**COLLEGE: CSS**

**COURSE: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY**

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#### **Chapter One: The Discipline of Sociology**

### 1.1. **Definition and Subject Matter of Sociology**

The term sociology comes from the Latin “Socius” that may variously mean society, association, togetherness or companionship and the Greek “logos”, literally means to speak about or word. However the term is generally understood as study or science. Thus, the etymological, literal definition of sociology is that it is the word or speaking about society. A simple definition of sociology here is that it is the study or the science of human **society**[[1]](#footnote-1).

Sociology emerged as a scientific discipline in early 19th century. The person who coined the word sociology was the French philosopher and thinker, Isidore Auguste Francois Marie Xavier Comte (1798-1857) who ‘freed’ sociology from social philosophy for the first time. He is regarded as one of the founding fathers of sociology.

Definitions of sociology are many. Sociologists instead of giving a formal definition of sociology have entered into an extended discussion of its nature. Many scholars define sociology differently. What common to them is that sociology as a systematic study of society deals with people and social groups including their behavior, roles and relationship with each other. As a science of society, sociology mainly focuses on the influence of social relationships up on people’s attitudes and behavior and on how societies are established and change.

**Sociology** is the science or study of the origin, development (growth), organization (structure), and functioning (activities) of human society by the operation of physical, vital, and psychical causes working together in a process of evolution; the science of the fundamental laws of social relationships, institutions, etc. It includes a body of classified knowledge relating to society and a number of principles and laws. It investigates causes and effects, discovers social forces, and formulates laws of control, or rules of action. It generally concerns itself with the social rules and processes that bind and separate people not only as individuals, but as members of associations, groups, and institutions, and includes the examination of the organization and development of human social life.

**Sociology** can also be defined as referring to the formal study of how humans behave in groups with a special focus on focus on how human groups originate, how they are organized, and how they relate to one another.It is the scientific study of human societies and human behavior in the many groups that make up a society.

**Sociology** is a branch of the science of human behavior that seeks to discover the causes and effects that arise in social relations among persons and in the inter-communication and interaction among persons and groups. It includes the study of the customs, structures, and institutions that emerge from interaction, of the forces that held together and weaken them, and of the effects that participation in groups and organizations have on the behavior and character of persons.

**Sociology** is concerned with the basic nature of human societies, locally and universally, and with the various processes that preserves continuity and produce change over time.

In a more comprehensive manner; sociology is a branch of social science that systematically studies the basic nature of human society, their interaction and relationships and the nature and complexity of the group, organizational and institutional make up of the people that are included within the whole society.

**The Subject Matter of Sociology**

There are three paths that are available for delineating the subject matter of sociology:

**1. The historical path**: where by we seek through study of the classical sociological writings to find the central traditional concerns and interests of sociology as an intellectual discipline. The historical path offers us the opportunity to benefit from the wisdom of the past. In brief, we ask, “What did the founding fathers say?”

2. **The empirical path**: where by we study current sociological work to discover those subjects to which the discipline gives most attention. In other words, we ask, “What are contemporary sociologists doing?”

3. **The analytical path:** where by we arbitrarily divide and delineate some larger subject matter and allocate it among different disciplines.

# The discipline of sociology studies social life, social change, and social causes and consequences of human behavior. The subject matter of sociology covers from the intimate family to the hostile mob; from organized criminalities to religious denominations; from race, gender and social class to the shared beliefs of a common culture; and from the sociology of work to the sociology of sports.

Sociology emphasizes more on the following areas of interest.

* Social interaction and its effect on the routine daily activities of human being and their behavior.
* The patterns of social interaction and the fundamental laws and principles that governs social relationship.
* The effect of the social world (social environment) on our behavior, world views, life style, personality attitudes, etc.
* How we create the social realities as they are.

**1.2. The Sociological Imagination/perspective and Its Benefits**

A basic reason for studying sociology is that by understanding the society in which we live, we can gain fuller insights in to ourselves. An American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) termed this component as **sociological** **imagination.**

Sociological imagination is an approach to the understanding of human behavior by placing it in its broader social context. According to the American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916-1962), the sociological imagination is an unusual type of creative thinking that sociologists rely on in attempting to understand social behavior. It is awareness or the ability to see the relationship between an individual and the wider society. The awareness allows all of us to comprehend the links between our immediate personal settings and the remote, impersonal social world that surrounds us and helps to shape us. It is also a means by which men know how to grasp what is going on in the world and to understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of intersections of biography and history within society"(Mills, 1959:7).

Sociological imagination is the ability to see our selves, concerns, problems and hopes as entwined within the larger social and historical context in which we live. That means our private experiences and personal difficulties are entwined with our society’s structural arrangements and the historical times in which we live. To find out why people do what they do, sociologists look at social location, where people are located in history and in a particular society. Sociologists focus on such characteristics of people, as their job, income, education, gender, and race. At the center of the sociological perspective lies the question “how people are influenced by society?” we usually think and speak of peoples’ behavior as though it is caused by their sex, or their race, or some other factor transmitted by their genes. The sociological perspective helps us to escape from this narrow personal view by exposing the broader social context that underlies human behavior. It helps us to see the links between what people do and the social setting that shapes their behavior.

The key element in the sociological imagination or perspective is the ability to view ones own society as an outsider, rather than from a limited perspective of personal experience and cultural biases. Thus, instead of simply accepting the fact that movie stars and rock stars are the royalty of our society, we could ask in a more critical sense, why this is the case. Generally, it is an empowering tool that allows us to look beyond a limited understanding of thing and viewing the personal and global happening in a new way and through a broader and multi-dimensional lenses than we normally use.

The sociologist Peter Berger (1963) definessociological imagination as:

**1. Seeing the General in the Particular**

Peter Berger (1963) characterized the sociological imagination as seeing the general in the particular. He meant that sociologists identify general patterns of social life in the behavior of particular individuals. While acknowledging that each individual is unique, in other words, sociologists recognize that society acts differently on various categories of people (say, children compared to adults, women versus men, the rich as opposed to the poor). We begin to think sociologically as we start to realize how the general categories in to which we happen to fall shape our particular life experiences.

**2. Seeing the Strange in the Familiar**

Especially at the beginning, the sociological imagination amounts to seeing the strange in the familiar. As Peter Berger (1963:34) says in his invitation to sociology, the first wisdom of sociology is this: ‘things are not what they seem.’ For instance, observing sociology requires giving up the familiar idea that human behavior is simply a matter of what people decide to do and accepting instead the initially strange notion that the society guides our thoughts and deeds.

**3. Individuality in Social Context**

The sociological imagination often challenges common sense by revealing that human behavior is not as individualistic as we may think. For most of us, daily living carries a heavy load of personal responsibility, so that we pat ourselves on the back when we enjoy success and kick ourselves when things go wrong. Proud of our individuality, even in painful times, we resist the idea that we act in socially patterned ways.

The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals … It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the self-and to see the relations between the two (C.W.M. 1959).

The sociological imagination helps us distinguish between personal troubles and social (public) issues*. Personal troubles* are private problems that affect individuals and the network of people with which they associate regularly. As a result, these problems must be solved by individuals within their immediate social settings. For example, one person being unemployed or running up a high credit card debt could be identified as a personal trouble. Where as *public issues* are problems that affect large numbers of people and often require solutions at the societal level. Wide spread unemployment and massive, nation wide consumer debt are examples of public issues.

The sociological imagination helps us place seemingly personal troubles, such as losing one’s job or over spending on credit cards, in to a larger social context, where we can distinguish whether and how personal troubles may be related to public issues.

**Benefits of Sociological Imagination**

Applying sociological perspective in our daily lives provides us the following most important benefits.

* The sociological imagination becomes a way of thinking a form of consciousness that challenges familiar understanding of our selves and others; so that we can critically assess the validity/ truth of commonly held assumptions. Putting it in other way, we start to realize that certain ideas we have taken for granted may not be entirely true. That is certain ideas which are considered as a normal and natural happens to be far from the exact and appropriate reality that should have been to be. Thus, a sociological thinking encourages us to whether these beliefs are critically true and to the extent that they are not and still why they are so widely held.
* *The sociological imagination enables us to recognize both the opportunities and the constraints that characterize our lives*. To think sociologically is to recognize that, for better or worse, our society operates in a particular and deliberate way. This recognition is important because no one is able to live with complete disregard for society’s rules. Sociology helps us to understand what we are likely and unlikely to accomplish for our selves and how the goals we adopt can be realized more effectively.
* *The sociological imagination empowers us to be active participants in our society.* With out an awareness of how society operates, we are likely to accept the status quo too. The greater our understanding of the operation of society, however, the more we can take an active part in shaping social life.
* *The sociological imagination helps us to recognize human diversity and human* *suffering and to cope-up or confront the challenge of living in a diverse world.* Sociological thinking high lights our world remarkable variety of human social patterns like people every where, we tend to define our own way of life as proper and natural. But, the more we think sociologically, the more we appreciate that today’s world presents as with a countless competing versions of correct behavior.

##### 1.3. The Scope of Sociology

Sociology is the study of human social life. Because human social life is so expansive, sociology has many sub-sections of study, ranging from the analysis of conversations to the development of theories to try to understand how the entire world works. The sociological field of interest ranges from the analysis of short contacts between anonymous individuals on the street to the study of global social processes. The discipline covers an extremely broad range that includes every aspect of human social conditions; all types of human relationships and forms of social behavior.

##### 1.3.1. Basic and Applied Sociology

***Basic (pure) sociology*** is concerned with increasing theoretical understanding of society or social phenomena – knowledge on its own sake. It refers to research carried on to expand man’s frontiers of knowledge irrespective of the immediate application/ of utility of that knowledge, or the research out put.

***Applied Sociology*** on the other hand, is concerned with applying sociological knowledge or methods to solve practical problems. It refers to a research carried on in an effort to make practical application of scientific knowledge, to know and improve some social phenomena. Pure and applied sociology are not mutually exclusive, but complement to each other.

##### 1.3.2. Macro and Micro sociology

There are generally two levels of analysis in sociology, which may also be regarded as branches of sociology: **micro-sociology and macro-sociology**.

**Micro-sociology** concentrates on the study of small groups and the patterns and processes of human social relations, i.e. face to face interactions between humans. It is interested in small scale aspects of society or social phenomena. It focuses on social interaction; analyzing interpersonal relationships, and on what people do and how they behave when they interact. It also involves the detailed study of what people say, do and think moment by moment as they go about their daily lives.

Where as **macro-sociology** concentrate on large groups, events or whole societies. Macro sociologists attempt to explain the fundamental patterns and processes of large-scale social relations. It focuses on the broad features of society to examine the large scale social phenomena that determine how social groups are organized and positioned within the social structure. It also emphasizes upon large scale and long term social processes, including the state, class, the family, the economy, culture, and society.

Clearly, the micro-sociological and macro-sociological levels are not independent of one another. Large structures at the macro level are makeup of repetitive patterns of interaction at the micro level. In turn, what people think, say and do at the micro-level is influenced and shaped by large structures at the macro level.

Within these general frameworks, sociology may be divided in to specific sub-fields on the basis of certain criteria. The most important fields of sociology can be grouped in to six areas.

* **The Field of Social Organization**: focuses on institutions and groups, their formation and change, manner of functioning, relation to individuals and to each other.
* **Social Control and Theory of Social Order**: focuses on the ways in which members of a society influence one another so as to maintain social order.
* **Social Change**: focuses on the way society and institutions change over time through technical inventions, cultural diffusions and cultural conflict, and social movements, among others.
* **Social Processes**: focuses on the pattern in which social change takes place, and the modes of such processes.
* **Social Groups**: focuses on how social groups are formed, structured, and how they function and change.
* **Social Problems**: focuses on the social conditions which cause difficulties for a large number of persons and which the society is seeking to eliminate such as crime, poverty, prostitution, child abuse, war, ethnic conflict, marital conflict, etc.

Currently, sociology has got quite several specific sub divisions or fields of specialization in it including criminology, demography, human ecology, political sociology, medical sociology, sociology of development, social psychology, sociology of science and technology, sociology of law, urban and rural sociology, economic sociology, industrial sociology, etc.

##### 1.4. Sociology and Its Relation with Other Disciplines

As one of the social sciences, sociology shares the basic common element that all the social sciences attempt to understand human behavior.

In so doing, the social science may use each other’s methodology to understand human behavior. They differ from one another, however in their unique approach, the concepts they use, the questions they pose, and the solutions they reach.

For instance, if the social problem to be investigated is the problem of low productivity, the economist may suggest the improvement of the machinery, where as the sociologist may suggest the creation of good working conditions as solutions to the problem.

##### 1. Sociology and Anthropology

Anthropology is the closest to sociology of all other social sciences, both in theoretical orientation and method since the two disciplines are very much related. Sometimes sociology is considered as the major field while anthropology being its subdivision and vice versa. Yet, they do exhibit differences.

**Similarity**- both fields are concerned with human behavior and socio-cultural life. Except physical anthropology and Archeology which are not associated with sociology, cultural/social anthropology is very much related to sociology.

**Differences**

**Target Society**-Anthropology is highly concerned with primitive societies where as sociology is very much interested in modern societies. This does not, however, mean that each is confined only to their traditional subject matters. For instance, there is urban anthropology. This happened for the simple reason that the demarcations between rural and urban become blurred. Rural sociology has become one of the main branches of sociology.

