formal organization marked by a clear hierarchy of authority, the existence of written rules of procedure, staffed by full-time salaried officials, and striving for the efficient attainment of organizational goals.

**Bureaucratization.** Refers to the tendency of bureaucracies to refine their procedures to ever more efficiently attain their goals. More generally, refers to the process of secondary organizations taking over functions performed by primary groups (see also Intensification and Rationalization).

## C

**Capital.** The name of Karl Marx's two volume set (often called Das Capital). It is also used as a synonym for capitalism.

**Capitalism.** An economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution in which the goal is to produce profit.

**Capitalist class.** Those who own companies, or stocks and shares, using these to generate economic returns or profits.

**Carrying capacity.** The number of a species that a particular ecosystem can support without suffering irreversible deterioration (see also Ecology).

**Cash-crop production.** Production of crops for world markets rather than for consumption by the local population.

**Cash-nexus.** Defining all human relationships in terms of money.

**Caste system.** A closed form of stratification in which an individual's status is determined by birth and cannot be changed.

**Cathedrals of consumption.** A term coined by George Ritzer to refer to commercial displays meant to inspire awe, wonder, and enchantment in the consumer—shopping centers, casinos and sports stadiums are examples.

**Causation.** A "cause and effect" relationship exists wherever a change in one variable (the independent variable) induces change in another (the dependent variable). Causal factors in sociology include individual motivation as well as many external influences on human behavior that often go unrecognized.

**Centralization.** Power and authority concentrated into a few offices.

**Census.** A count of the population, often including a detailed profile of that population.

**Charisma.** A personal quality attributed to leaders who arouse fervent popular support and enthusiasm.

**Charismatic authority.** Weber's term for authority which rests on the extraordinary characteristics of the leader attributed to them by followers. (See also Traditional authority and Rational-legal authority.)

**Chronic disease.** Disease of long duration, often not detected in its early stages, and from which the patient will not recover such as high blood pressure or diabetes.

**Church.** A body of people belonging to an established religious organization.

**Citizen.** A member of a state, having both rights and duties associated with that membership.

**Civil disorders.** Social conflict (such as riots) that the government becomes involved in to restore public order.

**Civil religion.** Secular forms of ritual and belief similar to those involved in religion--such as political parades or ceremonies.

**Civil rights.** Legal rights held by all citizens in a given state.

**Clan.** A broad extended kin group found in many preindustrial societies.

**Class.** Most sociologists use the term to refer to socioeconomic differences between groups of individuals which create differences in their life chances and power. Marx differentiates class by their relationship to the mode of production (owner/non-owner).

**Class consciousness.** An objective awareness of the class system, including the common interests of people within your class.

**Class system.** Stratification is a "multidimensional phenomenon"; that is, populations are ranked along various dimensions such as occupation, education, property, racial-ethnic status, age, and gender. Each of these dimensions is a "class system." According to Gerhard Lenski, class systems are "a hierarchy of classes ranked in terms of a single criterion." Thus, "African-American" is a particular class within the American racial-ethnic class system, while "working class" is a particular class within the American occupational class system.

**Clerical workers.** Refers to low-prestige and low-paid white collar workers who perform clerical work of keeping files, checking forms, and other office tasks.

**Climate change.** The accumulation of gasses in the atmosphere, especially carbon dioxide and methane, that act like the glass roof of a greenhouse, letting sunlight in but trapping the radiant heat. (See also Greenhouse effect and Global warming).

**Cognition.** Human thought processes including perception, reasoning, and remembering.

**Cognitive ability.** The ability to think in abstract terms.

**Cohabitation.** Living together in a sexual relationship of some permanence, without being legally married.

**Cohort.** All individuals born within a particular time period.

**Collective action.** Social action undertaken in a relatively spontaneous way by a large number of people.

**Collective behavior.** Behavior in crowds and mobs that occur when the usual norms are suspended.

**Collective conscience.** Sometimes translated as "collective conscious." Common beliefs and values that guide human behavior. Durkheim posited that such a conscience was necessary for maintaining the social order.

**Collective violence.** Large numbers of people engaging in violent social behavior.

**Colonialism.** The process whereby nations establish their political and economic rule over less powerful nations.

**Coming out.** The act of openly declaring one's self as gay.

**Commercialization.** To organize an activity around making a profit.

**Commodification.** The exchange of goods and services that were once given through primary group ties through the market economy.

**Commodity chains.** The raw material, production, and labor network responsible for the fashioning of products. These chains often span the globe, with some countries profiting greatly for their contribution to the chain, and others clearly being exploited.

**Commodity riots.** Riots in which the focus of violence is the destruction of property.

**Communal riots.** Riots in which the focus of violence is other groups (usually other race or ethnic groups).

**Communication.** The transmission of information from one individual or group to another.

**Communication technology.** Technology developed to extend the transmission of information between individuals and groups as well as over time. Examples include language, writing, printing, telegraph, telephone, and the Internet. The development of this technology quickens and intensifies the pace of sociocultural change.

**Communism.** A set of political and economic ideas in which the means of production and distribution are controlled by an authoritarian state with the expressed goal of creating an egalitarian social order. "Communism" as developed by Lenin and institutionalized throughout Eastern Europe (until 1990) and China bears little resemblance to Marx's vision.

**Community.** A group of people who share a common sense of identity and interact with one another on a sustained basis.

**Comparable worth.** The evaluation of jobs dominated by women and those traditionally dominated by men on the basis of training, skills, and experience in attempts to equalize wages. The principle is that men and women should be paid equally for similar jobs.

**Concept.** Any abstract characteristic that can potentially be measured.

**Confirmation bias.** A tendency to search for and interpret information in a way that confirms one's preconceptions. It is a phenomenon wherein decision makers actively seek out and assign more weight to evidence that confirms their hypothesis, and ignore or assign little weight evidence that could disconfirm their hypothesis. "Facts" are only true if they confirm what they already believe, all else is nonsense, error, or outright lies.

**Conflict.** A clash of interest (sometimes escalating to active struggle) between individuals, groups or society.

**Conflict theory.** Sociological theory that emphasizes the role of power, authority, and manipulation in sociocultural change and stability.

**Conformity.** Human behavior which follows the established norms of a group or society. The bulk of human behavior is of a conforming nature as people accept and internalize the values of their culture or subculture.

**Contagion theory.** The idea that individuals in crowds are suggestible and take on a single way of acting.

**Conglomerates.** Large corporations made up of separate companies producing or trading in a variety of different products and services. Conglomerates are usually the result of mergers between companies or a take-over of one firm by another.

**Consensus.** Agreement on basic social values by the members of a group or society.

**Conspicuous consumption.** Concept popularized by Thorstein Veblin that many people consume goods and services to publicly display their wealth and taste.

**Consumerism.** The philosophy of seeking happiness through the consumption of goods and services.

**Content analysis.** The analysis of cultural meanings through artifacts such as books, documents, songs, and other communications.

**Contingency work.** Temporary, part-time, or "contracted" employment for the duration of the project. Contingency work is one of the fastest growing employment sectors in America as it enables employers to expand and contract their workforce with the vagaries of the market and allows them to avoid costly fringe benefits and other commitments of long-term employment.

**Contradiction.** Marx's term to refer to mutually antagonistic tendencies within institutions or the broader society such as those between profit and competition within capitalism.

**Contradictory class location.** A position in the class structure which shares characteristics of the class positions both above and below them--the classic position would be that of a foreman in a factory or a department chair in academe.

**Core countries.** The advanced industrial societies of America, Western Europe and Japan are often referred to as core countries because of their central position on the world stage. (See also Periphery countries and Semi-Periphery countries.)

**Corporate Crime.** Criminal or deviant behavior committed by a corporation.

**Corporations.** A legally recognized organization set up for profit--the powers and liabilities of the organization are legally separate from the owners or the employees. In the U.S., corporations have the legal status as a person. (See also Citizens United.)

**Correlations.** The relationship between two variables in which they vary together--say a correlation between the income of parents and reading ability among primary school children. Statistical correlation can vary from -1 to 1 (a 0 indicates no correlation between the variables). A positive correlation between two variables exists where a high score on one is associated with a high score on the other. A negative correlation is where a high score on one variable is associated with a low score on the other.

**Cost-benefit decision making.** A criterion used in deciding on what actions to take. What are the benefits of the action? What are the costs? Pain versus gain.

**Counter-culture.** A sub-culture that is opposed to the ideas, beliefs, or behaviors of the dominant culture.

**Coup d'état.** An armed takeover of government by a small group of conspirators--often military officers. (See also Rebellion and Revolution.)

**Craftsman.** A skilled worker who practices a trade.

**Created environment.** Human constructions such as buildings, roads, factories, and private homes.

**Credentialism.** The tendency for jobs to require more and more formal education, even though the skill or knowledge requirements for the job have not changed.

**Cross tabulation (Crosstabs).** A table illustrating the relationship between two variables, such as Sex (Male and Female) and Years of Education.

**Crime.** Any action that violates criminal laws established by political authority.

**Criminology.** A social science discipline that focuses upon the study of crime and the criminal justice system.

**Crisis medicine.** Medical treatment that focuses on curing illness (as opposed to preventing the occurrence of disease).

**Crude birth-rate.** A statistical measure representing the number of births per thousand population within a given year.

**Crude death-rate.** A statistical measure representing the number of deaths per thousand population that occur annually in a given population.

**Cult.** A fragmentary religious group which lacks permanent structure.

**Cultural diffusion.** The transmission of cultural elements between sociocultural systems.

**Cultural lag.** A dysfunction in the sociocultural system caused by change occurring in one part of the system and the failure of another part of that system to adjust to the change. An example would be married women engaged in outside employment and the continuance of the domestic division of labor.

**Cultural materialism.** A macro-social theory that attempts to account for the similarities and differences between sociocultural systems by focusing on the environmental constraints to which human action is subject.

**Cultural pluralism.** The more or less peaceful coexistence of multiple subcultures within a given society.

**Cultural relativism.** The idea that a culture item can be judged or understood only in relationship to the entire culture in which it is embedded.

**Cultural superstructure.** Sociocultural materialism term used to refer to the shared symbolic universe within sociocultural systems. It includes such components as the art, music, dance, rituals, sports, hobbies and the accumulated knowledge base of the system. (See also Mental superstructure, and Superstructure.)

**Cultural transmission.** The socialization process whereby the norms and values of the group are internalized by individuals.

**Cultural universals.** Values or practices shared by all human cultures.

**Culture.** The values, norms and material goods shared by a given group. Your instructor prefers to restrict the term to refer to symbolic aspects (values and norms).

