

# Glossary of Sociology

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## 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.

**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.

**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION.** Government programs intended to assure minorities and women of equal hiring or admission opportunities.

**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 STRUCTURE.** The relative proportions of different age 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.

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

**AIR POLLUTION.** Refers to the contamination of the atmosphere by noxious substances (see also [DEPLETION](#), [ENVIRONMENT](#), and [INTENSIFICATION](#)).

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

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

**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.

**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.

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.

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

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**

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

CAPITALISTS. 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.

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

**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.

**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.

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

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

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

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

**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.

**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.

**COMMUNISM.** A set of egalitarian political and economic ideas associated with Karl Marx in which the means of production and distribution system would be owned by the community. "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.

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

**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

**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 take-overs of one firm by another.

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

**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.

**CONTRADICTION CLASS LOCATIONS.** Positions in the class structure which share 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](#)).

**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.

**CORRELATION.** 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.

**COUP D'ETAT.** An armed takeover of government by a small group of conspirators--often military officers( See also [REBELLION](#) and [REVOLUTION](#) ).

**CREATED ENVIRONMENT.** Human constructions such as buildings, roads, factories, and private homes.

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

**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 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. Your instructor uses a variant of this theory constantly (see also [SOCIOCULTURAL MATERIALISM](#)).

**CULTURAL PLURALISM.** The more or less peaceful coexistence of multiple subcultures within a given society.

**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 contribute to their poverty.

**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.

## ***D***

**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](#)).

**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.

**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](#)).

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

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

**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.

**DIVISION OF LABOR.** The specialization of work tasks or occupations. 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.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.** Violent behavior directed by one member of a household against another.

**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](#)).

**DUAL CAREER FAMILY.** Families in which both spouses are in the outside labor force.

**DUAL WELFARE SYSTEM.** Refers to disguised forms of welfare that go to the middle class and the rich (also called Wealthfare).

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

## ***E***

**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.

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

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

**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.

**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.

**ESTATE.** A form of stratification established by law.

**ETHNICITY.** An ethnic group is one of a common cultural identity, separating them from other groups around them.

**ETHNOCENTRISM.** The tendency to judge other cultures by the standards one's own culture.

**EUTROPHICATION.** Oxygen depletion of water due to overfertilization.

**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.

**EXOAMY.** 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.

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](#)).

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*

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.

FEMINISM. Advocacy of the social equality of the sexes.

FERTILITY. The average number of liveborn children produced by women of childbearing age in a particular society.

FETISHISM. Obsessive attachment or sexual desire directed toward an object.

**FIRST WORLD.** A term now rarely used that refers to the group of nation-states that possess advanced industrial economies (see also [SECOND WORLD](#) and [THIRD WORLD](#))

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

**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.

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

**GEMEINSCHAFT** According to Toennies, 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.

**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.

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

**GESELLSCHAFT.** According to Toennies, 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.

**GLOBALIZATION.** The development of extensive worldwide patterns of economic relationships between nations.

**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.

**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.

**GUERRILLA MOVEMENT.** A non-government military organization that engages in fighting or harassment.

## ***H***

**HEALTH MAINTENANCE ORGANIZATIONS (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](#)).

**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.

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

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

**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.

**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.

## *I*

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

**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.

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

**IMPERIALISM.** The establishing of colonial empires in which domination is both political and economic.

**INCOME.** Payment of wages usually earned from work or investments.

**INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY.** Democratic participation in the workplace.

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

**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.

**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 (probabalistically) determines primary and secondary group structure, which in turn determines the cultural and mental superstructure" (see also [MODE OF PRODUCTION](#), [MODE OF REPRODUCTION](#), [PRIMARY GROUP](#), [SECONDARY GROUP](#), [SUPERSTRUCTURE](#), and [FEEDBACK LOOP](#)).

**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 (see also [MODE OF PRODUCTION](#), and [MODE OF REPRODUCTION](#)).

**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.

**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.

**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.

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

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.

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.

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 is 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.

INTERNATIONAL DIVISION OF LABOR. The interdependence of countries which trade on global markets.

INTERGENERATIONAL MOBILITY. Movement up or down the social hierarchy from one generation to another.

IQ (INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT). 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.

**K**

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

## *L*

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.

LAISSEZ-FAIRE. One of the main doctrines of capitalism that asserts that government should not interfere with commerce.

LATENT FUNCTIONS. The unintended consequences of one part of a sociocultural system. 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. A written rule established by a political authority and backed by government.

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

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). Legitimation crisis in other institutions produce parallel responses on the part of administration.

LESBIANISM. Sexual activities and emotional attachments between women.

LIBERAL DEMOCRACY. Refers to those societies based on some form of democracy coupled with capitalism.

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.

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-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.

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. Thomas Malthus' 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, . . .). The debate rages on, there are neo-malthusians and anti-malthusians among us today!

MANAGED CARE. The reorganization of the health care delivery along corporate lines (see also [HEALTH MAINTENANCE ORGANIZATIONS](#)).

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.

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](#)).

**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.

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

**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](#)).

**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 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 and the social relations among the producers (based on the ownership of that technology).

**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.

**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.

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

**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 (often centered around the year 2000 and the second coming of Christ) heralding the arrival of a new epoch in human affairs.