**Scale of Coverage**- sociology often studies communities by taking a [particular problem of that community) where as anthropology studies smaller communities but from holistic prospective (anthropology is concerned with all social life including the social, political economic, etc affairs). Sociology is wider in scale / coverage while anthropology deeper but smaller in scale.

**Method of Investigation**:-In most cases, sociology uses the survey method (questionnaire, interviews) where as anthropology uses participant observation to study socio-cultural phenomena.

Emphasis in the usage of quantitative and qualitative methods- sociology emphasizes in the usage of quantitative where as anthropology emphasizes the use of qualitative methods because participant observation is quite difficult to quantity.

##### 2. Sociology and Economics

Both sociology and economics are interested in the economic problems in society (issues of poverty and income distribution).

Both of them use the application of quantitative models in analyzing and interpreting research findings. Both study the system and subsystem of the economy.

Economics is the study of production, distribution and consumption of goods and services in society. Economists generally focus in the study of pure economic variables (demand, supply, monetary flow, price, input – out put ratios, etc.). However, sociologists focus on the social consequences of production and distribution.

Sociology on the other hand focuses on social factors or issues that either promote or hinder economic activities or development. The factors could be the relationships existing between management and worker in a certain economic activity or the social status of workers, etc. Moreover, sociology studies the social factors that influence economic growth like employer-employee relationship, the role of other social institutions (e.g. the family) on production.

**3. Sociology and Political Science**

**Similarity**- both disciplines study the behavior of people in group; how people govern one another.

**Differences**-political science is the study of state (government): various forms and structures where as sociology is primarily concerned with the study / or the science of society as a whole. Sociology especially focuses on the impact of various forms of government on people’s lives.

Political science focuses primarily on formal political institutions such as systems of the administration and political ideas and theories

where as sociology incorporates in its studies both formal and informal institutions like tribe and ethnic groups.

Political sociology stresses or emphasizes on the study of political behavior which includes voting behavior, political party membership, popular participation in decision making and the like.

###### 4. Sociology and Psychology

Psychology looks into the cause of

* behavior,
* emotions,
* motivations,
* perceptions, and personalities of individuals.

Psychology and sociology meet in social psychology. Like psychologists, sociologists are also concerned with how people adjust to the difficulties of life.

Social psychology: - studies individual personalities as changed by the social study action.

Sociology – has no primary interest in the individual, or in his personality, or in his individual behavior but concerned with the nature of the group to which individuals belong and the nature of society on which they live.

In short, psychology studies the individual, social psychology the individual in the social group, and sociology the groups themselves and the largest social structure in which both the individual and the group process occurs.

5. **Sociology and History**

History is concerned with the description of the record of past events, the when and where of events as they happened in chronological order.

Sociology, on the other hand, though to all intents and purposes uses past records, is primarily interested in those events in so far as they exemplify social processes resulting from the interaction and association of people in various situations under various conditions i.e. is not interested in the events themselves but rather in the patterns they exhibit, for instance, social events such as revolutions, war, careers and lives of famous men.

The historian describe events as they were by themselves, the sociologist investigates its results. E.g. sociology studies not careers but leadership in general and the social phenomena that helped the career holder to occupy that position.

The social phenomena to be studied should be such that it can be universal applicable to different societies in different parts of the world.

In summary, history and sociology may be distinguished by the observation that the former is a particular discipline, the latter a generalizing one. History is descriptive where as sociology an analytical one. History investigates the unique and the individual, sociology the regular and the recurrent.

In conclusion, unlike political scientists and economists, sociologists do not concentrate on a single social institution. Unlike anthropologists, sociologists primarily focus on industrialized societies. And unlike psychologists, sociologists stress on factors external to the individual to determine what influences.

**Chapter Two**

**The Development of Sociology: A Historical Review**

**2**.1 Early Origins and Development of Sociology;

What sociology is today and what it will be tomorrow is dependent in large measure on what it once was. The emergence of sociology is dated back to the age of human beings, usually from the beginning of the development of stable civilization.

Sociology and other social sciences emerged from a common tradition of the reflection of social phenomena, interest in the nature of human social behavior and society has probably always existed; however, most people in most past societies considered their culture as a fixed and God-given entity. But, latter on , the sociological issues, questions and problems had been raised and discussed by the forerunners, starting from the

* ancient Greek and
* Roman philosopher’s and
* Hebrew’s prophet’s times.

Through out history, social philosophers and religious authorities have made countless observations about human behavior, but the first systematic analysis of society is found in the philosophers of early Greek philosophers such as Plato (C. 427-347 B.C.E.) and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.). For example, Aristotle was concerned with developing a system of knowledge and he engaged in theorizing and empirical analysis of data collected from people in Greek cities regarding their views about social life when ruled by kings or aristocracies or when living in democracies. However, early thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle provided thoughts on what they believed society ought to be like, rather than describing how society actually was.

Following this trend of development the more scientific explanations were started to be employed by different scholars especially in western Europe ( France and Germany and Great Britain) and it greatly advanced based on the efforts of modern social scientists especially that of the united states elites. Social thought began to change rapidly in the seventeenth century ( 17th ) with the scientific revolution. Like their predecessors in the natural sciences, social thinkers sought to develop a scientific understanding of social life, believing that their work might enable people to reach their full potential. The contributions of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) to modern science, including the discovery of the laws of gravity and motion and the development of calculus, inspired social thinkers to believe that similar advances could be made in systematically studying human behavior. More over his belief that the universe is an orderly, self-regulating system strongly influenced the thinking of early social theorists.

Although through all ages people have known of society, sociology is relatively a new academic discipline. It was only in 1838 that the French philosopher and thinker August Comte (1798-1857) coined the term sociology to mean reasoning about the social to describe a new way of looking at society.

2.1.1 Factors for the Development of Sociology

Sociology arose as an independent science, not because a new object of study had appeared, but, because problem could not be tackled by the traditional means and within the bounds of the existing system of knowledge. Sociology is the offspring of the 18th and the 19th century philosophy, political economy and cultural history and has been viewed as a reaction against the frequently non-scientific approaches of classical philosophy to ***social phenomenon[[2]](#footnote-2)****.*

The development of sociology and its current concerns have to be understood in the context of changes that have created the modern world. The social world is changing. Some argue it is growing; others say it is shrinking. The important point to grasp is: society does not remain unchanged over time. We live in an age of massive social transformation. In a space of only something like two centuries a set of social changes has occurred. These changes that have originated in the Western Europe now are global in their impact. They have totally dissolved the forms of social organization in which human kind has lived for thousands of years of its previous history. Their core is found in the social currents of the 18th and 19th century Europe (such as political revolutions, industrial revolution and the associated problems). As will be discussed in more detail below, sociology has its roots in significant societal changes (e.g., the industrial revolution, the creation of empires, and the enlightment of scientific reasoning) early practitioners developed the discipline as an attempt to understand societal changes. When society crumbled beneath their feet, the social scientists of the period started focusing on the current society.

Thus, Sociology emerged in the early 19th century in response to the challenges of modernity. Increasing mobility and technological advances resulted in the increasing exposure of people to cultures and societies different from their own. The impact of this exposure was varied, but for some people included the break down of traditional norms and customs and warranted a revised understanding of how the world works. Sociologists responded to these changes by trying to understand what holds social groups together and also explore possible solutions to the breakdown of social solidarity. Some early sociological theorists (e.g., Marx, Weber, and Durkheim) were disturbed by the social processes they believed to be driving the change, such as the quest for solidarity, the attainment of social goals and the rise and fall of classes, to name a few examples.

All intellectual fields are profoundly shaped by their social settings but in most cases the reverse is also true. This is particularly true of sociology which is not only derived from the social setting but also takes them as its subject matter. As a result, we will focus briefly on a few of the most important social conditions that were of having the utmost significance in the development of sociology.

In a general speaking, we can divide the factors for the emergence of sociology in to two as: social forces and intellectual forces.

2.1.2 Social Forces and the Rise of Sociology

**1.** **Political Revolutions**

Among the political revolutions, the 1789 French revolution was the most vital one out of the 1800s and 1900s political revolutions. It swept aside the feudal system and brought up a structural change within the existing system. In the French revolution for the first time in history there took place the over all dissolution of social order by the movement guided by secular ideas. And the most important concern of all thinkers of that time was to restore order and stability. The American civil war also brings the same outcome.

The impact of these political revolutions on many societies was enormous, and many positive changes were resulted. However, there were also negative consequences which attracted the attention of the then thinkers and forced them to spend their ample time in creating and developing different social remedies to the various social pathologies of the time.

**2. The Industrial Revolution and the Rise of Capitalism**

It is usually traced to the Great Britain in the late 18th century and spread in the 19th century through out the Western Europe and the USA. The industrial revolution is sometimes presented as a set of technical innovations. But these technical innovations are only part of the much broader sets of social and economic changes. People began to migrate from the surrounding areas to near by urban centers due to the employment opportunities provided by industries. Industrialization and urbanization were at the heart of the transformations that have irreversibly dissolved most traditional forms of society. This resulted in different social problems like poverty, unemployment, crime, pollution, prostitution, inadequate housing and other social hazards. These were the kinds of social crisis that stimulated the development of sociology.

**3. The Growth of Physical Sciences**

The 19th century was a period of scientific revolution. Scientific method- objective systematic observations to test theories used in chemistry and physics had began to transform the world. Given these successes, it seemed logical to apply this method to the question being raised about the social world. Thinkers of the day started using the method of natural sciences. Sociologists like Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and George Simmel were been pre-occupied with the idea of modeling sociology after the success of natural science disciplines.

**4. Imperialism**

At the end of 19th c, western expansion resulted in the establishment of new world systems. New information and knowledge about the non- western societies were collected by westerners. The discovery of a large number of societies which are often called as exotic societies and culture usually attracted the attention of many sociologists. The diffusion of new information and knowledge to different societies and their culture served as an input to the sociological and anthropological theories. Just at the time when the industrial revolution and imperialism moved people began to question the fundamental aspects of their social worlds.

**5. Secularization**

The social changes brought by political revolutions, industrial revolutions, and urbanization had a profound effect on religiosity. As the traditional order was challenged, religion lost much of its force as the unfailing source of answer to life’s questions.

There are various social currents, however, that put momentum in the development of sociology such as the rise of socialism, feminism, and the likes.

2.1.3. Intellectual Forces and the Rise of Sociology

In the real happenings, intellectual forces can not be separated from social forces, that is, the intellectual movements were intimately related to the social movements, and in many cases the intellectual forces served as a fuel to the concrete accomplishment of plenty social changes that taken place in Europe and the rest of the world. Among these forces, enlightment and counter enlightment movement had been among the crucial areas of thoughts that contribute a lot for the growth of sociology; though, there are also other movements which have made it a comprehensive social discipline. The basic stand/ belief of enlightment are man can make the universe/ world through empirical research and rational reasoning. They believe that society is the result of the rational calculation of individuals.

In short, the main reasons for the emergence of sociology, as the scientific study of human behavior are both the social and intellectual forces, and the misery and violence brought about by them that necessitate scientific investigation.

**2.2. Founders of Sociology**

As it has already been noted, philosophers and religious authorities of ancient and medieval societies made countless observations about human behavior. Their observations were not tested or verified scientifically; nevertheless, they often became the foundation of moral codes.

In the 19th century European theorists including August Comte made pioneering contributions to the development of a science of human behavior, sociology.

**2.2.1. Auguste Comte (1798-1857)**

Comte was a French social theorist who lived in a period when France was at a great chaos as a result of the French Revolution. He was the man who coined the word “sociology” from Latin ‘Socius’ and the Greek “Logos” to apply to the science of human behavior.

All the sciences, according to him, share an over-all framework of logic and method; all seek to uncover universal laws governing the particular phenomena with which they deal. If we discover the laws governing the human society, Comte believe, we will be able to shape our own destiny in much the same way as science has allowed us to control events in the natural world.

Positive Philosophy is his well-known book and in this book and other of his writings he showed the possibility of the scientific study of society. The philosophy abandoned speculation about the nature of reality in favor of scientific investigation. He advocated positivism in that social phenomena could be studied scientifically and proposed methods of studying it through observation, experimentation, and comparative- historical analysis. This materialistic approach helped to lay the foundations for modern sociology. By using positive (scientific) methods, Comte believed, it is possible to study and provide solutions to existing social problems.

The collective facts of history and society are subject to laws and not to individual volition (free will), according to Comte.

Comte treated society as divided in to two:

* **social statics** and
* **social dynamics**.

**1.Social statics** refers to the investigations of the laws of action and reaction of the different parts of the social system. The parts of the society can’t be studied separately as if they had an independent existence. In stead, they must be seen as a mutual relation forming a whole that compels us to treat them in a combination.

If social statics is the study of how the parts of the society are interrelated,

2.**social dynamics** was the focus on the whole societies as the unit of analysis and to show how societies develop and change through time.

Comte was convinced that all societies moved through certain fixed stages of development, and they progressed to an ever-increasing perfection. There are three stages of development in laws of human thought:

1. **theological,**
2. **metaphysical, and**
3. **the positive**. These stages characterize the development of both knowledge and society.

**The Three Stages in the Laws of Human Development**

1. **Theological Stage**: no critical investigation, both philosophical speculation and scientific explanation were absent but dominated by religious interpretation of occurrences.
2. **Metaphysical Stage**: based on partial religions and partial speculative philosophy, abstract reasoning.
3. **Positive or the Scientific Stage**: all social phenomena are investigated in a scientific manner through observations, experiment and comparison.