**Culture of poverty.** The view that the poor have a different value system that contributes to their poverty.

**Culture shock.** The disorientation that may occur when one experiences a new and different culture or when one encounters rapid social change in one's own culture.

**Cumulative change.** A distinctive kind of change associated with systems composed of



multiple, interrelated parts. Within these systems, some parts change while others remain unchanged. Thus, cumulative change is a process that combines elements of continuity with elements of change; many parts of the system are preserved for extended periods while new parts are added and other parts are either replaced or transformed. Evolutionary change tends to be cumulative in nature.

**Curative medicine.** Another term for Crisis Medicine--the focus on curing disease rather than its prevention.

**Custodial care.** Occurs when the focus of health care is on the needs of the institution (convenience, efficiency) rather than on the needs of the patient.

**Cyberterrorism.** The threat or the actual hacking of computer networks in order to cause widespread disruption to further a group's political, economic, or social agenda.

## D

**Data.** Systematically measured information.

**Data analysis.** The organization of data to look for patterns and uniformities.

**Defensive medicine.** The use of widespread medical tests on the part of physicians in order to avoid possible malpractice suits.

**Deforestation.** The removal of all trees from an area (see also Depletion, Environment and Desertification).

**Deductive reasoning.** The process of going from general theory to specific hypotheses.

**De facto segregation.** The separation of social groups in fact, though not by law. Housing patterns in the U.S. often reflect de facto segregation.

**Defensive medicine.** The practice of ordering unnecessary medical tests as a precaution against overlooking a condition and thus opening the physician up to a law suit.

**Dehumanization.** The act of depriving people of their human qualities—treating people like animals or things as if they have no feelings or worth.

**Deindustrialization.** The loss of manufacturing capacity.

**De jure segregation.** The separation of social groups by law.

**Deinstitutionalization.** The movement of mental patients out of hospitals and into the "community."

**Democracy.** A form of government that recognizes the citizen as having the right to participate in political decision-making, or to elect representatives to government bodies.

**Demographic transition.** A stabilization of population level in industrial society once a certain level of economic prosperity has been reached. Population is thought to stabilize because of economic incentives on families to limit the number of children.

**Demography.** The scientific study of human population--including size, growth, movement, density, and composition.

**Density.** A measure of human crowding usually expressed as the number of people per square mile.

**Dependency theory.** The thesis that many Third World countries cannot control major

aspects of their economic life because of the dominance of industrialized societies. Because of this dominance, core nations are often able to exploit peripheral nations in economic relationships.

**Dependent variable.** The variable that you believe will be affected by another. In the posited relationship between education and income, education is the independent variable, income is the dependent variable. See also independent variable.

**Depletion.** One of the primary constraints of the environment on sociocultural systems. Refers to the limited supplies of natural resources (although the limits are unknowable, that there are limits can be inferred). These limits can often be stretched through the use of technology (see also Pollution, and Intensification).

**Desertification.** A fertile region that has been made barren by the activities of human societies (see also Depletion, and Pollution).

**Detailed division of labor.** It breaks the manufacturing of a product down into simple discrete steps, and then assigns each task to an individual workman. Also called the manufacturing division of labor.

**Deterrence theory.** The prevention of military conflict through the build up of armaments. The basis of deterrence theory is in ensuring that a potential aggressor would suffer too many losses to make the initiation of hostilities worthwhile --M.A.D. or mutually assured destruction was based on this theory.

**Deviance.** Behaviors which do not conform to significant norms held by most of the members of a group or society. What is regarded as 'deviant' is highly variable across societies.

**Deviant behavior.** Actions or behaviors that violate cultural norms.

**Deviant community.** A group specifically organized around a form of social deviance.

**Deviant identity.** A person's self-identification as a deviant.

**Deviant subculture.** A subculture which has values and norms which differ substantially from those of the majority in a society.

**Dialectic.** An interpretation of change emphasizing the clash of opposing interests and the resulting struggle as the engine of social transformation.

**Dictatorship.** A form of government in which one person exercises supreme power and authority.

**Differential association.** Theory of crime and delinquency that holds that deviance is learned as a result of long-term interaction with others.

**Differentiation.** The development of increasing complexity and division of labor within sociocultural systems.

**Diffusion.** The spread of cultural traits from one sociocultural system to another.

**Discrimination.** The denial of equal access to social resources to people on the basis of their group membership.

**Disenchantment.** The retreat of the mysticism, supernatural belief, and awe from social life to be replaced by secular values, rationality, and scientific understanding.

**Disintegration.** The weakening of the social bond allowing various groups to fragment and

break away from the whole.

**Disorganization.** The disturbance of a system from a state of order and predictability to chaos and unpredictability.

**Division of labor.** The specialization of work tasks or occupations and their interrelationship. All societies have some division of labor based on age and sex. But with the development of industrialism the division of labor becomes far more complex which affects many parts of the sociocultural system. The division of labor is perhaps the most underrated concept in sociology. (See also Detailed division of labor.)

**Domestic economy.** Marvin Harris' term that refers to the structural components of sociocultural systems that are organized around basic production, exchange, and consumption within domestic settings (houses, camps, and other family and small community units).

**Domestic labor.** Unpaid labor carried out around the home.

**Domestic violence.** Violent behavior directed by one member of a household against another.

**Dominant culture.** The beliefs and values of the dominant group within a sociocultural system.

**Double standard.** A code of behavior that is more restrictive on women than on men.

**Doubling time.** The time it takes for a particular level of population to double in size. A fairly accurate doubling time estimate can be computed by taking the annual growth rate and dividing it by 70. At 2% annual growth world population (5.5 billion in 1996) will double in size (to 11 billion) in about 35 years (2031) assuming the annual growth stays constant (see also EXPONENTIAL GROWTH).

**Dramaturgical model.** A sociological perspective that sees the social world as a stage, with all the men and women playing to their roles in the social order.

**Dual career family.** Families in which both spouses are in the outside labor force.

**Dual labor market.** The hypothesis that men and women have differential earnings because the work in different parts of the labor market. For example, men dominate the field of engineering (high pay, high prestige), women dominate the field of social work (low pay, low prestige).

**Dual welfare system.** Refers to disguised forms of welfare that go to the middle class and the rich. (See also Wealthfare.)

**Dyad.** A group consisting of two people.

**Dysfunction.** Refers to an institution's negative impact (or harmful effect) on the sociocultural system.

## E

**Eclecticism.** A conceptual approach that lacks commitment to any single paradigm or theoretical strategy. Eclectics draw upon multiple theories—sometimes contradictory in their assumptions—to explain physical, biological, or social phenomenon.

**Ecology.** The study of the system of relationships between organisms and their environment.

**Economy.** The organization of production and distribution of goods and services within a sociocultural system.

**Economic interdependence.** Comte and Durkheim both refer to the fact that in societies with a high division of labor individuals depend more on others to produce most of the goods they need to sustain their lives.

**Ecosystem.** A self-sustaining community of plants and animals within a natural environment.

**Education.** The transmission of knowledge to members of society. The knowledge passed on is in the form of technical and cultural knowledge, technical and social skills, as well as the norms and values of the society.

**Education system.** The system of formalized transmission of knowledge and values operating within a given society.

**Educational deflation.** The devaluing of education as a result of the forces of supply and demand.

**Egalitarian family.** Family arrangement in which power is shared more-or-less equally by both the wife and the husband.

**Ego.** Freud's posited part of the self that represents reason and common sense.

**Egoistic suicide.** Durkheim's concept for suicide performed by an individual who has not sufficiently integrated into the social order.

**Elderly abuse.** Acts of violence (or neglect) directed at the elderly (often by family members).

**Elite.** Men and women in the highest positions of the dominant institutions of a society and who consequently hold enormous power. (See also Power elite.)

**Elite crime.** Criminal behavior on the part of elites as part of their normal activity--such as tax evasion, hiring illegal aliens as domestics, or engaging in insider trading.

**Elitist.** One who subscribes to the theory that there is a power elite in American society.

**Emigration.** The movement of people out of their native land to other countries.

**Endogamy.** A system in which an individual may only marry within the same social category or group.

**Entrepreneur.** A person who organizes and manages a business firm.

**Empire.** A group of states under a single government.

**Empirical.** Social data or facts that are based on systematic observation or measurement.

**Empiricism.** The philosophy that knowledge comes from observation and experience.

**Enlightenment.** Seventeenth and eighteenth century European thought that placed great faith in science and human reason in dealing with social issues.

**Entropy.** The entropy law or the second law of thermodynamics--energy can only be transformed in one direction, from ordered to disordered. Entropy is also another name for pollution.

**Environment.** The physical, biological and chemical restraints to which action is subject.

**Environmentalism.** Refers to a concern with preserving the physical environment in the face of the impact of industrialism.

**Epidemiology.** The study of biological, social, and economic factors associated with disease and health.

**Estate system.** A form of stratification established by law in which the ownership of land leads to the monopolization of power.

**Ethnic group.** A group of common cultural identity, separating them from other groups around them.

**Ethnicity.** One's ethnic group.

**Ethnocentrism.** The tendency to judge other cultures by the standards one's own culture; often with the feeling that one's own culture is superior.

**Ethnomethodology.** A research method that focuses on the activities and beliefs of group members to determine what sense they make of their everyday lives.

**Eugenics.** A social movement in the early twentieth century that sought to apply genetic selection to "improve" the human race.

**Euthanasia.** The act of killing a person who is terminally ill (active euthanasia) or allowing such a person to die by withholding treatment (passive euthanasia). Usually the act is claimed to be an act of mercy.

**Eutrophication.** Oxygen depletion of water due to over-fertilization.

**Evaluation research.** Social research whose aim is to assess the effectiveness of a particular policy or social program.

**Evolution.** The change of biological organisms by means of the adaptation to the demands of the physical environment. Organisms that successfully adapt pass on their genes to future generations thereby changing the species itself.

**Exchange reciprocity.** Rough equality in the exchange of goods and services between groups or between sociocultural systems.

**Exogamy.** A system in which an individual may only marry outside their social category or group.

**Experiment.** A research method in which variables can be analyzed under carefully controlled conditions--usually within an artificial situation constructed by the researcher—that can potentially determine whether a given variable affects another independently of other factors.

**Exponential growth.** A geometric rate of progression which has the potential of producing a very fast rise (or an "explosion") in the numbers of a population experiencing such growth. (See also Doubling time.)

**Expropriation.** The confiscation of property or labor from an individual.

**Extended family.** A family group consisting of more than two generations of the same kinship line living either within the same household or, more usually in the West, very close to one another.

## F

**Fad.** Collective behavior that involves a novel, often frivolous, and usually short lived activity.

**False consciousness.** Marxian concept that refers to the ideology of the subordinate class which has been largely fashioned by the ideology and control of the elites within a society.