**MINORITY GROUP (OR ETHNIC MINORITY).** 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.

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

**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, natality, mortality, nurturance of infants, contraception, abortion and infanticide (see also [MODE OF PRODUCTION](#), and [INFRASTRUCTURE](#)).

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

**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](#)).

**MONOTHEISM.** Belief in a single divine power.

**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).

**MULTILINEAR 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 COMPANIES.** 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](#)).

**NON-STATE ACTORS.** International agencies, such as the U.N. or the World Health Organization, which play a part in the world system.

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

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

## *O*

**OBJECTIVITY.** Objectivity means striving as far as possible to reduce or eliminate bias in the conduct of research.

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

**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.

**ORGANIZED CRIME.** Criminal activities carried out by organizations established as businesses.

**OZONE DEPLETION.** Theory that societies production of chloroflourocarbons 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***

**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 to large and complex for participatory democracy to be a feasible form of government.

**PASTORAL 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](#))

**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.

**PERIPHERY COUNTRIES.** The term refers to 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-PERIPHERY COUNTRIES](#)).

**PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT.** A new occupation that handles many routine medical problems, thereby allowing the physician to specialize in the more difficult cases.

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

**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.

**POLITICS.** Attempts to influence governmental activities.

**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.

**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.

**POSITIVISM.** A philosophical position according to which there are close ties between the social and natural sciences, which share a common logical framework.

**POSTINDUSTRIAL SOCIETY.** 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.

**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.

**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.

**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 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 which 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).

PROSTITUTION. Having sex for economic gain.

PSYCHOPATH. A personality type that denotes a lack of moral sense and concern for others.

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.

## **R**

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

RACISM. The attributing of characteristics of inferiority to a particular racial category. Racism is a specific form of prejudice focused on race.

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

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](#)).

REBELLION. Rebellions are aimed at removing particular rulers or regimes rather than bringing about significant structural changes in a society (See also [COUP D'ETAT](#) 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.

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.

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.

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

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

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.

REVOLUTION. A process of change involving the mobilizing of a mass social movement in order to radically transform the society (see also [COUP D'ETAT](#) and [REBELLION](#)).

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

RITES 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.

## 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 representative part of a population for purposes of drawing inferences from the analysis of the sample characteristics to the population as a whole.

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

**SAPIR-WHORF HYPOTHESIS.** The conjecture that people perceive their world through the framework of language.

**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.

**SECOND WORLD.** Formerly communist industrial societies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (see also [FIRST WORLD](#) and [THIRD WORLD](#)).

**SECONDARY GROUP.** A group of individuals who do not know each other on a personal level interacting in pursuit of a goal (see also [PRIMARY GROUP](#)).

**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](#)).

**SECULARIZATION.** A process of decline in the social influence of religion (see also [RATIONALIZATION](#)).

**SELF (or SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS).** 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.

**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](#)).

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

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

**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 by one individual towards another.

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

**SOCIAL CHANGE.** Alteration in social structures or culture over time.

**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 and was often used to justify existing inequalities.

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

**SOCIAL EVOLUTION.** Theories of social change which generally hold that human societies move from simple to complex forms of organization.

**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 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 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 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.

**SOCIALISM.** An economic system in which the means of production and distribution of goods and services are publically 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.** An ecological-evolutionary world view. A variant of cultural materialism, it is the world view developed and taught by your instructor, F. Elwell (see also [CULTURAL MATERIALISM](#)).

**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.

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

**SOLID WASTE.** Refers to the accumulation of noxious substances (see also [DEPLETION](#), [ENVIRONMENT](#), and [INTENSIFICATION](#)).

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

**STEP-FAMILIES (BLENDED FAMILIES).** Families in which at least one partner has children from a previous marriage living in the home.

**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.

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

**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.

**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.

**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.

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

**SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM.** 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.

## ***T***

**TABOO.** A sociocultural prohibition on some act, person, place, animal, or plant.

**TAYLORISM.** Also referred to as 'scientific management,' a set of ideas developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor involving simplifying and coordinating the actions of workers to produce maximum speed and "efficiency."

**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 to achieve political 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.** 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 population (over 70 percent) live in Third World countries (see also [FIRST WORLD](#) and [SECOND WORLD](#)).

**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.

**TOTEMS.** Symbol associated with a descent group as an identifying insignia.

**TRADING NETWORKS.** Patterns of economic exchange between companies or countries.

**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 CLASSES. 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 COMPANIES. See [MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES](#).

## *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.

UNILINEAR EVOLUTION. A largely discredited view of social evolution according to which all societies pass through the same stages of development.

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.

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.

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.

URBANIZATION. The increasing concentration of the human population into cities.

## *V*

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.

VARIABLE. 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 INTEREST. An expectation of private gain that often underlies the expressed interest in a public issue.

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

## **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 subsidised services (higher education).

WELFARE STATE. A government system which provides a range of human services for its citizens.

WHITE-COLLAR CRIME. Criminal activities carried out by white-collar or professional workers in the course of their jobs.

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 SYSTEM THEORY. Immanuel Wallerstein's theoretical approach which analyzes societies in terms of their position within global systems.

## **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](#), and [MENTAL SUPERSTRUCTURE](#))

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