He proposed that society moves in a **unilineal**[[3]](#footnote-3) manner to wards perfection.

Despite his enormous contribution to the development of sociology as a systematic scientific field of study, his basic ideas suffer from some drawbacks; such as

1. He ignored the coexistence the three stages of social development within a given social system.
2. He was naive that there could be a multidirectional development in a society by advocating only unilinear development.
3. He ignored the existence of both regression as well as progression in change.

**2.2.2 Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)**

Herbert Spencer was an exponent of *organistic view of society* and a proponent of *evolutionarism*.

The identification of areas of study in sociology such as social control (deviance) politics, religion, the family, stratification, associations, and communities are one of the greatest contributions of Spencer.

Spencer believed that society operates according to certain fixed laws. He became convinced that societies evolve from lower or barbarian to higher or civilized forms. As generations pass, he said, the most capable and intelligent or the fittest members of the society survive, while the less capable die out. Therefore, over time societies become steadily improved. Spencer called this principle “*the survival of the fittest”.* Although Spencer coined this phrase, it is usually attributed to his contemporary Charles Darwin, who proposed that living organisms evolve over time as they survive the conditions of their environment. Because of their similarities Spencer’s view of the evolution of societies became known as **Social Darwinism.**

Spencer saw society as an organism, where in the various social institutions being its different organs.

In short, Spencer’s idea can be divided in to:

1) **The Idea of Social Evolution**- society moves from simple to more differentiated or complex forms or from homogeneity to heterogeneity. In his book, “*The principle of Sociology*”, he used the organic analogy to explain social organization and social evolution.

2) **The Organic View of Society**- Spencer conceived that the parts of a society are interdependent and interrelated which implies that the existence of one depends on the existence of another and change in one part implies change in another part, the idea he shared with Comte. But unlike Comte, who tried to prescribe laws to bring about change in the existing society, Spencer opposed to prescription.

His opposition to interference to bring about change made his approach very appealing and popular to many influential people in England and the United States who had vested interest in the status quo and were suspicious of social thinkers who endorsed change.

He said that through evolution society moves from structural differentiation to functional differentiation, from simplicity to complexity, from uniformity (homogeneity) to specialization (heterogeneity).

Types of societies as viewed by Spencer:

1. **The Militant** – the lowest stage characterized by small bands of people; homogeneous, undifferentiated, dominated by military coercion and rigid rules; compulsory cooperation. In some of such societies chiefs or kings claim to have obtained their authority from divine power (the supernatural). Religion justifies the exercise of military power.
2. **The Industrial Stage (Society**):- this is the opposite of the militant stage. Status is replaced by contract. No more rigidity but flexibility; no more despotic but democratic. The dominant sentiment was not patriotism but individualism and development. The greater part of social activity is toward peace, and production for the betterment of life. Human relationship is free, responsive and contractual which demands not compulsory but voluntary cooperation.
3. **The Ethical Society**:-the final and perfect stage of societal development. In such type of society, ethics s governs; individuals are selfish but responsive to others. Internal moral restraints replace external moral restraints. Time would come when no need of courts, police and the like to govern society. In fact this stage is more of an ideal type.

**2.2 3. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)**

Durkheim was a French sociologist who, like Comte and Spencer, identified certain basic areas of social investigation such as, religion, politics, the family, law, etc.

He took society as the major unit of analysis, and believed, like Spencer, that studying the parts of society independently of each other would result but incomplete facts about society. He viewed society as organic, or he had the organic view. Social groups are the basic unit of analysis and the action of individuals or their psychological make up are the reflections of group behavior. Durkheim believed that individuals are products of complex social forces and can not be considered out side of the context of the society in which they live.

Durkheim’s sociology revolved around the following areas.

* Social facts and social currents
* The division of labor in society/1893)
* Suicide (1897)
* The Rules of Sociological method (1895)
* Elementary forms of Religious life (1912).

Like Spencer and Comte, Durkheim believed in the stages in the development of society and he expressed this view in his book “*The division of labor in Society*.” In his “*Rules of sociological method”* he wrote how sociological investigation could be conducted. In “suicide” he showed how the behavior of individuals was influenced by social facts outside of the individual in question. In “*Elementary forms of Religious life*”, Durkheim showed that the origin of religion is social, not natural, and had a social function, how it affects society. Durkheim was the founding father of *functionalism school of thought (perspective*) in sociology. Functionalism is a perspective that emphasizes the way the parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability. Using functionalism as a perspective Durkheim focused on the role of religion in reinforcing feelings of solidarity and unity within group. Though religion and science seem incompatible, many sociologists took religion as their area of interest.

**Social Facts and Social Currents**

According to Durkheim a social fact is any manner of acting, fixed or not, capable to exert external influence on the individual or which is general through out society and have existence independent of its individual manifestations. In short, social facts are ways of acting thinking and feeling that are characteristics of a group in society. To Durkheim, thus social facts include such phenomena as group laws; customs, belief system, rules of conduct and institutions of society-the social facts of the social world.

Durkheim defined sociology as the study of social facts. He argued that sociologists should confine themselves to the study of social facts and that social facts should be considered as things (as objects and events in the natural world).

Social facts act upon the behavior of the individual independent of his/her free will. They exist over and above individual consciousness. Members of society are directed by collective beliefs, values and laws which have an existence of their own. The social facts should be studied using biological theories or the psychological condition of a single individual but through the sociological principles governing the society or group as a whole.

**Solidarity and the Division of Labor in Society**

Durkheim invented the concept of social solidarity to explain the then existing social problems he witnessed as he conducted most of his research where there was much disturbance in France. He used the concept to explain:

* What links people in society?
* Historical development of society from one stage to another

Hence the main direction in the evolution of society is seen in growing division of labor and differentiation of tasks, duties, occupational roles as society moves forward. This shows that Durkheim was an evolutionist in a certain sense.

**Social bond**: Social facts that help society live together. Based on the quality social bond society is divided in to two” 1) Mechanical solidarity 2) Organic solidarity.

**1) Mechanical Solidarity**

-Characteristics of pre-industrial society

-Based on similarity of interest and experience.

-No division of labor and differentiation of tasks.

-The social institutions perform almost all societal functions.

-There were shared values, norms and beliefs all of which help to hold society together.

**Traits of mechanical solidarity**

1. Main social bond – similar, uniform moral and religious consensus.
2. Position of an Individual-collectivism, focus on group or community.
3. Economic structure- Isolation, self sufficient, limited exchange with out side group
4. Social control- Repressive laws punish offenders (criminal laws)

**2) Organic Solidarity**

**-** Characteristics of industrial society

**-** Based on specialization and differentiation of tasks

- There is division of labor

- People focus of attention is multiple.

**Traits of organic solidarity**

Main social bond- Highly differentiated tasks, complementary and mutual dependence.

Position of the Individual – trying to achieve individual interest

Economic structure- Division of labor mutual dependence of groups and exchange

Social control – Restitutive laws, safe guarding contract (civil laws).

It is the characteristics of industrial societies.

**Suicide**

Durkheim selected certain social facts such as suicide as his area of investigation. He refused to accept the belief that suicide was caused by cosmic forces or by inherited tendencies. It could be explained instead, in terms of a variety of social facts affecting individuals.

Suicide is the act of taking one’s own life intentionally and voluntarily. The likelihood of suicide was related to the degree of the integration /involvement of within groups or society. More specifically, suicide is more common or more likely to occur in the extreme circumstances in which individuals lacked adequate integration within groups or society or in instances where individuals were too highly integrated into a group or society within these two type polarities there were various conditions for suicide.

Degree of regulation also determines the rate of suicide as well. Suicide could occur when there was:

1) Excessive/ oppressive regulation

2) Low /lack of regulation.

At low/lack of regulation there is no norm that group or society, the individual becomes puzzled either to adjust him to the newly arriving norms or to commit suicide.

**Types of suicide**

**1) Egoistic Suicide:** - a form of self centered suicide which is a result of the individual’s lack of full participation together with emotional evolvement that participation entails. It’s a result of low degree of integration. The individual feels isolation, deprivation and detachment. For Durkheim, this kind of state of mind exists among Protestants than Catholics, among unmarried as opposed to the married, divorced than undivorced.

**2. Anomic Suicide-** Anomie is a disjunction between means and ends or a breakdown of societal norms – a state of normlessness. It is the failure to internalize the norms of the society or inability to adjust to changing norms or tension resulted from the conflicting norms themselves. In ability to adjust and choose to commit suicide occurs during economic crisis on when a there occurs a change in government. It is a result of low degree of regulation of norms of the behavior of individuals. It is common in industrial societies.

**3. Altruistic Suicide –** is the result of an extreme integration into a group/society to the point where group norms and goals as the only thing that matter. Social norms or group expectations are strong enough to force the individual to commit suicide. Altruistic suicide is common in “traditional” societies where values, norms, customs and expectations of the group have an extreme influence upon the group have an extreme influence upon the individual

E.g. Chinese society, killing oneself is preferred t surrendering to an enemy. In some Indian societies a widow must accompany her deceased husband by killing herself at his funeral.

**4. Fatalistic Suicide**- occurs when there is excessive /oppressive regulation, the opposite of anomic cases. When the regulation is so oppressive individuals who see nothing bright in their future or when they become pessimistic become hopeless, helpless and commit suicide e.g. Suicide by slaves in bondage.

**2.2.4. Karl Marx (1818-1883)**

# Karl Marx had immense influence on sociology and the other social sciences. His theories become increasingly influential during the 1970s. He was an immensely influential German philosopher, political economist and revolutionary. Marx’s theories combine ideas derived from philosophy, history and the social sciences. While Marx addressed a wide range of issues, he is most famous for his analysis of history in terms of class struggles, summed up in the opening line of the introduction to the communist manifesto: “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” He is better known outside the social sciences for his writing about communism. Marx believed that the down fall of capitalism was inevitable, and that it would be replaced by communism. He said that the working class will defeat the ownership class and result in a utopia where government will wither away to nothing and the principle of economics will be based on "For each according to his needs and from each according to his ability."

His contribution to thinking in sociology is mainly in a perspective called "*Conflict Theory*" in which social organization and change is based upon conflicts built into society. The central idea in Marx view is the belief that society should not just be studied but also be changed, because the status quo (the existing state of society) was resulting in the oppression of most of the population by a small group of wealthy people. In sharp contrast to Durkheim’s focus on the stability of society, Marx stressed that history is a continuous clash between conflicting ideas and forces. He believed that conflict especially class conflict is necessary in order to produce social change and better society. Marx concluded that the capitalist economic system was responsible for the overwhelming poverty that occurred during the industrial revolution. He viewed private property and capitalism as the major cause of poverty and inequality that characterized the 19th century. Unlike Spencer, he was unwilling to see them as natural products of the evolution of society, viewing them instead as social products.

In the Marxian framework, class conflict is the struggle between the capitalist and the working class. The major source of conflict in the industrial age was between: the workers, whom he called the *Proletariat* (from Latin) who survived by selling their labor, *and* the owners of factories, whom he called the *Bourgeoisie* (a word having the same origin as burgh and burger) who needed the labor to make a profit. The exploited class favored and would benefit from change towards more equality, while the exploiting class resisted such change. From Marx’s view point, the capitalist class controls and exploits the masses of struggling workers by paying less than the value of their labor. This exploitation results in workers’ ***alienation***-a feeling of powerlessness and estrangement from other people and from oneself. Marx predicted that the working class would become aware of its exploitation, overthrow the capitalists and establish ***a free and classless society***.

Many of Marx’s ideas are of more interest to political scientists and economists than to sociologists, but Marx left two enduring legacies to sociology: the theories of economic determinism and dialectic.

1. **Economic Determinism**: Marx began his analysis of society by assuming that the most basic task any human society is providing food and shelter to sustain it self. Marx argued that the ways in which society does this-its modes of production-provide the foundations on which all other social and political arrangements are built. Thus, he believed that family, law and religion all develop after and adapt to the economic structure; in short, they are determined by economic relationships. He called this idea ***economic determinism.***

According to the principle of economic determinism, the nature of a society is based on the society’s economy. A society’s economic system determines the society’s legal system and political structure.

1. **The Dialectic**: Marx’s other contribution was the dialectic, the philosophy that views change as a product of contradictions and conflicts between parts of society. This view of change was directly counter to the then-prevailing view that change came about through revolution. Many 19th century scholars applied Darwin’s theories of biological evolution to society: they believed that social change was the result of a natural process of adoption. Marx, however, argued that the basis of change was conflict, not adoption. He argued that conflicts between opposing economic interests lead to change.

Marx’s thinking on conflict was influenced by the German philosopher George Hegel, who suggested that for every idea (thesis), a counter idea (antithesis) develops in conflict with it or to challenge it. Over time, as a result of conflict between the two ideas, a new idea (synthesis) is produced. This process of change is called ***the dialectic***. This notion was based on the idea that everything had within itself the seeds of its own destruction, but that a new form would rise from the ashes of the resulting destruction. Many people see this as having much resemblance to classical (Greek and Latin) myths about the Phoenix Bird (who flies too close to the sun and burns)

Marx’s contribution was to apply this model of ideological change to change in economic and material systems. Within capitalism, Marx suggested, the capitalist class was the thesis and the working class was the antithesis. He predicted that conflicts between them would lead to a new synthesis, a new economic system that would be socialism. In deed in this role as a social activist, Marx hoped to encourage conflict and ignite revolution that would bring about the desired change.