**Family.** A group of individuals related to one another by blood ties, marriage or adoption. Members of families form an economic unit, the adult members of which are responsible for the upbringing of children. All societies involve some form of family, although the form the family takes is widely variable. In modern industrial societies the main family form is the nuclear family, although a variety of extended family relationships are also found.

**Family of orientation.** The family into which an individual is born.

**Family of procreation.** The family we create through marriage.

**Fecundity.** The number of children which is biologically possible for a woman to produce.

**Feedback loop.** Sociocultural materialism term referring to the dynamic relationships between the different components of sociocultural systems. While the theory begins with an examination of infrastructural determinism, it recognizes that structure and superstructure can play an independent role in determining the character of the system (see also INFRASTRUCTURAL DETERMINISM).

**Fee-for-service medicine.** The provision of medical services in return for a monetary fee.

**Femininity.** The characteristic behaviors expected of women in a given culture.

**Feminization of poverty.** A process by which increasing proportions of the poor are women and children.

**Feminism.** Advocacy of the social equality of the sexes.

**Fertility.** The average number of live born children produced by women of childbearing age in a particular society.

**Fetishism.** Obsessive attachment or sexual desire directed toward an object.

**Feudalism.** A social system based on fealty between a Lord and a Vassal. It is characterized by grants of land (fiefs) in return for formal oaths of allegiance and promises of loyal service.

**Field research.** Research that involves the investigator directly with the people or groups being studied.

**First world.** A term now rarely used that refers to the group of nation-states that possess advanced industrial economies, usually market based (see also SECOND WORLD and THIRD WORLD).

**Flextime.** An arrangement that allows employees to set their own schedules (starting and quitting time) whenever possible.

**Folkways.** Widespread standards of behavior.

**Forces of production.** Marx's term to refer to the technology used to produce economic goods in a society.

**Fordism.** The assembly line system of production pioneered by Henry Ford. It should be pointed out that not all industrial processes are based on the assembly line.

**Formal organization.** Another name for secondary organization, usually large and consisting of people who interact on the basis of status and role and often organized to accomplish a task.

**Formal rationality.** The use of zweckrational—goal oriented rational behavior—to achieve a goal without thought to wider social values, traditions, or emotions. A popular name for the

phenomenon is technocratic thinking. (See also Substantive rationality.)

**Forms.** The traditional, legal, or accustomed ways of government, respect for office, procedure, law, opposing parties, consultation and open communication within executive agencies and between branches of government.

**Functions.** The ways in which a sociocultural trait contributes toward the maintenance or adaptation of the entire sociocultural system.

**Functional analysis.** The use of functionalism in analyzing a sociocultural system or a part of that system.

**Functionalism.** A theoretical perspective that focuses on the way various parts of the social system contribute to the continuity of society as well as the affect the various parts have on one another.

**Fundamentalism.** A commitment to, and a belief in, the literal meanings of scriptural texts.

**Futurists.** Those who attempt to forecast the broad parameters of social life usually from the study of present day trends.

## G

**Gang.** An informal group of individuals that engage in common activities, many of these activities may be outside the law.

**Game stage.** Childhood stage in which children become capable of taking on the roles of others.

**Gemeinschaft.** According to Tönnies the term refers to social organization based on close and personal ties and traditional norms and values.

**Gender.** Socially defined behavior regarded as appropriate for the members of each sex.

**Gender gap.** Political term referring to the gap between men and women on political attitudes and behavior.

**Gender identity.** One's self-definition as a man or a woman.

**Genetic engineering.** The genetic manipulation of organisms in an effort to produce desirable characteristics.

**Genocide.** The systematic, planned annihilation of an ethnic, racial or political group.

**Generalization.** A claim that a specific observation will apply to a broader population. See also inductive reasoning.

**Gentrification.** The renovation of poor and working class urban neighborhoods and the displacement of the original residents.

**Gesellschaft.** According to Tönnies the term refers to social organization based on loose personal ties, self-interest, rationalization, and impersonality.

**Ghetto.** A section of a city occupied predominantly by members of a single racial or ethnic group, usually because of social or economic pressure.

**Government.** Formal institutional structures of the nation-state that attempt to regulate internal and external relations.

**Glass ceiling.** The unspoken/unwritten limit that a woman (or a member of a minority group)

may attain within an organization.

**Globalization.** The development of extensive worldwide patterns of economic, social, or political relationships between nations.

**Global stratification.** Systematic global inequalities between nation states determined by a nation-state's position in the capitalist world-system.

**Greenhouse effect.** The accumulation of gasses in the atmosphere that act like the glass roof of a greenhouse, letting sunlight in but trapping the radiant heat. Now more often called Climate change.

**Green Revolution.** The tremendous increase in farming productivity that occurred beginning in the 1950s with the application of pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilizers and the development of plant varieties especially bred to respond to these chemical inputs.

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP).** The total value of all goods and services produced within the boundaries of a particular country in any given year. In America, for example, this measure includes the value of the production of Japanese firms within the U.S. but not goods produced by U.S. firms on Japanese soil. GDP is now the preferred measure of the wealth of nations.

**Gross National Product (GNP).** The total value of all goods and services produced by nationals of a particular country in any given year. In America, for example, this measure did not include the value of the production of Japanese firms within the U.S. but did include the value of goods and services produced by U.S. firms on Japanese soil, GDP is now the preferred measure of the wealth of nations, though GNP is often used in historical comparison.

**Group.** A collection of individuals who communicate and interact on a regular basis, sharing many attitudes and beliefs.

**Group size effect.** Differing group sizes have differing effects upon the people within the group.

**Groupthink.** The tendency for groups to reach consensus on most issues brought before it.

**Guerilla movement.** A non-government military organization that engages in fighting or harassment.

## H

**Hate crime.** Assault or other violent acts aimed at individuals because they are a member of a deviant or a minority group.

**Health maintenance organization (HMOs).** An organization that provides health care to patients in return for a fixed annual fee. HMOs therefore have an interest in limiting the cost of treatment per patient (see also Managed care).

**Hegemon.** The predominant political, economic, or social influence of a nation-state over others.

**Herding societies (Pastoral societies).** Societies whose subsistence is based on domesticated animals. (See also Traditional states.)

**Heterosexuality.** An orientation in sexual activity towards people of the opposite sex.

**Hidden curriculum.** Behavior or attitudes that are learned at school but which are not a part



of the formal curriculum. For example, aspects of classism can often be "unintentionally" conveyed in learning materials.

**Higher education.** Usually refers to education beyond high school level, often in colleges or universities.

**High-trust systems.** Work settings in which individuals have a great deal of autonomy and control.

**Historical materialism.** Marx's interpretation that processes of social change are determined primarily (but not exclusively) by economic factors.

**Holistic.** Perspectives that emphasize the whole system as well as the interdependent nature of the parts of that system.

**Holistic medicine.** Medical treatment aimed at the whole person--physical, mental, and the social environment.

**Homo duplex.** Durkheim's conception of human beings as beings of two natures, the angel and the beast, the beast being the stronger of the two. The first and "lower" part of that nature is that of "will," an id-like nature that is focused on the individual satisfaction of all wants and desire. The other part of human nature is social in origin, the "collective conscience." This conscience is a collective moral system, a reality separate from the individual that is made up of ideas and values.

**Homogamy.** The tendency for individuals to select mates from similar social backgrounds.

**Homogenization.** To become more uniform, all parts becoming alike.

**Homophobia.** Fear, hatred or loathing of homosexuals.

**Homosexuality.** Having sexual preference for persons of the same sex.

**Household.** A census term that refers to all people occupying a housing unit.

**Housework** (Domestic labor). Unpaid work carried on in and around the home such as cooking, cleaning and shopping. Studies show that the bulk of this labor is carried out by women despite the predominance of dual-income families.

**Hospice.** Caring for the terminally ill within the home.

**Human ecology.** The study of human and environmental relationships.

**Humanitarianism.** A person devoted to human welfare and social reform.

**Human relations management.** The interdisciplinary study of worker relations in the workplace. It attempts to maximize productivity through improving worker-management relations through the promotion of social events and other activities to improve worker morale. Many sociologists (Mills and Braverman especially) consider it simply an exercise in manipulation.

**Hunting and gathering societies.** Societies whose subsistence is based primarily on hunting animals and gathering edible plants.

**Hypothesis.** A tentative statement about a given state of affairs that predicts a relationship between the variables, usually put forward as a basis for empirical testing.

**Hyper-industrialism.** A term that many favor over the term postindustrial society to refer to very advanced industrial societies such as the U.S. It is Industrialism writ large in which "all"

social institutions (government, family, education) have adapted to the demands of the industrial economy. The prefix "hyper" denotes "over and above," even to the point of "abnormal excess." To describe contemporary America as "hyper-industrial" is to stress both its continuity with the past and how it is rapidly changing--even to abnormal excess.

**Hyper-consumption.** The consumption of goods and services to the point of abnormal excess.

I

**Iatrogenic.** Disease caused by the physician in the course of treating the patient.

**Id.** Freud's posited part of the self that represents human drives such as sexuality and hunger.

**Idealist.** One who subscribes to the hypothesis that ideas are prime movers (important causal agents) in sociocultural systems.

**Idealism.** Pursuing your values and beliefs, often to the exclusion of practical reality.

**Ideal type.** Weber's construct of a 'pure type', constructed by emphasizing logical or consistent traits of a given social item. The traits are defining ones, not necessarily desirable ones. Ideal types do not exist anywhere in reality; rather they are "measures" that we can use in comparing social phenomena. One example is Weber's ideal type of bureaucratic organization (which are anything but desirable). More widely used (and understood) examples would include "ideal democracy" and "ideal capitalism."

**Ideology.** Shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify and support the interests of a particular group or organizations.

**Idiographic.** Concerned with unique historical events. See NOMOTHETIC.

**Imitation stage.** The first of three stages of childhood socialization described by George Herbert Mead. In the imitation stage the child mimics or copies the behavior of others without much understanding of the social meaning of the behavior. See also *Game stage* and *Play stage*.

**Immigration.** The settlement of people into a country in which they were not born.

**Imperialism.** The establishing of colonial empires in which domination is political and/or economic.

**Impression management.** Selective control of how others perceive us.

**Income.** Payment of wages usually earned from work or investments. This is usually measured by year.

**Independent variable.** The variable that you believe affects another. In the posited relationship between education and income, education is the independent variable, income is the dependent variable. See also dependent variable.

**Index crime.** Street crime such as robbery, rape, and other serious offenses.

**Indigenous cultures.** Native or the original culture of a particular region.

**Individualism.** A belief in the centrality and primary importance of the individual and the importance of self-sufficiency and independence.

**Inductive reasoning.** The process of going from specific observations to general statements.

**Industrial democracy.** Democratic participation in the workplace.

**Industrial production.** Economic production carried on through the use of machinery driven by inanimate sources of power.

**Industrial reserve army.** A concept popularized by Marx that refers to the legions of unemployed within a society dominated by capital. The existence of an industrial reserve army keeps wages down.

**Industrial Revolution.** Involved the transformation of a technology based on human and animal labor to a technology based on the use of inanimate energy sources. The term is actually an arbitrary construct used by social scientists, journalists, and lay people alike. There is no one event that marks its beginning or ending except as defined by social consensus--it is not a thing but one abstraction that we use to break the continuous world of reality into a piece that we can manipulate.

**Industrialism.** A mode of production characterized by the large-scale manufacturing of goods (including agriculture). As with any mode of production, industrialism imposes severe constraints upon the rest of the sociocultural system.

**Industrialization.** The continual expanding application of sophisticated technology designed to efficiently draw energy and raw materials out of the environment and fashion them for human use.

**Industrialization of war.** The application of industrial production and bureaucratic organization to warfare.

**Infanticide.** The intentional killing of infants. One of history's dirty secrets, according to Malthus and others, is the widespread practice of infanticide as a method of controlling population level throughout human history.

**Infant mortality rate.** The number of infants who die during the first year of life, per thousand live births. Infant mortality rates have declined dramatically in industrial societies.

**Informal relations.** Relations in organizations developed on the basis of personal connections. These ties are often used to pursue organizational goals instead of the formally recognized procedures.

**Infrastructural determinism.** The major principle of sociocultural materialism (borrowed and modified from Harris' cultural materialism). "The mode of production and reproduction (probabilistically) determines primary and secondary group structure, which in turn determines the cultural and mental superstructure."

**Infrastructure.** The interface between a sociocultural system and its environment. In sociocultural materialism it contains the principle mechanism by which society regulates the amount and type of energy from the environment.

**In-group.** A social group an individual belongs to and identifies with.

**Inner city.** The areas composing the central neighborhoods of industrial cities which are subject to dilapidation and decay, the more affluent residents having moved to outlying areas.

**Innovation.** One of Merton's adaptations in Anomie Theory (or Stress Theory). It is characterized by individuals who have accepted the culturally approved goal, but have not fully internalized the culturally approved means to attain this goal. The individual thereby adopts a different (and often deviant) method for attaining the goal.

**Instinct.** A genetically fixed pattern of complex behavior (that is, beyond reflex) which

appears in all normal animals within a given species. The behavior of humans is not instinctual.

**Institution.** An established pattern of human social behavior in a given society--such as marriage, family, or government.

**Institutional capitalism.** A condition that exists when large institutions such as pension plans, banks, and insurance companies hold large shares of capitalistic enterprises.

**Institutional discrimination.** Accepted social arrangements that place minority groups at a disadvantage.

**Institutional racism.** Accepted social arrangements that exclude on the basis of race.

**Institutionalization.** The embodiment of widespread norms, beliefs, and values into social structures, laws, and formal codes of conduct. Also refers to the act of committing a person to a total institution—a nursing home or asylum.

**Insurrection.** An organized revolt against civil authority in an attempt to replace that authority with another.

**Integration.** Incorporating disparate parts within the whole. The bringing of people of different ethnic groups into equal association.

**Intensification.** The application of ever greater amounts of technology and labor techniques to increase productivity. Refers to the growth in the complexity of the mode of production (greater energy expenditures as well as energy produced/consumed), and population over the course of social evolution. (See also Bureaucratization and Rationalization.)

**Intelligence.** Level of intellectual ability in an individual. Also refers to the gathering of information (defensive, offensive, and industrial capabilities) about one nation by another.

**Intermediate organization.** Robert Nisbet's term for primary groups based on religion, family, or community that historically stood between the individual and the state.

**Internal colonialism.** The economic exploitation of a group within a society whereby their labor is sold cheap and they are made to pay dear for products and services.

**Internalization.** A process by which members of a group make the ideas, values, and norms of the group their own.

**International division of labor.** The specialization of work tasks and occupations among nation states. The interdependence of countries which trade on global markets. Products are produced globally; profits go to only a few.

**Interpersonal violence.** The use of force between individuals to kill, injure, or abuse.

**Interest groups.** Groups organized to pursue specific interests in the political arena. The interests of these groups are often economic, but many are organized around moral concerns. The major activity of interest groups is lobbying the members of legislative bodies (Congress as well as state legislators), contributing vast sums to political campaigns, and increasingly running their own propaganda campaigns to affect the legislative process.

**Interlocking directorates.** Linkages between boards of directors of different companies due to the fact that the same people (often of the same class) sit on several different boards.

**Intergenerational mobility.** Movement up or down the social hierarchy from one generation to another.

**Intelligence quotient (IQ).** A score attained on tests of symbolic or reasoning abilities. Most social scientists (excluding psychologists) do not put much stock in the validity of IQ tests.

**Iron law of oligarchy.** Posited by Robert Michels: "He who says organization says oligarchy." As bureaucracy enlarges and centralizes, more and more authority is placed at the top of these huge organizations.

**Irrationality factor.** The paradox of supremely rational organizations, bureaucracies, acting in very irrational ways for the total society. Because bureaucracies are designed for the efficient attainment of goals set by the top of the organization; and because those at the top of these organizations often have goals that are antithetical to the goals of society as a whole (say profit vs. welfare), the irrationality factor is very much a part of modern life.

## J

**Jeremiad.** Writing that is characterized by a long list of complaints, lament, or prophesies of doom.

**Job displacement.** The permanent loss of jobs due to shifts in employment patterns. With the transition from agrarian to industrial societies, many agricultural jobs were lost, while new manufacturing and service jobs were created. The shifts continue.

## K

**Kinesic communication.** Communication through body language.

**Kinship.** The network of social relationships which link individuals through common ancestry, marriage, or adoption.

## L

**Labeling effect.** The impact of labeling on an individual. Tracking students in different reading groups may produce poor reading not because of the ability of the student, but because the student was placed in a poor reading group and therefore internalized the label (I was a blackbird, somewhat below the cardinals).

**Labeling theory.** A social theory that holds that society's reaction to certain behaviors is a major factor in defining the self as deviant. People become 'deviant' because certain labels (thief, prostitute, homosexual) are attached to their behavior by criminal justice authorities and others. The resulting treatment of the individual pushes them into performing the deviant role. Also called "societal reaction" theory.

**Labor.** Physical or mental work, the primary factor in the production process.

**Labor power.** A concept much used by Karl Marx, it refers to abstract human labor that is used in exchange for money.

**Laissez-faire.** One of the main doctrines of capitalism that asserts that government should not interfere with commerce.

**Language.** Symbols and grammatical rules that provide for the communication of complex ideas.

**Latent functions.** The unintended consequences of one part of a sociocultural system on the whole or on other parts of that system. These consequences are often indirect and not always obvious. For example, the reform of big city political machines had a lot of unintended consequences on the governability of American cities (see also MANIFEST FUNCTION).

**Law.** Written rules established by a political authority and backed by government.

**Legitimacy.** The generally held belief that a particular social institution is just and valid.

**Legitimation.** The ways in which an institution engenders acceptance, validity, or commitment from individuals and other institutions.

**Legitimation crisis.** The lack of sufficient commitment on the part of members to a particular social institution for that organization to function effectively. Governments that lack legitimation often rely on repression to continue their rule (which is very inefficient).

**Lesbianism.** Sexual activities and emotional attachments between women.

**Liberal democracy.** Refers to those societies based on some form of democracy coupled with capitalism.

**Life chances.** The opportunities that are available to individuals as a result of their position in the class system.

**Lifestyle changes.** Often called for when treating chronic disease. Rather than curing the disease, the patient makes changes in lifestyle (nutrition, exercise, smoking cessation, weight reduction, alleviating stress) that help to control the disease process.

**Life expectancy.** The number of years a newborn in a particular society can expect to live. Also refers to the number of further years which people at any given age can, on average, expect to live.

**Life-span.** The maximum length of life that is biologically possible for a member of a given species.

**Limited war.** Warfare fought principally by a relatively small number of soldiers to reach specific and politically limited objectives (see also TOTAL WAR).

**Literacy.** The ability of individuals to read and write.

**Local knowledge.** Knowledge of a local community possessed by individuals who spend long periods of their lives in them.

**Longevity.** A long duration of life. Or, a long tenure in an organization.

**Looking glass self.** The theory that an individual's self-concept is derived from their interactions with others, that is, their perception of how others perceive them.

**Low-trust systems.** Work settings in which individuals have little autonomy and control.

**Luddites.** A term used to brand those who are against "all" modern technology. The term originally referred to British workmen (about 1811) who rioted and destroyed textile machinery in the belief that these machines were contributing to unemployment.

## M

**Macrosociology.** The study of large-scale organizations, sociocultural systems, or the world system of societies.

**Magic.** Rituals which attempt to influence supernatural beings to help achieve human ends.

**Male inexpressiveness.** The difficulties men have in talking about their feelings to others.

**Malthusianism.** The principle that population tends to grow faster than subsistence. T. Robert Malthus's theory of population dynamics, according to which population increase inevitably

comes up against the 'natural limits' of food supply. Population grows geometrically (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, . . .) while food supply grows arithmetically (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, . . .).

**Managed care.** The reorganization of the health care delivery along corporate lines. (See also Corporate medicine and Health maintenance organizations.)

**Management.** The coordination, supervision, or control of people and processes; the group of people who make decisions regarding the operations of an institution.

**Managerial capitalism.** A change in the control of capitalist enterprises from owners (which predominated in Marx's day) to control by (very well) salaried managers.

**Managerial demiurge.** C. Wright Mills' concept that refers to the increased proportion of managers at the top of government and business bureaucracies; an interlocking of these bureaucracies, and more and more areas becoming the object of management and manipulation.

**Manifest function.** The intended and known consequences of one part of a sociocultural system. For example, the reform of big city political machines had the intended consequence of limiting (relatively) corruption by city officials. (See also Latent function.)

**Manipulation.** Skillful or devious management.

**Manufacturing division of labor.** Also called the detailed division of labor. It breaks the making of a product down into simple discrete steps, and then assigns each task to an individual workman.

**Market research.** Social research aimed specifically at finding out the sales potential of a product or service.

**Marriage.** A socially approved sexual and economic relationship between two or more individuals.

**Marxism.** Contemporary social theory deriving its main elements from Marx's ideas. Marxist theory strongly emphasizes class struggle and material causation.