# Marx took this idea of the dialectic and applied it to society, saying that the origins of change are all materialistic, not based on ideas. In our terms that means they belong to the cultural dimensions of technology and economy. As technology of people developed from gatherer/hunters, to agriculture (*horticulture/herding*) to the Industrial revolution, changes in the technology led to changes in social organization and to changes in beliefs and values. This is called *dialectical materialism*. It is ironical that he predicted revolution to take place in industrialized societies, but the only communist revolutions in history took place in large agrarian feudal societies (as Russia and China were). An important concept of the conflict approach, after seeing social dynamics as a product of competition over resources, is that those in powers (with wealth) had vested interests to perpetuate the system which put them at the top of the social heap. The idea has been applied from micro to macro levels, such as from family dynamics to national social organization. The conflict approach, derived from his writings, has been borrowed and adapted to a large number of topics in sociology.

**2.2.5. Max Weber (1864-1920)**

Max Weber was a German scholar who made numerous contributions to sociological thought.

He believed that sociology should be “*value free*” – that political ideas should not enter into social research. He was an influential theorist in the areas of social class, religion, bureaucracy, stratification, political organizations, division of labor, the relationship of religious activities to economic.

In one of his influential writings, “The protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism,” he explained protestant religion that came out from the Catholic religion helped for the early development of capitalism in Western Europe. He explored that Protestantism led to investment rather than consumption of profits which in turn encouraged the growth of capitalism.

This is in opposition to the Marxian idea that social and cultural change is an out growth of changes in the economic system.

The connections between early protestant doctrine and the psychology of entrepreneurship may be summarized:

**1. Self Discipline and Work**: The Calvinist doctrine of predestination held that men were either condemned by God to everlasting hell or chosen to “live in the house of Lord for ever.” Because believers in this doctrine were uncertain whether they were among the elect, they were anxious and insecure. Strict self discipline, rejection of worldly pleasures, and righteous success in this world through hard work came to be regarded as signs of grace, evidence that one was in God’s favor. Relief from religious anxiety was this sought. In disciplined effort. To work was to play, and work was regarded as a personal mission or calling.

2. **Initiative and Acquisition**: Hard work and self discipline won economic advantage over competitors and led to the acquisition of wealth since the Calvinists were supposed to avoid worldly pleasure, be thrifty, and abhor waste, they could not use wealth in traditional ways. They could, however, use their capital to expand, their business activities. Individual initiative was rewarded, since success in work was interpreted as a sign pf God’s blessing. Further more, continuous work in one’s calling alleviated constant anxiety about salvation. No matter what a Calvinist accomplished in this world, he had no guarantee of salvation. Therefore he could not relax.

**3. Individualism and competition**: Calvinists believed that man is alone before his maker, that he should not trust the friendship of men that only God should be his confidant because even those closes to him might be among the damned. Each individual could seek success as the sign of grace, and this striving was consistent with economic competition. He dealt honestly and righteously with other men, but he was ready to take advantage of his opportunities even if that meant out doing his competitors, (Broom and Selznick p.403)

These, however, are the indirect, unintended effects of religion on economic development. So capitalism is a latent effect of religion according to the analysis of Max Weber.

**Sociology and Social Action**

Sociology is a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects. Social action is all human behavior when and in so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it, either overt o purely inward and subjective.

Unlike other sociologists of his time, Weber argued in favor of taking the individual as a basic, starting point of analysis. Unlike matter, humans have consciousness, thoughts and feelings, meaning and intentions or an awareness of being. Because of this human actions are meaningful; they define situations and give meaning to their actions and those actions of other. As a result, they do not simply react to external stimuli or they do not merely behave but they act. The sociologist must, therefore, discover the meanings individuals attach to their actions in order to understand them, Weber argued. So the subject matter of the natural sciences and social sciences is fundamentally different. The methods and assumptions of the natural sciences are inappropriate to the study of humans.

Since it is not possible to get inside the heads of the actors the discovery of meanings must be based on interpretation an intuition. Weber thought that it was possible to produce causal explanation of human behavior so long as an understanding of meaning formed part of those explanations. This explanation of authority of Weber is unlike the Marxist idea that the ruled obey the powers of the few because they are deceived by those in power, because of ideology (false consciousness)

**Social Action**- on the basis of mode of orientation, Weber identified four types of social actions.

**1. Traditional social action** – traditions are the motives that determine the action of the individual in a certain way.

**2. Affectual** – the actions or behavior of an individual are determined by certain affectual facts such as love, hatred, sympathy or anger.

**3. Value oriented rational** – action of individuals in response to certain values such as religious or ethical.

**4. Goal oriented Rational** – an action or mode of orientation is a means to an end.

The traditional and affectual actions are not social actions in proper sense because they are not rational actions aiming at achieving certain ends. Value oriented and goal oriented actions are rational actions because, according to Weber, an action is rationally oriented when the means, the end, and secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed. This involves rational consideration of alternative means to the end, of the relation of the end to other prospective results of employment of any given means, and the relative importance of different possible ends.

**Weber and the Theory of Domination**

An individual or group of individuals got the right to command others or to be obeyed by others. In other words some people are governors, while most others are governed. Weber tried to interpret the motives behind such obedience.

Domination- is the probability that certain (all) commands will by obeyed by a given group of persons because of diverse motives of compliance (affection, custom or tradition, rational calculation of an advantage, material interest) on the part of the obeyed.

**Types of Domination/Authority**

Power- is the ability to do or act.

Authority- is power socially defined as appropriate /legitimate, or it is an institutionalized power. It is a power accepted as appropriate or supported by those subjected to it. According to Weber there three types of domination/authority.

**1. Traditional authority/domination** – is based / rested on established beliefs, traditions and moral habituation to certain powers. The person in power could enjoy authority by virtue of his inherited status. People obey because the authority existed in the past and there fore should continue. No rational consideration of the importance of the existing authority. It is simply taken for granted as essential.

E.g. Hereditary kings, Menelik →Zawditu→ Haileselasie

**2. Charismatic Authority**: is based on devotion to a specific and exceptional (sacredness) of an individual. This exceptional quality could be heroism, exemplary character and of the normative patterns of order revealed or ordained by him.

The exceptional (gifted individual could be a religious leader e.g. Jesus Christ of Nazareth or Mohammed of Mecca, or persons such as Nelson Mandela, Fidel Castro, etc. Here people obey not regulations, traditions but individual personalities and extra ordinary qualities. These qualities could be possessed by magical power.

This type of authority is unstable because when the charismatic leader dies his followers disintegrate unless otherwise institutionalized.

**3. The Rational/Legal Authority/Domination:** This is based on rational, goal oriented, and consideration of advantages and disadvantages of being obeyed. People subordinate themselves to laws and regulations and individual personality or traditions are not so important.

Rational authority is a characteristic of a capitalist society. Modern bureaucracy is the purest and the best type, and it is the most rational form of administration. Individuals hold positions in the hierarchy of bureaucracy based not on heredity/Kinship but on competence. Found in schools, government organizations, and most other institutions.

Professional Authority – is identified by scholars other than Weber and is based on expertise (Knowledge, profession, etc) e.g. Medical doctors, architects, etc.

The three types of authorities are not found in pure form, most societies are a blend of two or more of the types. E.g. in the United Kingdom, both traditional (the monarchy) and legal (the executive) authorities are found.

**Chapter Three**

**Major Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology**

**3.1 The Three Major Theoretical Perspectives**

**What Is The Need Of Theory?**

Fats do not speak for themselves. Facts are silent. Before facts can speak, we must approach them with a question in mind and find relationships among them. For instance, you may have children or anticipates having children. What do you do when they misbehave? Do you threaten them or ignore them? What do you do is based on a theory-about how children can learn.

Theory can be regarded as attempts to explain, describe and predict events, forces, materials, ideas or behavior in a comprehensive manner. It is an attempt to make sense of our experiences. With theory, we can see relationships, among facts or events. One among the special qualities of sociology is, its rely on the theoretical thoughts in explaining the on going social activities. Within sociology, theory is a frame work of different concepts or a set of statements established on evidence that seeks to explain a society (societal activities) and/or specific social events such as problems, actions or behaviors, mainly with the connection of different social facts.

Theoretical perspective is a way of looking at various features of the world-an orientation that suggests methods for studying the social experience and finding explanations for it. Theoretical perspectives are aids-mental constructs-that allow you to visualize something. Thus, a given theoretical paradigm or school of thought may have its own general assumption concerning views of human beings and motivation. In other words, the adherents of each perspective ask some what different questions about society and so provide us with different images of social life.

Accordingly, contemporary sociologists view society in different ways. Some see the world in general or specifically society as basically as a stable and ongoing entity; while others view it as composed of many groups in conflict, competing for scarce resources; still others describe it as based on the every day, routine interactions among individuals. These differing perspectives of society are all ways of examining the same phenomena. Each of these views is based on general ideas as to how social life is organized and represents an effort to link specific observations in a meaningful way. These different views represent the three major theoretical perspectives in sociology; namely the functionalism, the conflict and the symbolic interactions theory respectively.

**3.1. Structural-Functionalism Perspective**

It draws heavily up on the ideas of August Comte, Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim. Its theorists take a big picture- a macro sociological view of social life.

The structural-functionalism paradigm owes much to the ideas of August Comte, who was concerned about how society could remain unified while under going massive change. This led sociologists to give emphasis on how society could remain integrated by maintaining its stability and social order. Another who advanced this theoretical approach was the English sociologist Herbert Spencer. He asserted that the structural parts of human body-the skeleton, muscles and various internal organs such as the heart, lung, kidney and others are interdependent and each one has a function that contributes to the survival of the human organism. Likewise, Spencer reasoned that the elements of human society are interdependent and work together tom keep society operating. This approach, then, leads sociologists to identify the various parts of society, asking what part each plays in the operation of the whole. Emile Durkheim continued the development of structural-functionalism paradigm in France. Like Spencer, Durkheim investigated ways in which modern societies maintain their social integration. These early functionalists because they drew on the work of natural scientists, they compared society to a living, evolving organism. Societies develop social structures, or institutions that persist because they play a part in helping society survive.

Later on, American sociologists like Talcot Parsons and Robert Merton refined further more the functionalism school of thought.

The structural-functionalism or simply the functionalist perspective is based on the assumption that society is a stable, orderly system; a complex system whose parts work together to promote stability and social order and views social change as occurring in slow and orderly fashion. Stability is the key feature of this model of society. This stable system is characterized by societal consensus-where by the majority of members share a common set of values, beliefs and behavioral expectations. Most members of a society agree on what is desirable, worthwhile and moral as well as on what is undesirable, worthless and evil (immoral). People need to share a consensus regarding core values and beliefs. They said that a high degree of consensus binds society together as a cohesive unit and provides a foundation for social integration and stability. In any area of its analysis, this approach focuses on consensus, social order, social structure and function in society.

The advocators of functionalist perspective views society as a social system-a system composed of interrelated parts , each of which serves a function and contributes to the over all stability of the society. Under this, functionalists attempt to do two things; firstly, they relate the parts of society to the larger whole and secondly, they relate one part to the other. Society is composed of various kinds of social structure-relatively stable pattern of social behavior. That means functionalists appraise the structural properties of institutions much like biologists describe the body organs. Institutions such as family, education, religion, economy and the state are among the crucial parts of any society. Then they identify the social functions performed by institutions. For instance, family provides reproduction, socialization and maintenance of children. All social structures are related in terms of their social functions they provide. Thus, all the elements of society-from religious belief to a simple handshake-have important functions that help society to persist, at least in its present form.

One feature of a system is the interdependent of its parts. Functionalists try to explain how the relationship among the parts of society are created, how they become interdependent to one another and how these parts are functional or dysfunctional to the individual or society. Change in one institution has implications for other institutions and for the society as a whole. For example, the entrance of women in to the wage economy led them to postponed marriage and has had fewer children. As a result, military authorities for see a shortage of young men and women for armed forces during early 1990s.

Functionalists say that societies tend toward equilibrium-a self maintaining order. A social system achieves some measure of stability. These compensating mechanisms enable a society to recover from a war or disaster.

**Functions and Dysfunctions**

Robert Merton defines *functions* as those consequences that permit the adaptation or adjustment of a system. Functionalists pay particular attention to the functions performed by s system’s parts, including its values, norms, institutions and groups. If a system is to survive, certain essential tasks must be performed. If certain tasks are not performed, the system fails to maintain it self. So if society is to exist, its members must see that certain functions are performed. For instance, goods and services must be produced and distributed so that sustenance needs are to be met; children need to be born, socialized, maintained and placed within social positions so that new generations will replace the old ones to ensure the continuity of society; social con troll needs to be achieved if people are going to be protected in carrying out their daily tasks. And institutions are the principal structures for organizing, directing and executing these critical tasks.

Merton points out that just as institutions and other parts of society can contribute to the maintenance of the social system; they can also do the opposite. He termed the consequences that lessen the adaptation or adjustment of a system as *dysfunctions* (undesirable consequences of any element of a society). Merton noted that all features of a social system may not be functional at all.

For example, sociologists identify that poverty is functional and dysfunctional. It creates jobs for those who serve the poor, example, police officers, social workers, drug pushers.

But large number of poor people may also be dysfunctional for society. Poverty intensifies many social problems, including those associated with health, education, crime, drug addiction, etc. education may be dysfunctional in that it perpetuates gender, racial and class inequalities. Such dysfunctions may threaten the capacity of a society to adapt and survive. The act of homicide is also dysfunctional for society.

**Manifest and Latent Functions**

Merton also distinguishes between manifest and latent functions. Manifest functions are intended and/or overtly recognized consequences by the members of a social unit. They are the opened, stated and conscious consequences of the parts of a system. Where as latent functions are unintended (unconscious) and often not recognized and that may reflect the hidden purpose of an institution. For instance, the manifest function of education is the transmission of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next. Universities are centers of academic competence and excellencies. The latent function of universities is the establishment of social relations and networks. They also serve as a meeting ground for people seeking marital partners.

**Critical Evaluation**

Functionalism perspective is a useful tool for describing society and identifying its structural parts and the functions of these parts.

* Functionalists do not deal with history and the process of social change. They describe behavior at a given point in time not social processes.
* It over emphasizes the extent of societal consensus, integration, stability and order while neglecting conflict, dissensus and instability.
* It has a conservative bias-emphasizes on the existing social arrangement (status quo).

**3.2. Conflict Perspective**

The conflict paradigm is a framework for building theory that envisions society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and change. Conflict perspective uses different key concepts in explaining social systems or social behavior such as competition, struggle, power, inequality and exploitation. Conflict theorists view **society as conflict**: society that contains social forces that make conflict inevitable. Society is composed of many groups that are often in conflict with each other to pursue their interests and goals. For one thing, resources are scarce that distribution generates struggle among members of society. Therefore, society is considered to exist on a continuous struggle in order to control the scarce resources at hand. For another, there is power differences some groups dominate other groups.

Conflict theorists contend that a full understanding of society requires a critical examination of the competition and conflict in society; especially of the processes by which some people are winners and others losers. As a result, conflict theory addresses the points of stress and conflict in society and the ways they contribute to social change.

Conflict perspective investigates how factors such as social class, race, ethnicity, sex and age are linked to unequal distribution of money, power, education and social prestige. A conflict analysis points out that rather than promoting the operation of society as a whole, social structure typically benefits some people while depriving others. They further preach that the different social system is shaped as per the need of the powerful (dominant) segments of the population. They also try to spotlight ongoing conflict between dominant and disadvantaged categories of people- the rich in relation to the poor, white people as opposed to black, men versus women. Typically, those on the top strive to protect their privileges; while the disadvantaged counter by attempting to gain more resources for themselves.

**Analyzing conflict**: Like structural functionalists, conflict theorists are interested in social structures. The questions they ask, however, are different. Basically, conflict theorists ask two questions: how is unequal access to scarce resources built in to the social structure? Ho do tensions arising from this inequality affect change and stability?

Some conflict over scarce resources is inevitable. Not only are there limited supplies of goods and services but also there are limited opportunities for such things as education, jobs, decision- making and leisure. Conflict theory is concerned with identifying how unequal access to these scarce resources is built in to our social structure. It is also concerned with the processes through which those with advantages manage to protect them.

Many sociologists who embrace the conflict paradigm attempt not just to understand society but also to reduce social inequality. This was the goal of Karl Marx, the social thinker whose ideas underlie the conflict paradigm. Marx did not seek merely to understand how society works but to change it. In a well known declaration, Marx asserted: `the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however is to change it. `

**Critical Evaluation**

* It over emphasizes on inequality and division while neglecting social solidarity and integration
* It considers individuals as passive agents that are merely dictated by the social structure with out influencing it significantly.
* It over simplified social system to that of group struggle.

**3.3. Symbolic Interaction Theory**

Both the functional and conflict perspectives share a macro-level orientation, meaning a concern with large scale patterns that characterize society as a whole. They are based on the assumption that human social behavior and society can be understood by examination of the social structures that guide behavior. The symbolic interaction theory, however, provides a micro-level orientation meaning a concern with small scale patterns of social interaction in specific settings. It involves micro sociological orientations: individuals in society and their definitions of situations, meanings, roles, interaction patterns and the like.

The symbolic interaction theory addresses questions such as how can the individual and society be separate and distinct and yet be interrelated even incorporated, one with the other? How can people create, sustain, and change society and simultaneously be shaped by society? How can society persist past the life times of its individual members if, at bottom, it rest on their actions? It concerns it self on the relationship between the individual and society. Society and the individual are reciprocally related in a fundamental way, one person presupposes the other, and neither exists except in relation to the other. They are two sides of the same coin.

The symbolic interaction theory, then, is a theoretical framework based on the assumption that society involves interaction by which individuals actively construct reality in every day life. They view **society as interaction**: society is not something that is existed “out there” rather; society is continually created and recreated moment-by-moment as we interact with one other. The symbolic interaction perspective sees society as the product of the every day interactions of individuals. The approach focuses on how people act toward one another and how they make sense of those interactions.

The symbolic interaction theory addresses the subjective meanings of human acts and the process through which people come to develop and communicate shared meanings. It focuses on the every day aspects of social life and analyzes the interaction of persons in face-to-face communication. It views society as a complex, every changing mosaic of subjective meanings.

How the lives of millions of distinct individuals woven together in to the drama of society? One answer is that people interact in terms of shared symbols and meanings. That is human beings are creatures who live in a world of symbols, attaching meaning to virtually every thing. “Reality”, therefore, is simply what results as we define our surroundings, our own identities, and our obligations toward others. A symbol is any thing that socially has to come to stand for something else. Symbols take many forms including spoken and written words, gestures, and such objects as flags, medallions, and clothing, which form the basis of human communication. The ability to communicate in symbols is the key feature distinguishing humans from other animals.

Symbolic interationists comment that we are creatures who make sense out of our world. We do so by attributing meanings to people, objects and events. Mostly, we respond to others according to the meanings we attach to them. Our behavior depends on how we define others and our selves.

**Symbolic Interaction Analysis**: when symbolic interactionists study human behavior, they being with three major premises.

1. Symbolic meanings are important. Any behavior, gesture, or word can have many interpretations or can symbolize many things. In order to understand human behavior, we must know what it means to the participants.
2. Meanings grow out of relationships. When relationships change, so do meanings.
3. Meanings are negotiated. We do not accept others’ meanings uncritically. Each of persons has an active role in negotiating the meaning that things will have for us.

These premises direct Symbolic interationists to the study of how individuals are shaped by relationships and social structures. Fore example, Symbolic interationists could be interested in how growing up in a large as opposed to a small family affects individual attitude and behavior. They are also interested in the active role of individual in modifying and negotiating his or her way through these relationships. Why do two children raised in the same family turn out differently? The answer lies in part in the fact that each child experiences subtly different relationships and situations; the meanings which the youngest child derives from the family experience may be different from those the oldest child derives.

**Assumptions of Symbolic Interaction perspective:** proponents of symbolic interactions base their claims on the following assumptions.

1. Society is the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups,
2. Society exists within every socialized individual and its external forms and structures arise through social interaction,
3. We act according to our own interpretation of reality, i.e., we act toward things according to the meanings those things have for us,
4. Subjective interpret ions are based on the meanings we learn from others-we learn the meaning of something by the way we see others acting toward it,
5. We are constantly interpreting our own behavior as well as the behavior of others in terms of the symbols and meanings we have learned.

**Critical Evaluation**

By focusing on day-to-day instructions the symbolic interationist paradigm ignores large social structures such as culture, class, gender, and race.

**Chapter Four: Culture**

4.1. The Concept of Society and Culture

Before continuing the discussion of culture, we should first understand the difference between the concepts of culture and society. While culture refers to way of life of people, society refers to the people who share and engage in that culture.

**A society**

- has a definite geographic location

- persists over time

- is relatively self sustaining and independent

- has an organized relationships among the people

A society can be defined broadly or narrowly with respect to the context of speaking. We can talk of the whole web of social relationship (human society in general) society of a given country like the American Society and different nations and nationalities with in a given country like the Amhara Society, the Oromo society, the Gurage society etc.

**Culture:-**

Culture is the broadest ethnographic concept, which has got the following two forms of definitions:

Edward Tylor (1871) defined **culture** as follows:

“**Culture** is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, low, custom and other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of society”. This definition is from idealistic perspective. Hence, it includes those aspects of culture that take non-physical form and hence are unobservable.

“Culture is the sum total of material and intellectual equipment where by people satisfy their biological and social needs and adapt themselves to the environment,” Paddington

This definition includes aspects of culture that have physical existence and hence are observable. And this definition is from materialistic perspective.

So, when we look at the above two definitions culture includes both the material resources (man made physical objects) and non-material (man made intangible culture traits) of group life.

##### 4.2. Components of Culture

For the purpose of analysis, sociologists break down culture in to three component parts.

1. Culture trait (element)

* Is a simplest unit of culture employed in a particular analysis
* Is irreducible unit, i.e. can not be further divided into meaningful parts
* Can be material (e.g. plough, hoe, chair) or non-material (e.g. idea, belief, skill etc)

1. Culture complex-is any integrated system of culture traits that function as a unit in society.

E.g. let’s take the traditional cultivation system in rural Ethiopia. Tools such as a plough, mofer, kenber, a pair of oxen and a farmer with a skill to handle the tools are required to cultivate the land and to produce. Thus, the combination of these material and non material culture traits make up an essential culture complex

1. Culture pattern-is a number of culture complexes combined to function as an integrated whole.

E.g. The farming system described above is only a component part of the economic pattern of rural Ethiopia If we have to adequately and exhaustively describe the rural economic pattern, then we need to include the modern farming methods which employ tractors, harvesters, combiners etc; fishing, forestry, pastoratlism; industries (large, medium and small) The combination of all these activities constitute the economic pattern of the country and these function as an integrated whole. Culture refers to the shared way of thinking & believing that grow out of group experience & are passed from one generation to the next. It is the way of life of society the knowledge beliefs customs & skills available to its members.

**4.3. Attributes/Characteristics of Culture**

1. **Culture is essentially symbolic**: The most frequent form of use of symbols is language. Words are symbols because they stand for something else. The word blackboard, for example, is a symbol because it stands for the idea of a blackboard. So, Culture is found only in human society. This is because human beings can develop and use highly complex systems of symbols. Social life can exist with out symbols as it does among other animals. But only human have culture b/c only they are able to create symbols.
2. **Culture is acquired**: This implies that culture is learned. For instance, each individual is born into a group that already possesses values, beliefs, and standards of behavior. These are transmitted through interaction with other, i.e. socialization
3. **Culture is shared**: Culture is a quality or attribute of a group rather than an individual. But not all shared throw are culture; beyond its shared nature it must be learned. For example, we share Blank hair naturally, so it can not be culture. But the hair style is a culture because learning is involved. Eating can not also be a culture rather how, when and what we eat makes a culture.
4. **Culture is Dyna**mic: Dynamic: Culture grows, expands, and develops continually. No culture is totally fixed and static. Cultural growth is a cumulative process because societies add new cultural elements, complexes and patterns. Similarly, societies discard cultural traits, complexes and patterns that have out lived their purposes. So, Cultural growth is a selective process.

Culture grows and changes through:

1. Innovation: the process of introducing an idea, or object that is new to a culture.

2. Invention: discovery of new culture. It could be:

a) Primary- Discovery for the 1st time

b) Secondary- improvement of those inventions, which already existed.

3. Diffusion: is the process of borrowing culture traits, complexes or patterns from other societies. It could be :

* 1. Direct – through war, trade, migration, etc
  2. Indirect – though radio, television, reading materials etc.

4. Transmission: cultural transmission is the process by which accumulated knowledge passes from one generation to another orally, in a written form or both

NB. The above three factors for culture change are not mutual exclusive. That is, one or more than one factor can play a role in changing a culture of society simultaneously.

**4.4. Cultural Diversity and Uniformity**

**4.4.1. Cultural Diversity (variability)**

It is believed that human beings everywhere have the same biological and mental make up. But their motivations, customs and beliefs differ enormously. We observe differences in technology, custom, diet, art, religion, government, marriage practices etc from one society to another. We call this cultural variability or diversity. But why have people developed so d/t life styles? Cultural diversity refers to differences with in a specific culture that add to the complexity of the culture & to the rich texture of social life.

In general social scientists agree that cultural variability is attributed to the fact that people in different parts of the world have found different ways of life and survival mechanisms for satisfying their basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Nevertheless, the search for more specific explanations has resulted in the formulation of the following five approaches:

1. **Geographic Factors**: Climatic conditions, topography, vegetation etc are considered to be principal sources of cultural variability. Obviously, these geographic factors have influence on cultural variability since societies adopt behavior in accordance with the natural environment.

But if this approach is true one would expect people in more or less similar natural environment would develop more or less similar culture, which is not necessarily true from the available reality.

NB. While it is true that geographic factors influence culture in certain ways, it is important to note that they do not necessarily play a determining role in shaping culture.

2. **Racial Determinism**: this approach assumes that culture vary because of differences in races. It was believed that differences in human behavior can be traced in biological characteristics like skin color, shape of the skull hair texture etc.

race-any of the group into which humans can be divided according to their physical characteristics of color of skin color type of hair, shape of eyes and nose etc.

Thus, sociologists reject this approach on the ground that culture is a social inheritance, a form of acquired or learned behavior, rather than a biological inheritance. Besides, there is no substantial evidence in favor of this argument.