**Masculinity.** The characteristic forms of behavior expected of men in any given culture.

**Mass media.** Forms of communication designed to reach a vast audience without any personal contact between the senders and receivers. Examples would include newspapers, magazines, video recordings, radio and television.

**Master status.** A position that is so central to the identity of the individual that it overshadows all other statuses.

**Material culture.** The physical objects of a given sociocultural system. Usually thought to consist of products, art, tools and other tangibles.

**Materialism.** The view that 'material conditions' (usually economic and technological factors) have the central role in determining social stability change.

**Materialist.** One who believes that material conditions are the foundation of sociocultural systems. Materialism is the philosophical view that the only thing that can truly be said to 'exist' is matter; that fundamentally, all things are composed of 'material' and all phenomena are the result of material interactions.

**Matriarchy.** Social organization in which females dominate males.

**Matrilineal descent.** The tracing of kinship through only the female line. (See also Patrilineal descent.)

**Matrilocality.** A family residential pattern in which the husband is expected to live near to the wife's parents. (See also Neolocality.)

**McDonaldization.** George Ritzer coined the term to describe rationalization—the identical process extensively described by Weber—because modern audiences could better identify with fast food restaurants and students could more easily relate to them.

**Mean.** A statistical measure of 'central tendency' or average based on dividing a total by the number of individual cases involved. The mean is very sensitive to extreme scores. For example, the average life expectancy for people in a society with high infant mortality would be a misleading measure. (See also Median.)

**Means of consumption.** George Ritzer's term referring to the means whereby the consumption of goods and services is carried out in a society. Consists of such institutions as malls, superstores, Internet stores (such as Amazon.com), warehouse stores, theme parks, cruise lines, mega-malls, and casinos.

**Means of production.** Marx's term referring to the means whereby the production of material goods is carried on in a society. Marx included in this concept both technology (which he called the "forces of production") and the social relations among the producers (which he called the "relations of production" and based on the ownership of that technology).

**Mechanical solidarity.** "Solidarity which comes from likeness," Durkheim writes, and "is at its maximum when the collective conscience completely envelops our whole conscience and coincides in all points with it."

**Mechanization.** The use of machinery to replace human labor.

**Median.** The number that falls halfway in a range of numbers--the score below which are half the scores and above which are the other half. The median is a way of calculating 'central tendency' which is sometimes more useful than calculating a mean (particularly when many extreme scores are in the distribution).

**Medicaid.** Government program (federal and state) to provide medical care to the poor.

**Medical model.** The application of the medical perspective in explaining and treating troublesome human behavior.

**Medicalization.** The tendency in the West to define all forms of deviance and social problems to be due to disease, genetic predisposition, or other personal pathologies.

**Medicare.** Government health insurance for those over sixty-five.

**Megalopolis.** A vast unbroken urban region consisting of two or more central cities connected by their surrounding suburbs.

**Mental disorder.** The inability to psychologically cope effectively with the demands of day-to-day life. Psychiatrists recognize two general types of mental disorder, neurosis (milder forms of illness, such as anxiety states) and psychosis (more serious forms of disturbance, in which individuals lose touch with reality). The organic and sociocultural basis of various mental disorders are disputed matters.

**Mental superstructure.** Sociocultural materialism term used to refer to conscious and unconscious motives for human behavior. Borrowed from Max Weber, there are four basic



motivations for human behavior: wertrational (or value oriented rationality), affective action (action motivated by emotions), traditional action (action motivated by what Weber calls the "eternal yesterday"), and zweckrational (goal oriented rational action). (See also Superstructure and Cultural superstructure.)

**Microsociology.** The study of small scale patterns of human interaction and behavior within specific settings.

**Middle class.** A social class broadly defined occupationally as those working in white-collar and lower managerial occupations; is sometimes defined by reference to income levels or subjective identification of the participants in the study. (See also Bourgeoisie.)

**Migration.** The movement of people from one country or region to another in order to settle permanently.

**Militarism.** A policy that emphasizes military preparedness, threats, and action in addressing problems of state. A glorification of military ideals and capabilities.

**Military-industrial complex.** A reciprocal relationship (such as the interchange of personnel) between select business firms and the armed forces of a society, based on common interests in weapons production.

**Military rule.** Government by military leaders.

**Millenarianism.** Beliefs held by the members of some religious movements that cataclysmic changes will occur in the near future (lately centered on the year 2012 or the second coming of Christ) heralding the arrival of a new epoch in human affairs.

**Mini-systems.** Immanuel Wallerstein's term for societies small in size, homogenous, relatively simple in structure. Such societies are self-contained sociocultural systems such as hunting and gathering societies and perhaps simple horticultural, herding, and fishing societies.

**Minority group.** A group of people who are defined on the basis of their ethnicity or race. Because of their distinct physical or cultural characteristics, they are singled out for unequal treatment within a society.

**Miscegenation.** The mixing of the races through marriage.

**Mixed economy.** Economies which have major elements of both capitalism and socialism (such as many economies of Europe).

**Mobilization.** Activities aimed at arousing people and resources to press for social change.

**Mode.** The value that appears most often in a given set of data. This can sometimes be a helpful way of portraying central tendency. (See also Median and Mean.)

**Mode of production.** The technology and the practices employed for expanding or limiting basic subsistence production, especially the production of food and other forms of energy. Examples would include the technology of subsistence, technological/environmental relationships, and work patterns. (See also Mode of reproduction and Infrastructure.)

**Mode of reproduction.** The technology and practices employed for expanding, limiting, and maintaining population size. Examples of variables included are demography, mating patterns, fertility, mortality, nurturance of infants, contraception, abortion and infanticide. (See also Mode of production, Infrastructure, Demography, and Population.)

**Modernity.** The state of being modern, usually associated with industrial and hyperindustrial societies.

**Modernization.** The process of general social change brought about by the transition from an agrarian to an industrial mode of production.

**Monarchy.** A hereditary form of government in which a king or queen or some similar "noble" rules.

**Monogamy.** A form of marriage that joins one male and one female at any given time.

**Monopoly.** A situation in which a single producer dominates in a given industry or market. (See also Oligopoly.)

**Monopoly capitalism.** Huge amounts of accumulated capital within corporations that give these organizations enormous social, political, and economic power. Operating control of these organizations is vested in specialized management.

**Monotheism.** Belief in a single Divine power (such as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit).

**Mores.** Norms that have strong moral significance, violation of which cause strong social reaction (murder, sexual molestation of children).

**Mortality rate.** The number of deaths that occur in a particular population in a specified period of time (usually a year).

**Motive.** A personal drive, intentional reason, or impulse that causes a person to act in a certain way.

**Multiculturalism.** A sensitivity to the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of the members within a society.

**Multi-linear evolution.** An interpretation of social evolution that not all societies pass through predetermined stages of evolutionary development--there are varying paths of evolutionary change followed by different societies.

**Multinational corporations.** A business corporation that operates in two or more countries--also sometimes referred to as a "transnational."

## N

**Nationalism.** An individual's internalization of the set of beliefs and values expressing love, pride and identification with a given nation state. Ritual and symbols are important tools in fostering nationalism among the citizenry.

**Nation state.** The modern state in which a government has sovereign power within a defined territorial area, and the mass of the population are citizens.

**Neo-colonialism.** The informal dominance of some nations over others by means of unequal conditions of economic exchange (as between industrial and Third World countries).

**Neo-locality.** A family residential pattern in which the married couple lives apart from the place of residence of both the bride's and the husband's parents (see also MATRILOCALITY).

**Newly industrialized countries.** Nation states (such as South Korea) that have recently attained industrialization.

**Nomothetic.** A tendency to generalize or search for universal laws or principles; sociology is

a nomothetic enterprise; history is idiographic.

**Nonmaterial culture.** Consists of the norms, customs, beliefs, and ideologies of social groups.

**Non-state actors.** International agencies, such as the U.N. or the World Health Organization, which play a part in the world system.

**Normative consensus.** Shared agreement among the vast majority in a group or society about what behaviors are appropriate and expected of its members.

**Norms.** Rules and expectations of conduct which either prescribes a given type of behavior, or forbids it.

**Normative structure.** Long-standing patterns of norms and expectations of behavior within a society or an organization.

**Nuclear family.** A basic family group consisting of married female and male parents and dependent children, living away from other relatives.

## O

**Objectivity.** Striving as far as possible to reduce or eliminate bias in the conduct or interpretation of research and scholarship.

**Occupational distribution.** The number of workers in each occupational classification.

**Occupational prestige.** Social respect accorded to an individual or group because of the status of their occupation.

**Oligarchy.** Rule by a few within an organization or in the society as a whole.

**Oligopoly.** A situation in which a small number of firms dominate a given industry or market. When four or fewer firms supply fifty percent or more of a given market the effects of oligopoly become apparent. These effects are reputed to be a rise in price and a lowering of quality because of the decline of competition. (See also Monopoly.)

**Open lineage family.** A family system found in preindustrial Europe in which family relationships are closely intertwined with the local community.

**Operatives and laborers.** Unskilled and semi-skilled workers, usually working in manufacturing or construction.

**Organic solidarity.** Durkheim's concept referring to social cohesion based on the interdependence of the division of labor rather than on likeness.

**Organization.** A large group of individuals that is formally organized for the purpose of attaining a goal.

**Organized crime.** Criminal activities carried out by organizations established as businesses.

**Ownership.** The legal right to the possession of an object or thing. For Marx, ownership of the means of production were key factors in understanding a sociocultural system.

**Ozone depletion.** Theory that the production of chlorofluorocarbons and other gasses is depleting the ozone layer that protects plant and animal life from harmful ultra-violet radiation. (See also Pollution and Environment.)

## P

**Paradigm.** A theoretical framework or worldview within which middle-range theories and generalizations regarding social reality are formulated and tested.

**Participant observation.** A research method in which the social scientists engages in systematic observation while a member of the group.

**Participatory democracy.** A system of democracy in which all members of a group or community participate collectively in major decisions. Most nation states today are too large and complex for participatory democracy to be a feasible form of government.

**Pastoral societies (Herding societies).** Societies whose subsistence is based on domesticated animals. (See also Traditional states.)

**Patient dumping.** The practice of only treating patients that can pay leaving the poor to government or charitable organizations.

**Patriarchy.** Social organization that structures the dominance of men over women.

**Patrilineal descent.** The practice of tracing kinship only through the male line. (See also Matrilineal descent.)

**Patrilocality.** A family residential pattern in which the wife is expected to live near to the husband's parents. (See also Neolocality.)

**Pauperization.** To impoverish or make someone poor. Marx theorized that capital must ultimately lead to the pauperization of the masses.

**Peasants.** People in agrarian societies who produce food from the land, using traditional farming methods of plow and animal power. Farm workers in agrarian societies.