3. **Span of interest**: the argument here is that different societies have developed different span of interest emphasizing on different aspect of life. For instance, societies may emphasize on acquisition of wealth, political and economic power, practice of religion (life after death), individual achievement etc. such emphasis difference is thus believed to have contributed to cultural variability. Although the impact of this can not underestimated estimated, this may not necessarily play a determining role.

4. **Demographic factors**: Population size seems to be an important factor in this approach one factor that influence cultural development is invention. Hence, it is assumed that invention is dependent up on inventors and the number of inventors is directly related to the size of the population.

5. **Historic chance**: the argument here goes that cultural difference is due to mere historic chance or occurrences that happened by accident.

Remark: In an attempt to explain cultural variability, sociologists do not feel comfortable with any single determining factor but tend to consider various factors that bear influence on culture.

**4.4.2. Cultural Uniformity (Cultural Universals)**

Despite their great diversity, there is a striking uniformity among the world’s cultures. Murdock has listed about 73 elements that are known to all cultures some of which include cooking, division of labor, greetings, music, language, law etc.

We call a culture is uniform or universal when the general idea is taken into consideration, but the specific form it takes is different. For instance, all human societies have some kind of language, but we observe d/t languages throughout the world.

###### 4.5. Definition of Basic Cultural Concepts

###### A. Social values

The term value in sociology is both similar to and distinct from its meaning in every day life. As commonly used value often means price. In sociology, we start from the assumption that as individuals all of us possess a set of values. We have a value scale or a system of value for deciding what is most important in life, for instance, placing a high value on intellectual development, wealth, fame etc. Some of us may value intellectual development very highly and decide to undergo for several years of training to satisfy our objective. For some of us, however, intellectual development may not be a priority or a value we cherish. On the contrary, we may appreciate fame and to satisfy this objective we may be involved in music or sports.

In the same way, as individuals, every society possesses its own value system. Values at the level of the society are commonly known as social and/or cultural values.

Social or cultural values are shared assumptions by the members of society as to what is right and wrong, good or bad, important or unimportant, desirable or undesirable. It means that the sociological concept of values hinges on more basic moral issues than the trivialities of price. It involves judging the worth of one thing compared to another where neither of the objects can be assigned a price. Hence, values are widely held beliefs and ideas about what is important to the community’s identity or wellbeing, E.g. privacy, equality, freedom etc.

Values are relative and subjective heavily influenced by time and place. It is important to note, however, that although more or less similar sets of social values can be identified across different societies, not all societies do have similar value systems.

Kluckhohn defines a value as a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group of the desirable, which influence the selection from available modes, means and ends of action.

Values are also dynamic in that they are liable or subject to changes in response to changes in social conditions.

##### B. Social Norms

All societies have rules or norms specifying appropriate and inappropriate behavior and individuals are rewarded or punished as they conform to or deviate from the rules it is impossible to imagine a norm less society, because with out norms behavior would be unpredictable. Therefore, societies develop norms, which manifest or reflect their social values.

Norms are the standards, which should govern behavior in roles; they are the society expectations of what is normal. Sometimes they have to be formalized as law, but most are less formal.

Norms obviously vary in strength and are classified as mores and folkways according to the intensity of feeling associated with them and the degree of conformity expected. Some norms are defined by individuals and societies as crucial. Based on this assumption, W.G summer broadly divided the norms into two: mores and folkways.

###### Mores

Mores are serious social norms up on which society’s existence is believed to depend. They are those norms, which must be followed because they are believed essential to group welfare. By this, we mean strong ideas of right and wrong, which require certain acts and forbid others. For example, in modern society all members may be required to wear clothing and to burly their dead. Such “musts” are often labeled mores.

When the term mores is used to refer to the must behaviors of a society, it generally includes the must not behaviors or taboos. For example, one must not kill another person or have sexual intercourse with one’s parents.

In short, mores are very important, strictly enforced and punishable.

B. Laws: with in each society, some norms become codified. We call these codified norms, laws.

2. Folk Ways: Compared to mores, folkways are less serious social norms such as those governing dress.

Feelings about folkways are less intense than feelings about mores and conformity with folkways is largely up to the individual. A person who does not conform to generally accepted norms arouses little reaction in others except on formal occasions or in special situations. E.g. wearing a mini – skirt in church may be highly reacted from the clergymen.

**C. Social Control**

However, a mere existence of social norms does not guarantee the universal observation of the norms.

Failure to conform to and/or abide by the norms of society is referred to as non- conformity. Non- conformity is broadly classified into two:

1. **Eccentricity**: refers to non conformity to folkways. It is usually overlooked by the members of society.
2. **Deviance:** is non-conformity to mores. It is taken very seriously by members of the society because deviants hold at system of values and norms which conflict with the values and norms of the society at large. E.g. a criminal group.)

Thus, a society must have social order if it is to function smoothly. To function effectively, societies establish a system of social control in order to enforce conformity to their norms. Social control means control of the society over an individual.

There are two types of social control:

1. **Informal Social Control**: In simple societies, social control is largely informal. Gossip and other group administered sanctions are sufficient. Every one knows every one else. It consists of the techniques where by people who know one another on personal basis accord praise to those who comply with their expectations and show displeasure to those that do not.
2. **Formal social control:**  In complex societies, social control is formal; laws are passed and enforcement machinery is created. Written contracts replace oral agreements. At this level & development folkways and mores by themselves are not enough to ensure the general welfare of the society. People well in advance are made aware of the consequences that they will have to face if they transgress social norms.

Social control involves the use of sanctions or is accomplished through the applications of sanctions. Sanctions are actions through which we reward conformity to norms and punish non-conformity. (Sanctions may be of two types:

**1. Positive (Reward):**

* 1. Formal positive sanctions – include bonuses, medals, promotions etc
  2. Informal positive sanctions- Which include exaggerated praise, encouragement, signs of approval, flattery etc

**2. Negative (punishment):**

a. Formal Negative Sanctions –includes imprisonment, fines, dismissal from job etc?

b. Informal negative Sanctions- Which include criticism, ridicule, gossip, Ostracism, stigmatizing, reprimand, etc.

If the societal norms are not enforced, anomie which is a state of confusion, insecurity or normlessness will reign.

**D. Cultural alternatives**: refer to the activities which the member of society may freely choose to follow or not to follow.

- Several alternatives are associated with a particular cultural universal thus allowing personal choice.

- For instance, one widely shared cultural universal by many societies is that people have to work and participate in some labour activity in order to earn a living. But the choice of occupation is left to individuals. Choice is limited by the number of roles & the number of people available to perform them.

**E. Cultural Specialties**: refer to the special skills or abilities and behavior associated with the cultural alternative.

Generally, the alternatives are limited by the scope of the division of labour in society. Once the alternative is chosen, the skill the alternative demands must be learned.

**F. Culture Shock**:: refers to the psychological maladjustment individuals experience when they came across the society different from their own culture, i.e. first contact. It is a feeling of confusion and anxiety caused by contacts with another culture. Culture shock is the disorientation and frustration of those who find themselves among people who do not share their basic values and beliefs.

Usually, disagreements over styles of dress, eating habits and other every day matters can be adjusted to fairly easily. Acute culture shock is most likely when expectations about personal felling and interactions are violated.

**G. Xenocentrism** is the belief that the products, styles or ideas of one’s society are inferior to those that originate elsewhere. In a sense, it is a reverse ethnocentrism.

**H. Ethnocentrism** is a tendency to feel that ones own particular culture or way of life is superior, right and natural and that all other cultures are inferior and often wrong and unnatural.

It is basically an inclination to judge other cultures in terms of the values and norms of one’s own culture.

In short, ethnocentrism is advocating of individuals that my way of life is the best. All people have a tendency to think of their own culture as best. I.e. stereotyped thinking may be almost inevitable, but it can at least be reduced, if not eliminated.

**I. Cultural Relativism**: Is opposite to that of ethnocentrism. It refers to the notion that each culture should be evaluated form the stand point of its own setting rather than from the stand point of its own setting rather than from the stand point of a different culture. In other words, norms, values and beliefs are relative to the particular culture in which they exist and should be judged only from the view point of that culture, The “goodness’ or “badness” of values. Practices and beliefs are relative to their cultural setting.

**J. Subculture**: is a pattern that is distinct in important ways but has much in common with the dominant culture. In other words, a subculture contains some of the dominant cultural values but also values or customs of its own. So, it is a culture with in a culture. Complex societies like that of our own contain not one culture but many ethnic, regional or any other sub-cultures with different values, norms, social relations and life styles. Subcultures are set of beliefs, norms and customs supported by values interpersonal networks of participation in common institutions which exist with in a larger social system, E.g. Ethnic subcultures, occupational subcultures, and counterculture.

Every group has some distinctive patterns, but unless they affect the total life of members, patterns do not make up a sub culture.

A sub- culture has a general influence on attitudes and life styles and tends to give a person a specific identity.

E.g.1) a sub-culture may be based on an occupation if that occupation is the context of the every day life of its members. Such occupations as mining, police work, railroading etc are likely to develop sub- cultures.

Eg.2) More typical, however, is a sub-culture tend to be with their special shops, churches and schools. Thus they provide a setting for may of the activities of their members.

**K. Acculturation**: is the adoption of new traits or patterns as a result of contact with another culture. Ideally, acculturation is the way one people learn form another as a result of culture contact.

**Chapter Five: Socialization**

##### 5.1. Meaning of Socialization

Socialization refers to the process by which people interact with others to learn the ways of their culture in order to function with in it. Hence, it is a set of process by which people will learn the norms, values, attitudes and beliefs of his/her society. Humans must learn to be human

Socialization can be looked at from societal and individual points of views:

**From societal points of view**, socialization is the process of fitting new individuals into an organized way of life and teaching them the society’s cultural traditions. Socialization transforms the human animal into a human being, a member of society. Because of that transformation most babies grow up into fully functioning social beings, able to use the language of their parents and competent in their society’s culture.

**From the individual viewpoint**, socialization is the process of developing a self. Through interaction with others, person gains an identity, develops values and aspirations, and under favorable conditions becomes able to make full use of his or her potential.

Although intensive socialization takes place during the early child hood, socialization is a never-ending process. It begins from early child hood and ends at the end of the life of an individual. Socialization continues throughout life.

##### 5.2. Types of Socialization

To have a better picture of socialization, it is useful to know four different kinds of socialization that occur in society. Because socialization begins at birth and continues through out the life cycle, it is a process that takes different forms depending on the stage of life and the special environmental and situational problems that may arise.

There are four major types of socialization: Primary socialization, Anticipatory socialization, Adult Socialization and Re-Socialization

**5.2.1. Primary or Childhood Socialization**

The most crucial phase of learning for an individual occurs in the first years of life. In the early years of child hood, in credible complex learning must occur, and it occurs relatively quickly. This early child hood socialization is referred to as primary socialization. It is called primary because it supplies the foundation for all other learning and it must come first. Most often the child learns from the family through imitation, conditioning and reward for accomplishing the expected behavior.

In primary socialization, the child must learn the basic skills necessary to function in society. The child must master or begin to master motor skills involving coordination and control of the body such as walking, grasping, and feeding himself or herself and so on. Language and the understanding of symbols and gestures must be mastered if any further learning is to take place.

**5.2.2. Anticipatory Socialization**

It is adopting the attitudes and behavior of group or category before one joins it. It is useful in helping the upwardly mobile adapt to their new position in society. One way of learning the roles we will play in our lives is to rehearse them.

Anticipatory socialization refers to learning roles by practicing those we anticipate playing in the future. In child hood, for example, children play house-boys practice playing the father and husband roles, while girls rehearse the behavior they see in their mothers. Numerous examples of anticipatory socialization can be found at various stages in our lives.

Children, as well, spends hours copying role models from Television. Here, toys and games give children the opportunity to experience, through play, a taste of what they may do in the future. There are fore example, toys for children to practice occupations such as doctor, firefighter, teacher, etc.

Anticipatory socialization is a part of primary socialization, but is not restricted to it. We continue to rehearse though much of our lives because rehearsal functions as a powerful learning tool. It serves as a means of preparation by which people gain some certainty and confidence regarding their performance before others.

**5.2.3. Adult or Secondary Socialization**

Adult socialization is the learning that builds on and modifies primary socialization and is required all of us as we move into new stages of life and face a changing environment Adult socialization is sometimes called secondary socialization.

We may have, for example, learned the basic framework of marriage and parenthood from both primary and anticipatory socialization. But the actual adjustment to marriage and the ability to get along with your specific partner require some learning and adaptability.

Significant differences exist between child hood socialization and adult socialization. Some of them include:

* Child hood socialization usually takes place in a situation that is specifically geared to teaching and learning. Adult learning on the other hand usually occurs on the job or on the family.
* Children tend to be emotionally involved with those who socialize them- parents, teachers and peers while relations between adults and their socializers tend to be less likely emotional.
* Adult socialization tends to be voluntary.

**5.2.4. Reverse Socialization**

Reverse socialization refers to the process of socialization where by the dominant socializing persons, such as parents, happen to be in need of being socialized themselves by those whom they socialize, such as children. This idea seems to be associated with the fact that socialization is a two-way process. It involves the influences and pressures from the socializes that directly or indirectly induce change the attitudes and behaviors of the socializers themselves. In reverse socialization the children, for example, may happen to socialize their parents in some roles, skills and attitudes which the latter lack.

**5.2.5. Re-socialization and De-socialization**

In the lives of individuals, as they pass through different stages and life experiences, there is the need for re-socialization and de-socialization. Re-socialization means the adoption by adults of radically different norms and life ways that are more or less completely dissimilar to the previous norms and values. It signifies the rapid and more basic changes in the adult life. A drastic shift that involves giving up one way of life for another that is not only different from it but also incompatible with it. This is quite often happens as adult life in modern societies demands sharp transitions and changes.

E.g. Brainwashing – is rejecting old beliefs and ideas and accepting new ideas, Rehabilitation of criminals, Religious conversion of sinners. In all of these cases, a person breaks with the past and is made over.

De-socialization typically precedes re-socialization. De-socialization refers to stripping individuals of their former life styles, beliefs, values and attitudes so that they may take up other partially or totally new life styles, attitudes and values. The individuals have to abandon their former values and take up new ones in order to become part of the new social group.

NB. De-socialization and re-socialization of adults often takes place in what is called **total institutions**, an environment which is an all encompassing and often isolated from the community such as religious places, prisons, military units, mental hospitals etc. they demand a thorough de-socialization of the new entrants before they assume full-fledged membership. In each case, persons joining the new setting have first to be de-socialized, before they are re-socialized.

Re-socialization may also mean socializing individuals again into their former values and norms, after they rejoin their former ways of life, spending a relatively longer period of in total institutions. This is because they may have forgotten most of the basic values and skills of the former group or society. This kind of re-socialization may also be regarded as reintegration, helping the ex-community members renew their memories of their former life ways, skills, knowledge, etc.

Re-socialization is sometimes confused with adult socialization and it is important to distinguish the two processes. It is helpful to think of adult socialization as the learning process required of all of us as we adjust to new stages in our lives. Re-socialization, on the other hand, applies to situations that are more unusual and dramatic. It requires some break with a past way of life because the past way of life no longer works in a radically new situation. All of us go through the process of adult socialization, while only some of us face the difficulties of re-socialization.

**5.3. Settings (Agents) of Socialization**

In the study of socialization, sociologists emphasize four major socializing agents as the most influential in transmitting the culture to the individual and in fostering the individual’s personality and social self. These four agents are the family, school, peer group and mass media.

Throughout life, people change their attitudes, values and self-images as they take on new roles & undergo new experiences. Socialization which involves intense interaction over long time (as in primary group) is likely to have more effect on the individual than less direct influence (as though the radio and newspapers). Thus, government programs to encourage people to take up new farming methods or send their children to school are likely to be more successful if they are passed on by individuals who are known & respected than if they are only promoted over the radio. The mass media are more successful in supporting than initiating a change in values or behavior.)

##### 5.3.1. The family

The family begins the process of socialization and is the first major setting in which the child interacts. The family provides the earliest human contact for an infant and has responsibility of giving the affection, love and concern necessary for the child to thrive. The family also gives the child its initial position in the social structure in terms of social class, ethnicity, and religion.

**5.3.2. Peers (friendship)**

With their peers children are able to engage in democratic relationships with out the ascribed differences given in the home. Children, for example, quickly learn the power and the pain of ridicules from peers and feel the need to fit in and be like the others. As a result, children are constantly learning new behavior and attitudes from other children.

Interactions within the peer group accomplish much in the establishment of identity and self concept. From other children, they learn how they are perceived by others outside their family. Those perceptions in turn affect how they perceive themselves. For instance, they may entertain the idea whether other children call them skinny or fat, fast or slow, smart or stupid, cute or ugly, friendly or unfriendly, etc.

Peers also provide role models for each other. Today, much of the pressure to wear the right clothes and do certain things stems from the role modeling of peers and the desire to please the peer group becomes especially acute during the adolescent years, when youths often feel a need to break away from the family and parental control.

**5.3.3. Schools (Classrooms)**

Schools serve us in teaching the intellectual skills necessary for effective participation in society. In addition to stated school curriculums regarding intellectual skills, the hidden curriculum is concerned with molding and shaping what is considered to be proper social behavior. It teaches children to conform, to be neat and punctual, to respect authority and to be patriotic citizens concerned with their country’s way of life.

## 5.3.4. The mass media

Mass media is one of the important settings for socialization. Television and other mass media are not necessarily designed to teach people. Nevertheless, the evidence shows that Television content has heavy concentration of violent and aggressive behavior, and that children are seeing many violent incidents. The media also presents role models for children to admire and imitate (e.g., singers and film actors)

**Chapter Six: Social Organization and Interaction**

**6.1. The Concept of Social Organization**

Human beings are social animals by nature and what ever we do or say is related to the social environment. Our lives as human being have their meanings in organized relationships. Whether we eat, drink, play, Worship, recreate or learn; we do it in social group context. No one enjoys alone out side organized networks of social interaction and relationships. Hence, social organizations are the results of the interaction, relationship, action and reaction that we perform in our social life.

***Social organization*** refers to the actual regularity of human interaction; there is organization to a degree that the actions of individuals towards other individuals are recurrent and coordinated by the mutual orientation of the acts of each individual to others. It also refers to the pattern of individual and group relations and interactions. The term “organization” signifies the technical arrangement of parts in a whole, and the term “social” indicates the fact that individual and group relations are the out comes of social processes. Social organizations are the basis of our life because it gives structure or pattern to our life.

Hence, one of sociology’s main concerns is to study the behavior of human society as it appears in its structured and organized ways and relationships. Specifically, sociologists are here interested in discovering and analyzing:

* The Personal and group relations that influence individual behavior and social institutions;
* How persons and groups relate to each other;
* How people organize themselves in various social situations, whether consciously or unconsciously;
* What kind of social relationships occur in their organized behaviors; and
* How these social relationships are maintained; how they decline or disintegrate.

Social organization or structure of a society may also be seen as a network of roles involving interaction between individuals and groups which together give the society both its unique qualities and the characteristics which it shares with other societies. It includes the process by which influence, authority and power are exerted, the interdependence of individuals and groups through segregation or integration, and the broad patterns through which social order is maintained and social solidarity promoted.

**6.2. The patterning of Social life (Social Structure, Social Interaction and Relationship)**

“The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order.”

Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), mathematician and philosopher

Social life is not an island or it is not some thing that is performed in random way rather it is patterned or structured by the values, norms and sentiments of the members of the group.

***Social structure*** is the recurrent and patterned relationships that exist among the components of a social system. It is a larger entity which encompasses social organization, culture and so on.In other words, it is the interweaving of people’s interactions and relationships in recurrent and stab le patterns. Because of social structure, human life gives the impression of organization and regularity. Social structure gives us the feeling that much of social life is routine and repetitive.

We can find the notion of structure through out the sciences; molecular structure, atomic structure, anatomical structure and personality structure. But what sociologists call social structure consists of subtle understandings and agreements\_ networks of invisible rules and institutional arrangements\_ that guide our behavior. Many sociologists view social structure as a social fact of the sort described by Emile Durkheim. We experience a social fact as external to our lives\_ as an independent reality that forms a part of our objective environment. It is there, something that we cannot deny and that we must constantly deal with. Consequently, social structures constrain our behavior and channel our actions in certain directions. They provide the frame work within which we make our choices. Beyond our characteristics as individuals, then, are the characteristics of groups of which we are a part.

If we are to live our lives as members of society, our actions must be guided and constrained by the requirements of the larger social enterprise. Much of human life is organized and focused rather than haphazard and random. The recurrent and patterned relationships we establish with one another find expression in our use of space. The way we lay out our buildings reflects our division of labor and our patterns of social inequality.

There are two basic aspects of the patterns of social life which are necessary for human interactions: status and role. Status and role are basic units of social structure. They are very important concepts for groups, institutions and societies. Membership in groups, institutions and societies confers status and role. Through their behavior in various groups people come to perform certain roles and acquire status.

**1.** **Status**: refers to any of the hundreds of socially defined positions that members of a society may occupy. It signifies the numerous social spaces existing in a society. These spaces are independent of the individuals who occupy them; they simply designate the positions necessary to the ongoing functions of a society: bank teller, lawyer, cleric, student, prisoner, mother, husband and many more.

We can have two types of statuses: ascribed and achieved

1. **Ascribed status**: Ascribed statuses are assigned to us by society, generally at the time of our birth: gender, race or ethnic group, age and family.

A classic example of a scribed status is the Hindu caste system, which existed until recently in India. A Hindu was born into a particular caste and usually remained in the caste for life. The class hierarchy seems as follows.

1. The priest and warrior classes held the highest positions in the caste system
2. The occupational classes fell just below the priest and warrior classes.
3. At the bottom were the out castes.
4. **Achieved Status**: Are statuses attained as a result of some activity or accomplishment. Your presence in this sociology class us probably one step in achieving a new status – the status of college student.

**2. Social roles:** By virtue of occupying a particular status, we have social relationships with occupants of other status. These relationships and the norms that govern them are called roles.

Role can be regarded as bundle of expectations. It is the pattern of behavior associated with or expected of a person or the individual who occupies a status. When one puts the rights and duties which constitute the status into effect, he is performing a role.

Role can be divided into two:

* 1. **Ideal role:** prescribes the rights and duties belonging to a social position. it tells the individual what is expect of him un his role as a father or teacher to whom he has obligations and up on he has a right full claim. These norms dictate what people should do and should not do generally.
  2. **Actual Role:** is role behavior which is subject to the influence of a specific social setting as well as the personality of the individual. Actual role refers to actual conduct or the role performance of the individual who has occupied a specific status. They are actual behaviors of the people in a given situations regardless of how the perspective norms should behave.

There are also other important points with regards to the concepts of role and status. Some of them include:

**Role set:** is a concept, which indicates the complements of roles associated with a particular status. There fore, each social status involves not a single associated role but an array or roles. Each of us simultaneously occupies many statuses and for each status, has several roles.

For example, a person who takes a status of a lecturer at Mekelle College of Medical Sciences does have several roles to play including giving lecture to students, doing research, sitting at departmental meetings to decide on departmental affairs, taking extra assignments with other government and non-government agencies, etc.

All these are complementary roles associated with the person and are referred to as role set.

**Status set:** We often use the term status set for all the statuses that a person occupies. It refers to complement of a distinct statuses occupied by an individual, each of these in turn having its own role set.

For instance, a person can be a teacher, a husband, father and Idir chairman. In this particular case the person has four status positions.

**Multiple Roles:** Each status demands a different role. As a result of this, they have multiple roles, a variety or complex of roles related with different statuses. It refers to the different roles played by the individual as a result of occupying different status.-

A doctor, for example, may be at the same time the head of a house hold, a church member, a lecturer etc. Each of these is a different status and demands a different role.

NB. It should be made plain that the role set differs from multiple roles. Multiple roles refer not to the complex of roles associated with a single social status but with the various social statuses (often in differing institutional spheres) in which people find themselves.

**Social Mobility**

All of us begin life with a social heritage that includes call membership. An individual may shift or alter his class level or status position over time through his individual efforts.

In some societies moving up in the social ladder or hierarchy is possible. Individuals freely move up and down the class structure. Such movement in the class structure of society is referred to as social mobility.

Social mobility may be vertical or horizontal

1. Vertical Social Mobility

Vertical social mobility implies a change in status position and is of two types:

1) Upward (ascending) and 2) Down ward (descending), the former takes place when status position rises up in the social structure, while the latter is down in the social hierarchy.

For example, take for instance a poor peasant who migrated to Addis Ababa ins each of employment at the age of thirteen, and who started out as a shoe shiner boy and after a while he managed to save some money and later opened up a modest shop. In the life time of the person, we observe changes in status position from a poor peasant boy to a middle class shop owner. The mobility may also be in opposite direction as, for instance, a person who commands substantial wealth, but over time develops the habit of heavy drinking & gambling and gradually looses all his money and resorts to beginning and making a living in the streets of Addis. In this case the mobility experienced is downw3ard, i.e., from a rich respectable person to a poor bigger in the life time of the person.

1. Horizontal Social Mobility Horizontal mobility is a movement with in a class where the individual slightly improves and/or declines in his status position with in his class level.

* Horizontal mobility does not involve status change.

**5.3. Social Groups**

**5.3.1. Meaning and Types of Groups**

We generally refer to any gathering of individuals as a group. We say there are groups at work, groups waiting for a bus, ethnic or racial groups living in one part of a town and so forth. However, a sociologist would not call these entire bunch of people groups because some of them lack the characteristics essential to the sociological definition of a social group.

One non-group, for example, is a category. A category is a set of people who happen to share some common characteristic (e.g. the set of all females in Ethiopia). Members of a category do not necessarily know one another or interact with one another in any way.

Another type of non-group is an aggregate. This is a gathering of people in physical proximity who has come together temporarily, but who lack any organization or lasting pattern of relationship. The crowd at the bus stop is an example of an aggregate, as is a bunch of people who happen to be in the same theatre watching movie or play.

So, the sociological interest is beyond this – on a social group. There are four essential characteristics of a social group:

* 1. Regular and usually sustained interaction between members.
  2. A sense of common identity
  3. shared interests and
  4. Some patterns for organization of behavior on a regular basis.

From these characteristics, the following definition is generally accepted as a standard:

“A group is a plurality of individuals who have contact with one another, who take each other into account in making decisions, and who have some sense of common identity as well as shared goals or interests.”

All groups are not the same. They vary in terms of their size, the intensity of relationship between members, standards for membership and the importance of the group to its members.

There are two broad types of groups classified depending on their quality of relationship and interaction. These are primary and secondary groups.

1. **Primary groups**: are groups characterized by.