**Peer group.** A friendship group with common interests and position composed of individuals of similar age.

**Peripheral countries.** Countries which have a marginal role in the world economy and are dependent on core countries in their trading relationships. (See also Core countries and Semi-peripheral countries.)

**Personal crime.** Crime directed against people.

**Personality.** The consistent pattern of attitudes and beliefs that an individual projects to the social world.

**Physician assistant.** An occupation that handles many routine medical problems, thereby allowing the physician to specialize in the more difficult cases.

**Play stage.** The stage in which children take on the role of others around them.

**Plea bargaining.** A deal between the prosecution and the accused offender where the accused will plead guilty in return for a reduced charge.

**Pluralist.** One who subscribes to an analysis of politics emphasizing the role of diverse and competing interest groups.

**Pluralist theory.** An analysis of politics emphasizing the role of diverse and competing interest groups in preventing too much power being accumulated in the hands of political and economic elites.

**Plutocracy.** A government in which the wealthy directly or indirectly rule.

**Policy research.** Social research aimed at clarifying issues and problems that can then be addressed by changes in social policy.

**Political economy.** Marvin Harris' term that refers to the structural components of sociocultural systems that are organized around production, exchange, and consumption within and between large-scale political units (bands, villages, states, and empires).

**Political action committees (PACS).** Interest group organizations aimed at contributing money to politicians who support the interests of the group.

**Political party.** An organization of people with similar interests and attitudes established with the aim of achieving legitimate control of government and using that power to pursue a specific program.

**Politics.** Attempts to influence governmental activities.

**Pollution.** One of the principal constraints of the environment. Refers to the contamination of soil, water, or air by noxious substances. (See also Depletion, Environment, and Intensification.)

**Polyandry.** A form of marriage in which a woman may have more than one husband.

**Polygamy.** A form of marriage in which a person may have more than one spouse.

**Polygyny.** A form of marriage in which a man may have more than one wife.

**Polytheism.** A form of belief in which a person has two or more gods. (See also Monotheism.)

**Popular culture.** Cultural elements (beliefs, norms, material objects) that are part of the everyday life of a people.

**Population.** In social research this term refers to the total group of people that the researcher is studying. For very large groups, sampling is usually undertaken.

**Population density.** The number of people who live in a given area. This is usually measured by the number of people per square mile.

**Population replacement level.** A condition in which the birth rate and the death rate are about equal, thus leading to zero population growth.

**Positivism.** A philosophical position according to which there are close ties between the social and natural sciences, which share a common logical framework. Accurate observation, description, and measurement are considered critical in this perspective.

**Postindustrial societies.** A society based on the production of services and information rather than material goods. A notion advocated by those who believe that the industrial order is passing. (See also Hyper-industrial society.)

**Postmodernism.** A theoretical perspective--widespread in cultural studies and anthropology--that is based on the idea that there is no objective social reality, but that different realities are constructed in the minds of individuals from the words and images (or discourse) between people.

**Power.** The ability to achieve aims or further the interests you hold even when opposed by others.

**Power elite.** According to C. Wright Mills the power elite are men in the highest positions of

government, corporations and the military who hold enormous power in modern industrial societies.

**Poverty line.** The amount of income that it takes to maintain a family at a basic level. This amount is often determined by government.

**Pre-industrial societies.** A broad classification of all modes of production that came before industrialism. The most common of which are Hunting and gathering, Horticultural, Pastoral, and Agrarian.

**Prejudice.** The holding of unfounded ideas about a group, ideas that are resistant to change.

**Prestige.** Social respect accorded to an individual or group because of the status of their position.

**Primacy of the infrastructure.** When trying to understand or explain a widespread social practice or belief, Marvin Harris urges, always begin with an examination of infrastructural-environmental relations. He calls this the *principle of infrastructural determinism* (a somewhat unfortunate choice of terminology since Harris explicitly recognizes the probabilistic nature of the relationships). Because of misunderstandings and misinterpretations, Harris later renames this principle the *primacy of the infrastructure*.

**Primary deviance.** The deviant act itself, the violation of a norm.

**Primary group.** A typically small group of individuals standing in an enduring personal relationship to one another--examples would include parents, spouse, or close friends. (See also Secondary group.)

**Primary group structure.** A term used in sociocultural materialism to refer to structural groups in which members tend to interact on an intimate basis. They perform many functions such as regulating production, reproduction, socialization, education, and enforcing social discipline. Examples include family, community, voluntary organizations, and friendship networks. (See also Structure and Secondary group structure.)

**Primary labor market.** The term refers to the economic position of individuals engaged in occupations that provide secure jobs, and good benefits and working conditions. (See also Secondary labor market.)

**Primary needs.** A term used by Karl Marx to refer to natural needs that we are born with rather than learn; this would include such needs as food, water, and shelter. (See also Secondary needs.)

**Primary sector.** That part of a modern economy based on the extraction of natural resources directly from the natural environment--includes such areas as mining and agricultural production.

**Private health care.** Fee-for-service health care available only to those who pay the full cost of them.

**Profane.** Elements of society that belong to the ordinary everyday world rather than the supernatural. (See also Sacred.)

**Professions.** Occupations requiring extensive educational qualifications, with high social prestige, subject to codes of conduct laid down by central bodies (or professional associations).

**Proletariat.** Marxist term that refers to the class of industrial workers who have nothing to sell

on the free market except their labor.

**Propaganda.** Information that is systematically spread by an organization to further its agenda.

**Property crime.** Crimes such as theft of property without physically harming an individual.

**Prostitution.** Selling sex acts for economic gain.

**Protestant Ethic.** Weber's thesis that protestant values and beliefs placed value on hard work and thrift, thus promoting the transition to capitalism.

**Psychoanalytic theory.** A psychological theory positing that the unconscious shapes much of human behavior.

**Psychopath.** A personality type that denotes a lack of moral sense and concern for others. (See also Sociopath.)

**Psychosis.** A serious mental disorder that involves a failure to distinguish between internal and external reality, the affected person cannot function effectively in social life.

**Public health care.** Government funded health-care services available to all members of the population.

## Q

**Qualitative research.** Less structured research more open to indirect observation and interpretation. There are many qualitative techniques such as participant observation, content analysis, or focus groups.

**Quantitative research.** Structured research focused upon the collection of discreet data and systematic analysis.

## R

**Race.** A socially defined category of people who share genetically transmitted physical characteristics.

**Racial profiling.** The use of race as the primary criteria to decide whether or not to subject an individual to more intensive scrutiny on the part of agents of social control (such as police, or airport security).

**Racism.** Attributing inferiority to a particular racial category. Racism is a specific form of prejudice focused on race.

**Radical movements.** Social movements that seek fundamental change in the sociocultural system.

**Random sample.** A technique of drawing a sample of a population in which each individual has an equal chance of being selected.

**Rape.** The use of force to compel one individual to engage in a sexual act with another.

**Rationalism.** The reliance on logic, observation, and reason to guide one's behavior and beliefs.

**Rationality.** Mental state characterized by coherent thought processes, that are goal oriented, and based on cost-benefit evaluation.

**Rational choice theory.** The idea that humans make cost-benefit analyses before significant

social actions (such as having children or choosing to go to college).

**Rational-legal authority.** Weber's term for authority that is based on law, rules, or regulations. (See also Charismatic authority and Traditional authority.)

**Rationalization.** Weber's concept to refer to the process by which modes of precise calculation based on observation and reason increasingly dominate the social world. Rationalization is a habit of thought that replaces tradition, emotion, and values as motivators of human conduct. Bureaucracy is a particular case of rationalization applied to human social organization. (See also Bureaucratization.)

**Reactionary movements.** Social movements bent on resisting change or advocating the return to an earlier order.

**Rebellion.** Social actions aimed at removing particular rulers or regimes rather than bringing about significant structural changes in a society. (See also Coup d'état and Revolution.)

**Recidivism rate.** The percentage of ex-convicts who are convicted of new offenses after being released from prison.

**Reciprocity.** A system of the exchange of goods based on social ties.

**Reference group.** The group one identifies with and looks to for standards of behavior, values, beliefs, and attitudes.

**Reform movement.** A social movement concerned to implement a limited program of social change, say changing the health care system to provide universal access to care.

**Relations of production.** The social relations people enter into through their participation in economic life. They are socially patterned, independent of the wills and purposes of the individuals involved; the primary distinction is whether they are owners of the forces of production or have only their labor to sell.

**Relative deprivation.** A perceived disadvantage in social or economic standing based on a comparison to others in a society.

**Relative poverty.** Poverty defined by reference to the living standards of the majority in any given society.

**Reliability.** The likelihood or probability that a given measure would be the same if measured again. Not all measures are reliable.

**Religion.** A set of beliefs involving symbols regarded as sacred, together with ritual practices in which members of the community engage.

**Religiosity.** A measure of the intensity and importance of religious faith to an individual.

**Replication study.** Repeating a study on another sample of subjects at a different time. Such studies are checks on the validity and reliability of research.

**Representative democracy.** Based on the existence of two or more political parties, in which voters democratically elect politicians to represent their interests.

**Research design.** The overall logic and strategy of the research methods of a particular study.

**Research methods.** The diverse strategies used to gather empirical (factual) material in a systematic way.



**Resocialization.** The relearning of cultural norms and values by mature individuals usually in the context of a total institution (see also TOTAL INSTITUTION).

**Retirement center.** A city or town to which many people move when they retire.

**Retreatism.** Robert K. Merton's Anomie Theory category consists of society's dropouts: psychotics, tramps, and substance abusers. They have given up on both the culturally prescribed means and the goals. Merton viewed it as a way of escaping society's demands. The other categories are Rebellion, Ritualism, Conformity, and Innovation.

**Revolution.** The overthrow of a government by the governed; a process of change involving the mobilization of a mass social movement in order to radically transform society. It also refers to a drastic and far reaching political, economic, social, or technological change (as in the Agricultural or Industrial Revolutions). Finally, it refers to a category in Robert K. Merton's Anomie typology to indicate one who rejects both the goals and means and substitute new goals and means in their stead.

**Riots.** An outbreak of collective violence directed against persons, property or both.

**Rite of passage.** Communal rituals that mark the transition from one status to another (such as a confirmation or a wedding ceremony).

**Ritual.** Formalized ceremonial behavior in which the members of a group or community regularly engage.

**Ritualism.** When blocked from achieving success goals, such men and women will stick to the legitimate means, essentially just going through the motions. Merton contended that the heavy emphasis that the lower middle classes place on socializing the young in obedience predisposes them to this mode of adaptation. The other categories are Rebellion, Retreatism, Conformity, and Innovation.

**Role.** The expected behavior associated with a given status.

**Role conflict.** When two or more roles conflict with one another.

**Role model.** An admired person who is held up as an example to imitate.

**Role set.** All of the roles a person occupies at a given time (doctor, daughter, wife, mother, sister,...).

**Role strain.** Conflicting expectations within a given role.

**Ruling class.** The class of people who exercise overwhelming power and control within a society.

S

**Sacred.** Something set apart from the everyday world which inspires attitudes of awe or reverence among believers. (See also Profane.)

**Sampling.** Taking a small part of a population for purposes of drawing inferences from the analysis of the sample characteristics to the population as a whole.

**Sanctions.** A reward for conformity or a punishment for nonconformity that reinforces socially approved forms of behavior.

**Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.** The theory that people perceive their world through the framework of language. Thus language determines other aspects of culture because it provides the

categories through which reality is defined.

**Scientific management.** A set of ideas developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor involving simplifying, rationalizing, standardizing, and coordinating the actions of workers to produce maximum efficiency. (See also Taylorism.)

**Scientific method.** Steps taken in the research process to assure the validity, reliability, and generalization of the results. These steps include observation (or gathering the data), hypothesis testing, and the analysis of data.

**Scapegoating.** Blaming, punishing, or stigmatizing a relatively powerless individual or group for wrongs that were not of their doing.

**Schizophrenia.** A serious mental disturbance in which an individual typically has delusions or hallucinations and a distorted sense of reality.

**Science.** The application of systematic methods of observation and careful logical analysis; the term also refers to the body of knowledge produced by the use of the scientific method.

**Script.** A concept used in role theory, refers to the learned performance of a social role.

**Second world countries.** Formerly communist industrial societies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (see also First world and Third world).

**Secondary organization.** A group of individuals who do not know each other on a personal level interacting in pursuit of a goal. (See also Formal organization, Primary group.)

**Secondary group.** A group that is relatively large in size and that interacts on the basis of narrow roles rather than on an intimate basis, and who are usually organized around a specific task.

**Secondary group structure.** A term used in sociocultural materialism to refer to structural groups in which members tend to interact without any emotional commitment to one another. These organizations are coordinated through bureaucracies. They perform many functions such as regulating production, reproduction, socialization, education, and enforcing social discipline. Examples include governments, parties, military, corporations, educational institutions, media, service and welfare organizations, and professional and labor organizations. (See also Structure and Primary group structure.)

**Secondary deviance.** The deviant role behavior that a person adopts as a result of being labeled as deviant.

**Secondary labor market.** Refers to the economic position of individuals engaged in occupations that provide insecure jobs, poor benefits and conditions of work. (See also Primary labor market.)

**Secondary literature.** In the social sciences secondary literature refers to a scholar's work about another scientist's theory or writings. Textbooks and encyclopedias are secondary rather than primary literature.

**Secondary needs.** Desires and wants that become important when primary needs are satisfied. Many such needs are learned.

**Sect.** A group that has broken off from an established religion.

**Secular.** Beliefs that are temporal or of this world rather than spiritual in nature.

**Secularization.** A process of decline in the social influence of religion. (See also

Rationalization.)

**Segregation.** The spatial and social separation of people based on ethnicity or race.

**Self-consciousness (Self).** The individual's awareness of being a distinct social identity, a person separate from others. Human beings are not born with self-consciousness, but acquire an awareness of self as a result of early socialization.

**Self-fulfilling prophecy.** The idea that the mere application of a label changes behavior and thus provides justification for label.

**Semi-periphery countries.** Countries that are in the initial stages of industrialism which provide labor and raw materials to the core countries. (See also Core countries and Periphery countries.)

**Semi-professions.** Differ from professions in that their members are overwhelmingly employed by bureaucracy (though increasing numbers of professionals are employed in such organizations as well), it is not often a terminal profession, and they lack specialized knowledge (such as law or medicine). Semi-professions lack the power, latitude on the job, and prestige of full professions, they also lack the compensation. Examples would include teachers, social workers, nurses and other occupations dominated by females—and many would say it is this latter characteristic that determines their status as semi-professions.

**Serial monogamy.** The process of contracting several marriages in succession-- marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

**Service workers.** Employees who work in the service sector of the economy—day care, restaurants, tanning salons, casinos.

**Sex.** The biological categories of females and males.

**Sex ratio.** The number of males per 100 females.

**Sex role.** The gender specific role behavior that a person learns as a member of a particular society.

**Sex stratification.** The ranking and differential reward system of the sexes.

**Sexism.** Beliefs which hold one sex superior to the other thereby justifying sexual inequalities.

**Sexual harassment.** The making of persistent unwanted sexual advances (physical or verbal) by one individual towards another that occurs within a relationship where the individuals have unequal power (such as an employer/employee).

**Sexual orientation.** The manner in which one experiences sexual arousal.

**Sexual revolution.** The widespread change in sexual behavior and attitudes among men and women in 20th century America. Some claim it happened in the 1920s rather than the 1960s.

**Sick role.** Patterns of behavior expected of one who is sick--this role often exempts the person from their normal role obligations.

**Significant other.** People to whom the individual has a close relationship.

**Social action.** Behavior that is meaningful to the actor and/or to the observer.

**Social change.** Alteration in social structures or culture over time.

**Social class.** Most sociologists use the term to refer to socioeconomic differences between groups of individuals which create differences in their life chances and power.

**Social construction.** A theoretical perspective that explains most social behaviors as created and learned within a cultural, social, and historical context.

**Social control.** The set of positive and negative sanctions that are used by a group to bring individual members into compliance with its norms and values.

**Social control agents.** Those who regulate and enforce social control within an organization or sociocultural system; in society at large, this would include the criminal justice and mental health systems.

**Social Darwinism.** An early and now largely discredited view of social evolution emphasizing the importance of "survival of the fittest" or struggle between individuals, groups, or societies as the motor of development. Social Darwinism became widely popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century and was often used to justify existing inequalities.

**Social differentiation.** The process through which different statuses develop within a group or a society.

**Social disintegration.** The process of a society going to pieces or losing coherence.

**Social disorganization.** A structural condition of society caused by rapid change in social institutions, norms, and values.

**Social dynamics.** A term used by Auguste Comte (and others) to refer to the principle forces responsible for social change.

**Social evolution.** Theories of cumulative sociocultural change which generally hold that human societies move from simple to complex forms of organization.

**Social facts.** Social forces or patterns external to the individual.

**Social forces.** The term refers to the fact that society and social organizations exert an influence on individual human behavior.

**Social groups.** Two or more individuals who interact in systematic ways with one another and share a high degree of common identity. Groups may range in size from dyads to large-scale societies.

**Social justice.** The fair administration of laws without regard to ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, or class.

**Social institutions.** Major structural entities in sociocultural systems that address a basic need of the system. Institutions involve fixed modes of behavior backed by strong norms and sanctions that tend to be followed by most members of a society.

**Social interaction.** Meaningful behavior between two actors.

**Social issues.** Problems that are the result of the institutional structure in a society; these problems usually affect large numbers of people and are experienced as individual problems. Examples in modern American society include divorce, poverty, and immigration.

**Social mobility.** Movement between different social positions within a stratification system.

**Social movement.** A large grouping of people who are organized to bring about, or to block, a change in the sociocultural system.

**Social network.** The web of relationships between individuals or between groups.

**Social organization.** The pattern of relationships within a group or society.

**Social reproduction.** The processes which perpetuate characteristics of social structure over periods of time. (See also Agencies of socialization.)

**Social role.** The expected patterned behavior of an individual occupying a particular status position.

**Social statics.** A term used by Auguste Comte to refer to the principle forces responsible for social stability and order—how societies maintain themselves over time. The term is somewhat outmoded and little used, often referring simply to social stability.

**Social structure.** The pattern of human relationships formed by human groups and institutions within a given society.

**Social stratification.** Structured inequalities in life chances between groups in society. These inequalities are relatively fixed; individuals within each broad group have similar attitudes, beliefs, and backgrounds.

**Socialism.** An economic system in which the means of production and distribution of goods and services are publicly owned.

**Socialization.** The lifelong processes through which humans develop an awareness of social norms and values, and achieve a distinct sense of self.

**Society.** A society is a group of people who live in a particular territory, are subject to a common system of political authority, and share a common culture.

**Sociobiology.** An approach which attempts to explain the social behavior of humans in terms of biological principles.

**Sociocultural materialism.** A variant of cultural materialism that emphasizes the relationship between intensification and rationalization as well as feedback loops from structural and cultural elements to the material infrastructure of a society. (See Cultural materialism.)

**Sociocultural system.** Material, structural, and cultural elements that make up the total system.

**Socioeconomic status (SES).** A frequently used measure of class determined by some combination of income, occupational prestige, and years of education.

**Sociological imagination.** A term used by C. Wright Mills that refers to the application of imaginative thought to the asking and answering of sociological questions. It is the ability to see the effects of social patterns and history on human behavior.

**Sociology.** The study of human behavior and societies, giving particular emphasis to the industrialized world.

**Solid waste.** Refers to the accumulation of noxious material substances. (See also Depletion, Environment, and Intensification.)

**Specialization.** Occupation that concentrates upon a small part of the whole enterprise. Sociologists often specialize in medical sociology, or stratification.

**Split labor market.** A situation in which one group of laborers (usually defined by race, sex, or ethnicity) is routinely paid less than other groups.

**Standing army.** A full-time professional army.

**State.** Government institutions ruling over a given territory, whose authority is backed by law and the ability to use force.

**State society.** A society which possesses a formal apparatus of government.

**Stateless society.** A society which lacks formal institutions of government.

**Status.** A social position within a society. The term can also refer to the social honor or prestige which a particular individual or group is accorded by other members of a society.

**Status attainment.** The process through which people arrive at a given position within a stratification system.

**Status inconsistency.** Gerhard Lenski's concept which occurs when an individual holds two status positions of very different prestige.

**Status offences.** Acts that are illegal for juveniles but not for adults (such as running away from home or engaging in sexual activities).

**Status quo.** The existing state, the way things currently exist.

**Status set.** All of the statuses held by an individual at a given time.

**Step family.** Families in which at least one partner has children from a previous marriage living in the home. Also called blended family.

**Stereotype.** A rigid and inflexible image of the characteristics a group. Stereotypes attribute these characteristics to all individuals belonging to that group.

**Stigma.** A symbol (or a negative social label) of disgrace that affects a person's social identity.

**Strategic defense initiative (Star Wars).** A program that aims to protect the U.S. from nuclear attack by developing the capabilities to shoot down enemy missiles.