* close and intimate association and cooperation
* Usually small in size
* Relatively frequent contact
* Usually face – to – face relationships
* Strong sense of identity and loyalty
* Deep and extensive communications, etc. E.g. The family, peer groups.

The very name of the group, primary, indicates something of its importance, It is primary in time, primary in intimacy, and primary in belonging. Primary groups have two important functions: socialization and individual support.

The primary group assists in the formation of basic human character and provides us with norms which we, in turn, internalize. While providing this education in socialization. Primary group also gives the member unconditional support. Relationships outside the primary group tend to be dependent up on one’s ability to perform. One can, for example, be a college student only so long as grades are maintained and bills are paid. Failure on either count will result in being cast out of the role of student. Membership in primary groups is not dependent up on performance, but on a covenant relationship in which one will be given support, even while being chastised for failing in some duty.

**2. Secondary groups:**  As societies grow larger and more complex, the relative frequency of primary groups lessons. Most relationships between people are carried on in what are known as secondary groups. These groups are opposite to primary groups and are characterized by:

* Relatively larger in size.
* Instrumental in nature; that is, they have specific goals to be attained, and the efforts of the group are directed at obtaining these goals.
* Relations with in the secondary group are partial in that members tend to see only one or a few segments of the person of their fellow members (i.e., Relations do not involve the entire personality of the individual participant.)
* Finally, relationships are basically contractual in the sense that members are expected to give some thing, perform some duty or pay in some way for the privilege of membership. E.g. College class, the company for which we work, our church, Idir etc.

Remarks

1. We may find primary groups in a secondary group
2. Not all groups small in size are primary groups. For example, A committee of five may constitute a group which is of secondary in its characteristics and purposes.

**5.4. Social Institutions**

**5.4.1. What is an Institution?**

“An institution is an organized network of values, norms, folkways and more through which a particular human society organizes itself and directs its members in the performance or its activities to satisfy their needs.”

So, social institution is a pattern which has developed around a major social function, goal or need. It is thus a means to an end.

* Institutions are universal in nature although they vary considerably in terms of their level of development and the functions they perform.

**5.4.2. Basic Social Institutions**

There are five basic social institutions:

1. Family social institution
2. Religious social institution
3. Economic social institution
4. Educational social institution
5. Political social institution

**1. The Family Social institution**

Definition: “family is a socially sanctioned, relatively permanent grouping of people who are united by blood, marriage or adoption ties and who generally live together and cooperate economically.”

Functions: The following are among the more or less universal functions of the family find throughout time and in all societies. However, the family has many other important functions that many vary overtime and from one society to another.

**a. Reproduction and regulation of sexual behavior:** reproduction is a prerequisite for the survival of a society. The family provides institutionalized means by which the society’s members are replaced from generation to generation. The family also provides for and regulates sexual derive. E.g. Premarital sex, incest taboo

**b. Care and protection of the young:** Young children through their long period of dependency need care and protection.

**c. Socialization**: the family is virtually the only primary social institution responsible for the early development of personality in the individual.

d. Family also provides the means by which n individual’s social status is initially fixed. For example, through the family individual member are assigned their ethnic or social status, their initial religious status and their class status.

e. The family also provides the affection, love and emotional support that are so vital to human happiness.

**2. Religious Social Institution**

Sociologists are not generally concerned with weather religious belief is true or not. They are mainly interested in the significance of religion in a society.

We find some kind of religion in all societies (university). The religious institution meets many basic human needs and its function in society can be broadly categorized under three headings.

**a. Individual support** – Religion can provide a source of explanation and meaning for individuals when faced by strains and crisis in their lives such as war, death and natural disasters.

**b. Social integration** – Religion provides unity, cohesiveness and solidarity in a society. Durkheim saw religion as a kind of social glue, binding society together and intergrading individuals into it.

**c. Social control** – Religion provides people with ethical principles and a set of guide lines for appropriate and in appropriate behavior.

**3. The Economic Social Institution**

The economic institution is universal. Its goal is the meeting of society’s economic needs, and it performs the following functions in order to meet them. To meet these function people have to cooperate with one another and create responsible organization, especially under condition when there exist extensive division of labor and thus specialization in certain labor activities.

Functions:

1. Gathering of resources.
2. The manufacturing of goods and services
3. The distribution of goods and services
4. The consumption of goods and services

In less complex societies, non-industrialized countries, economic institutions are merged with families and tribe, and it is difficult to distinguish economic activities from family life, religion, politics and social relations. In more complex societies economic institution is more clearly separated from other social institutions.

**4. The Political Social Institution**

The political institution is the complex of norms that regulate the acquisition and exercise of power by some individuals or groups over other within a given territory through social structures claiming a monopoly ultimate authority.

Functions:

a. Regulating the power of some people over others. It determines when, how and who should gain power.

b. Resolving conflicts that exist among various segments of society.

c. Institutionalizing and enforcing social norms through laws which are established by governments’ legislative body.

d. Protecting citizens from outside enemies.

\* In general, political institution plays a basic role of maintaining peace and order.

**5. Educational Institution**

Functions:

**a- Socialization:** Schools are important agencies of secondary socialization which usually beginning in the family. Here. Schools transmit societal values, attitudes, beliefs, norms, specific skills and system of knowledge to young people.

**b- Recruitment:** The Educational institution recruits, young people for specific roles by sorting out those who are best suited. In short, Educational institution produces labor force with the appropriate skills needed for work.

**c- Social Control:** Schools act as important agencies of social control, which encourage children to learn and conform to the values and norms expected by society. This is mainly carried out through the hidden curricula as there are no organized course in obedience and conformity.

**d- Preparing for social change:** Beyond encouraging people to accept culture which will lead to stability, schools also prepare students for a rapidly changing industrial society. It promotes technological changes in society by providing the basis of knowledge and skill that enable technological innovation to occur.

**5.4.3. Newly Emerging Social Institutions (health and medicine, mass media, Law…)**

**Chapter Six**

**6. Social Inequality and Social Processes**

**6.1. The Concept and Modes of Social Processes**

**Chapter Seven**

**7. Understanding Crime and Deviance**

**7.1. What is Deviance and crime?**

In the broadest sense, deviance means not conforming to predominant norms. It refers to behavior that violates the folkways, mores and laws of a particular group. This broad definition is not very useful because it includes deviant behavior ranging from telling a lie to committing mass murder.

Sociologists have refined their definition to specify the kinds of deviance that people label dangerous, morally wrong or socially unacceptable. The sociological definition of deviance refers to behavior that violates groups’ norms, exceeds its tolerance limits and is viewed as harmful or negative by the group.

Deviance encompasses a wide range of behavior. Perhaps the most significant type of deviant behavior is crime behavior that violates law.

**7.2. The Relativity of Deviance**

Deviance and its definition are quite complicated. The audience, time period, social status of those involved, and the situation influence whether an act is defined as deviant and how serious it is considered to be. These four aspects of the relativity of deviance are discussed as follows.

1. **The relevance of audience**: An audience includes any one who witnessed the act or was aware of the act. Audiences may be strangers on the street, a family, a jury, a group of neighbors or the public in general. Different audiences, particularly different sub cultural groups, vary in their definitions of deviant behavior. Quite simply, the judgment of what is good or bad depends on those who observe and evaluate the act.
2. **The relevance of time**: Normative expectations change over time. Even in a short span of ten or twenty years, the standards and expectations of conduct can vary substantially in a modern industrial society. For example, in U.S.A possession of small amounts of marijuana was a far more serious violation twenty years ago than it is today.

Another example is, in the 1950’s, few people dared to openly admit to homosexual behaviors in U-S-A. In the 1960’s and 1970s, much more openness about homosexuality was observed. In the late 1980’s we see an increasingly negative attitude toward homosexuality because of the conservative atmosphere of the time and the advent of AIDS.

1. **The relevance of social status**: people are perceived differently according to their social characteristics. Generally, higher status individuals are less likely to be labeled deviant or to receive harsh treatment than are lower status individuals.
2. **The relevance of the situation**: The situational context is often as important as the act itself in determining whether an act will be defined as deviant. As an example you might argue that killing another human being (murder) is the ultimate deviant act. But there are many times when people are not labeled as deviants or murderers just because he/she has killed some one. We ask whether the person killed in self defense, in war, whether the individual is considered legally insane or incapable of knowing right from wrong, etc. In each case, the act was the same - a person killed another person. The situations leading to the killings, however, were defined in a number of different ways. The definition of a particular situation, in turn, determined how people labeled the individuals involved.

**The Positive Functions of Deviance**

We commonly believe that deviance is a result of moral erosion and that the consequences of deviant acts are very negative. However, sociologists recognize that deviance is not always harmful to the group or to society.

One of the founding fathers of sociology, Emile Durkheim argued that deviance is in fact normal and universal in human societies. Durkheim encouraged us too see the positive functions of deviance to society.

According to him:

1. Crime provides an opportunity for society to collectively express its moral outrage against the deviant. This outrage can increase the cohesiveness of the group and its devotion to important norms.
2. The trial and punishment of the crime serve to clearly publicize the important norms of the society.
3. Criminal or deviant behavior can challenge unjust or outdated laws, there by brining about needed social change.

**6.3. Sociological Explanations of Deviance**

Sociologists have made considerable efforts in both theory and research regarding deviance. All sociological theories of crime and deviance have in common-an emphasis on social forces and conditions, as opposed to psychological or biological factors.

Three of the most important groups of sociological theories regarding deviant behavior are reviewed as follows:

**1. Anomie theory**

The term anomie was first used sociological by Emile Durkheim in his discussion of the causes of suicide. Durkheim defined anomie as a societal condition that results from too much social change and causes the norms of society to weaken

(\* Durkheim assumed that people need social regulation to keep their wants and desires under control. He essentially considered anomie a condition of weakened norms that leads to the perpetual dissatisfaction of people who need limits imposed by society.)

Robert Merton significantly redefined the term anomie. In his theory, anomie refers to a societal condition where people feel blocked from achieving the socially defined goals of success through the approved means of achieving success. Success is usually defined by material possessions such as cars, houses, clothes, stereos and other things. The proper means to achieve success would be getting an education and good job. Merton said that too much social emphasis on success with out a corresponding emphasis on the proper means to achieve success a cause of anomie.

Merton outlined four types of deviant responses or adaptations to this condition of anomie.

**A. Innovation:** The innovator accepts the socially approved goal, wants money and success, but uses deviant means such as stealing or cheating to achieve it. For example, if too much emphasis is put on diplomas and grades without a corresponding emphasis on achieving grades honestly, college students who are not doing well might cheat to get better grades.

**B. Retreat’s:** Occurs when individuals simply give up any hope of achieving the goals set out by society. Retreatists feel that they can not make it. Many students who drop out of school have given up of reaching graduation. They have retreated. People can retreat into alcoholism and drug addiction. Perhaps, the ultimate type of retreatism is suicide.

**C. Rebellion:** This deviant adaptation occurs when individuals want to change the structure of society by challenging the system. Rebels want to institute new social goals and means for achieving them. For example, revolutionaries often violate laws in an attempt to institute a different political system.

**D. Ritualism:** This response occurs when an individual has lost sight of his or her goals altogether and becomes obsessed with doing things the right way. Imagine a college football coach who continually loses every game but does not seem disturbed as long as the tem follows the rules of the game.

The ritualist person sees conformity as paramount. He or she has lost sight of what conformity is supposed to bring in terms of success, and has adopted conformity itself as a goal.

**2. Differential Association and Cultural Transmission Theories**

These two similar theories emphasize the role of the immediate environment and social learning experienced by a deviant person.

A Criminologist Edwin Sutherland was responsible for developing the theory of differential association. It focused on the process through which people learn norms, values, motivations, priorities, techniques and rationalization, which encourage deviance. People learn these through their interactions and associations with others.

If an individual has been exposed to deviant orientations with greater intensity and frequency, and for a longer period of time than he or she has been exposed to conformist orientation, then the individual is likely to engage in deviance.

The implication of differential association theory is that the family, environment, neighborhood peer group, school and other socializing agents can teach a child deviant behavior just prostitutes tend to enter their profession because they have friend, a group or a pimp who encourages them too sell themselves.

If one grows up admiring and identifying with those who have succeeded through crime or deviance, if one has close friends and associated who endorse deviant, behavior, if one interacts more frequently and satisfactorily with deviant individuals, then one is likely to learn various deviant adaptations including prostitution, drug use and embezzlement. In other words, deviance like any other behavior is transmitted through the culture and environment.

1. **Labeling Theory**

Labeling theory does not attempt to explain the origins of deviant behavior. It assumes that every one commits deviant acts at some point in life. It focuses on the perpetuation of deviance as a result of being singled out and given the stigma of a deviant status. So, this theory emphasizes on the power of society to label people as deviants. Here, **Social control agencies** play a major part in assigning deviant labels.

1. A society is a cluster, or system, of institutionalized modes of conduct. To speak of institutionalized forms of social conduct is to refer to modes of beliefs and behavior that occur and recur, or are socially reproduced across a long period of time and space.

   A society can also be defined as a group of people who share a common culture, occupy a particular territorial area, and feel themselves to constitute a *unified* and *distinct* entity. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ***Social phenomenon***, as defined by Durkheim, refers to events, facts, or occurrences of social interest susceptible to scientific description and explanations. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **Unilineal evolutionary** theory refers to a theory of social change which holds that all societies pass through the same successive stages of evolution and inevitably reach the same end.) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)