**Stratification.** The existence of structured inequalities in life chances between groups in society.

**Straw man.** An argument based on misrepresentation of an opponent's position. To "attack a straw man" is to create the illusion of having refuted a proposition by replacing it with a superficially similar proposition (the "straw man"), and then refuting it, without ever having dealt with the original position.

**Strike.** A temporary work stoppage by a group of employees.

**Structural strain theory.** Robert K. Merton's theory of deviance which holds that many forms of deviance are caused by a disjunction between society's goals and the approved means to achieve these goals; also called "anomie theory."

**Structural unemployment.** Unemployed workers whose skills and training have become "obsolete" and who have little chance of ever finding employment at comparable paying jobs.

**Structure.** Sociological term to refer to all human institutions, groups and organizations.

**Substantive rationality.** Weber's term for rationality exercised within a context of human values, traditions, and emotions. (See also Formal rationality.)

**Subculture.** A group within the broader society that has values, norms and lifestyle distinct from those of the majority.

**Suburbanization.** The development of areas of housing outside the political boundaries of cities.

**Sui generis.** (Soo-eye JEN-uhr-is) is an adjective meaning of its own kind or in a class of its own.

**Superego.** Freudian concept that refers to the part of the self which reflects moral social standards internalized by the individual.

**Superstructure.** A general term used in sociocultural materialism to refer to the symbolic universe--the shared meanings, ideas, beliefs, values, and ideologies that people give to the physical and social world. The superstructure, of course, can be divided into cultural and mental components. (See also Cultural superstructure and Mental superstructure.)

**Surplus value.** Marx's concept for the value of an individual's labor power (calculated by the amount of value the labor contributes to the product minus the amount of money paid to the worker by the capitalist). The conventional name for this difference is profit--thus the whole capitalist system is based on "expropriating" surplus value (or stealing labor) from workers.

**Surveillance.** Monitoring the activities of others in order to ensure compliant behavior. Modern techniques of surveillance include not only video cameras and microphones but also a whole range of computer surveillance as well.

**Survey.** A questionnaire or interview.

**Sweatshops.** A workplace that violates one or more standards of workplace safety, labor laws, or worker compensation. Such shops now thrive in many peripheral countries.

**Symbol.** One item used to meaningfully represent another--as in the case of a flag which symbolizes a nation.

**Symbolic interaction.** A theoretical approach in sociology which focuses on social reality as constructed through the daily interaction of individuals and places strong emphasis on the role of symbols (gestures, signs, and language) as core elements of this interaction.

**Synthesis.** The combining of elements from separate sources to produce a coherent whole. Much of macro social theory consists of synthesis of the ideas and insights of many.

## T

**Taboos.** A sociocultural prohibition on some act, person, place, animal, or plant; public knowledge of the violation of a taboo brings on severe sanctions.

**Taylorism.** A set of ideas developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor involving simplifying and coordinating the actions of workers to produce maximum efficiency. It is also referred to as 'scientific management.

**Technical specialists.** Individuals who specialize in highly technical fields.

**Technology.** The application of logic, reason and knowledge to the problems of exploiting raw materials from the environment. Social technologies employ the same thought processes in addressing problems of human organization. Technology involves the creation of material instruments (such as machines) used in human interaction with nature as well as social instruments (such as bureaucracy) used in human organization. (See also Rationalization.)

**Terrorism.** The use of violence or the threat of violence to achieve political, social, or economic ends. Many would restrict the definition to include only those acts committed by

non-government groups, but state terrorism is also a major factor in the social world.

**Tertiary sector.** That part of an economy that provides services (nursing homes, psychological counseling, and so forth)--engaged in by both private and government entities.

**Theory.** Summary statements of general principles which explain regularly observed events.

**Third world countries.** Societies in which industrial production is only developed to a limited degree. Many of these societies were former colonies of industrial states. The majority of the world's populations (over 70 percent) live in Third World countries. (See also First world and Second world.)

**Title IX.** A federal law prohibiting sex discrimination in educational institutions receiving federal funds.

**Total institution.** An organization in which individuals are isolated for long periods of time as their lives are controlled and regulated by the administration of the organization--such as a prison, mental hospital, or army boot camps. (See also Resocialization.)

**Total war.** Warfare in which all the resources of the modern state are committed including a large proportion of the population (both directly and indirectly), all of the armed forces, and a large proportion of the industrial sector of the society.

**Totalitarianism.** Authoritarian government that attempts to regulate every aspect of sociocultural life.

**Totemism.** A system of religious belief studied by Durkheim which attributes sacred qualities to a particular type of animal or plant.

**Totem.** Symbol associated with a group given sacred significance; often an identifying insignia.

**Tracking.** Grouping students in educational institutions based upon test scores predicting their abilities.

**Trading networks.** Patterns of economic exchange between companies or countries.

**Traditional action.** One of Weber's four action typologies (the others being Wertrational, Zweckrational, and Affective action) that refers to action motivated by custom or tradition.

**Traditional authority.** Weber's term for authority based on long-established custom or tradition. (See also Charismatic authority and Rational-legal authority.)

**Traditional states.** Societies in which the production base is agriculture or pastoralism (see also Agrarian societies and Pastoral societies.)

**Transformative movement.** A social movement to produce major social change in a society.

**Transitional class.** Marx's term to refer to social classes based on previous relations of production which linger on in the beginning stages a new one--such as peasants or landowners of a feudal system which has become capitalist.

**Transnational corporation.** A business corporation that operates in two or more countries--also sometimes referred to as a "multinational."

**Triad.** A group of three; there is a tendency for such groups to separate into a dyad against one (triadic separation).

**Tribute.** A regular payment of money or goods from a subjugated nation-state to the



conqueror nation; at times this payment is for protection or in lieu of being subjugated.

**Troubles.** C. Wright Mills term that refers to the an individual's privately felt experience of problems in social life, such as unemployment or divorce. Many people do not realize that these privately felt troubles are actually rooted in social forces of change or conflict.

## U

**Unconscious.** Freudian concept referring to motives and ideas unavailable to the conscious mind of the individual.

**Underclass.** A class of individuals in mature industrial societies situated at the bottom of the class system who have been systematically excluded from participation in economic life. The underclass is normally composed of people from ethnic or minority groups.

**Underemployment.** Employment at a job below your skill or educational level.

**Unemployment rate.** Government measure of those not working but who are actively seeking work.

**Unilinear evolution.** A largely discredited (and mythical) view of social evolution according to which all societies pass through the same stages of development. Unilinear evolution is normally used in straw man arguments to discredit social evolution.

**Unintended consequences.** Many social actions have significant effects on the total sociocultural system (or other parts of that system) that were neither intended nor foreseen by the participants. Robert K. Merton developed the concepts of latent and manifest functions, as well as the concept of dysfunction, to better study these unintended consequences.

**Union.** A social organization set up to represent the worker's interests in both the workplace and in the broader society as well.

**Upper class.** A social class roughly composed of the more affluent members of society, especially those who have great wealth, control over businesses or hold large numbers of stocks and shares.

**Urbanism.** The extent to which a community has the characteristics of city life.

**Urban ecology.** An analysis of urban life that examines the relationship between the city and its physical surroundings--based on an analogy with the adjustment of plants and organisms to the physical environment.

**Urban renewal.** Governmental programs of encouraging the renovation of deteriorating city neighborhoods through the renovation or destruction of old buildings and the construction of new ones.

**Urbanization.** The increasing concentration of the human population into cities.

**Utilitarian organization.** A group organized around a specific purpose such as to make money or to give charity.

## V

**Validity.** The degree to which the measurement of a variable actually reflects the intended concept. For example, how valid is IQ in measuring intelligence?

**Values.** Culturally defined standards held by human individuals or groups about what is desirable, proper, beautiful, good or bad that serve as broad guidelines for social life.

**Variables.** A characteristic that varies in value or magnitude along which an object, individual

or group may be categorized, such as income or age.

**Vertical mobility.** Movement up or down a social stratification system (see also STRATIFICATION).

**Vested interests.** An expectation of private gain that often underlies the expressed interest in a public issue.

**Verstehen.** German term that means to understand, perceive, know, and comprehend the nature and significance of a phenomenon. To grasp or comprehend the meaning intended or expressed by another. Weber used the term to refer to the social scientist's attempt to understand both the intention and the context of human action.

**Victimless crime.** Violation of law in which there is no other person (aside from the offender) victimized, such as drug-taking or illegal gambling.

**Vital statistics.** Statistical information about births, deaths, marriages, immigration, and other population characteristics.

**Voluntary organizations.** Groups and organizations that are formed to achieve personal or socially worthwhile goals (aside from monetary profit).

## W

**Welfare.** Government aid (in the form of services and money) to the poor.

**Wealth.** Accumulated money and material possessions controlled by an individual, group or organization.

**Wealthfare.** Government aid to the upper and middle classes. Often times this aid is disguised in the form of tax breaks (a deduction for interest on home mortgages) or subsidized services (higher education).

**Wertrational.** Weber's term that refers to value-oriented rationality. The value may come from an ethical, religious, philosophical or even holistic context. While the goal is not rationally "chosen," the means used to attain the goal are rational in character.

**Welfare state.** A government system which provides a range of human services for its citizens.

**White collar.** The growth of bureaucracy has caused the proliferation of white-collar occupations, which profoundly affects the values and perceptions of the people who hold these jobs. C. Wright Mills writes extensively about this class and the changes it has wrought for American society.

**White collar crime.** Criminal activities carried out by white-collar or professional workers in the course of their jobs.

**Will.** The first and "lower" part of Durkheim's conception of human nature, an id-like nature that is focused on the individual satisfaction of all wants and desires. Centered on the body, these egoistic drives and desires recognize no interests but that of the individual actor, pushing the individual to satisfy all wants and desires even at the expense of the will of others. The will is a "tyranny of passions imposed by nature"; it is the root of all human wickedness and evil, the source of immorality. The will seeks satisfaction of all wants and desires. It knows no boundaries. \

**Working class.** A social class of industrial societies broadly composed of people involved in manual occupation. The bulk of these jobs are unskilled, poorly paid and provide few benefits

or job security.

**World economy.** A single division of labor that spans multiple cultures, however unlike a world empire, a world economy does not have a unified political system. Capitalism, according to Immanuel Wallerstein, is a world economy.

**World-systems theory.** Immanuel Wallerstein's theoretical approach which analyzes societies in terms of their position within global economic systems. According to Wallerstein, the Capitalist World Economy now determines the relationships among nation states.

**X**

**Xenophobia.** The fear and/or hatred of foreigners.

**Z**

**Zero population growth (ZPG).** Population stability achieved when each woman has no more than two children.

**Zweckrational.** Rational action in relation to a goal. From Max Weber (the greatest sociologist who ever lived) and used extensively in his theory of social action. (See also Rationalization.)