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compilation of SOC 101 handout: introduction to sociology.

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**What is sociology?**

Sociology is the scientific study of society, which is interested in the study of social relationship between people in group context. Sociology is interested in how we as human beings interact with each other (the pattern of social interaction); the laws and principles that govern social relationship and interactions; the /influence of the social world on the individuals, and vice versa (Ibid.). It deals with a factually observable subject matter, depends upon empirical research, and involves attempts to formulate theories and generalizations that will make sense of facts (Giddens, 1982). Regarding the detective and expository nature the science, Soroka (1992:34) states that “Sociology is a debunking science; that is, it looks for levels of reality other than those presented in official interpretations of society and people’s common sense explanations of the social world. Sociologists are interested in understanding what is and do not make value judgments.”

**Sociology**, a [social science](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-science) that studies human societies, their interactions, and the processes that preserve and change them. It does this by examining the [dynamics](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dynamics) of [constituent](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/constituent) parts of societies such as institutions, [communities](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communities), populations, and gender, racial, or age groups. Sociology also studies [social status](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-status) or stratification, [social movements](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-movement), and [social change](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-change), as well as societal disorder in the form of crime, [deviance](https://www.britannica.com/topic/deviance), and [revolution](https://www.britannica.com/topic/revolution-politics).

Social life overwhelmingly regulates the [behaviour of humans](https://www.britannica.com/topic/human-behavior), largely because humans lack the instincts that guide most [animal behaviour](https://www.britannica.com/science/animal-behavior). Humans therefore depend on [social institutions](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-institution) and organizations to inform their decisions and actions. Given the important role organizations play in influencing human action, it is sociology’s task to discover how organizations affect the behaviour of persons, how they are established, how organizations interact with one another, how they decay, and, ultimately, how they disappear. Among the most basic organizational structures are economic, religious, educational, and political institutions, as well as more specialized institutions such as the family, the [community](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community), the military, peer groups, clubs, and volunteer associations.

Sociology, as a generalizing social science, is surpassed in its breadth only by [anthropology](https://www.britannica.com/science/anthropology)—a [discipline](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discipline) that [encompasses](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/encompasses) [archaeology](https://www.britannica.com/science/archaeology), [physical anthropology](https://www.britannica.com/science/physical-anthropology), and [linguistics](https://www.britannica.com/science/linguistics). The broad nature of sociological inquiry causes it to overlap with other social sciences such as [economics](https://www.britannica.com/topic/economics), [political science](https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-science), [psychology](https://www.britannica.com/science/psychology), [geography](https://www.britannica.com/science/geography), [education](https://www.britannica.com/topic/education), and [law](https://www.britannica.com/topic/law). Sociology’s distinguishing feature is its practice of drawing on a larger societal [context](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/context) to explain social phenomena.

Sociologists also utilize some aspects of these other fields. Psychology and sociology, for instance, share an interest in the subfield of [social psychology](https://www.britannica.com/science/social-psychology), **although psychologists traditionally focus on individuals and their mental mechanisms. Sociology devotes most of its attention to the**[**collective**](https://www.britannica.com/science/collective-behaviour)**aspects of**[**human behaviour**](https://www.britannica.com/topic/human-behavior)**, because sociologists place greater emphasis on the ways external groups influence the behaviour of individuals.**

The field of [social anthropology](https://www.britannica.com/science/cultural-anthropology) has been historically quite close to sociology. Until about the first quarter of the 20th century, the two subjects were usually combined in one department (especially in Britain), [differentiated](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/differentiated) mainly by anthropology’s emphasis on the sociology of preliterate peoples. Recently, however, this distinction has faded, as social anthropologists have turned their interests toward the study of modern [culture](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture).

Two other social sciences, political science and economics, developed largely from the practical interests of nations. Increasingly, both fields have recognized the utility of sociological concepts and methods. A comparable [synergy](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/synergy) has also developed with respect to law, education, and religion and even in such contrasting fields as engineering and architecture. All of these fields can benefit from the study of institutions and social interaction.

**Historical development of sociology**

Though sociology draws on the Western tradition of rational inquiry established by the ancient Greeks, it is specifically the offspring of 18th- and 19th-century [philosophy](https://www.britannica.com/topic/philosophy) and has been viewed, along with economics and political science, as a reaction against speculative philosophy and folklore. Consequently, sociology separated from [moral philosophy](https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethics-philosophy) to become a specialized discipline. While he is not credited with the founding of the discipline of sociology, **French philosopher**[**Auguste Comte**](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Auguste-Comte)**is recognized for having coined the term *sociology*.**

The founders of sociology spent decades searching for the proper direction of the new discipline. They tried several highly divergent pathways, some driven by methods and contents borrowed from other sciences, others invented by the scholars themselves. To better view the various turns the discipline has taken, the development of sociology may be divided into four periods: the establishment of the discipline from the late 19th century until [World War I](https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I), interwar consolidation, explosive growth from 1945 to 1975, and the subsequent period of segmentation.

**Founding the discipline**

Some of the earliest sociologists developed an approach based on Darwinian [evolutionary](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-evolution) theory. In their attempts to establish a scientifically based academic discipline, a line of creative thinkers, including [Herbert Spencer](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Herbert-Spencer), Benjamin Kidd, [Lewis H. Morgan](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lewis-Henry-Morgan), [E.B. Tylor](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edward-Burnett-Tylor), and [L.T. Hobhouse](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Leonard-Trelawny-Hobhouse), developed [analogies](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/analogies) between human society and the [biological](https://www.britannica.com/science/biology) organism. They introduced into sociological theory such biological concepts as variance, [natural selection](https://www.britannica.com/science/natural-selection), and inheritance—asserting that these evolutionary factors resulted in the progress of societies from stages of savagery and [barbarism](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/barbarism) to civilization by virtue of the [survival of the fittest](https://www.britannica.com/science/survival-of-the-fittest). Some writers believed that these stages of society could be seen in the developmental stages of each individual. Strange customs were explained by assuming that they were throwbacks to useful practices of an earlier period, such as the make-believe struggle sometimes enacted between the bridegroom and the bride’s relatives reflecting the earlier custom of bride capture.

In its popular period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, [social Darwinism](https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-Darwinism), along with the doctrines of [Adam Smith](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Adam-Smith) and [Thomas Malthus](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Malthus), touted unrestricted competition and [laissez-faire](https://www.britannica.com/topic/laissez-faire) so that the “fittest” would survive and civilization would continue to advance. Although the popularity of social Darwinism waned in the 20th century, the ideas on competition and analogies from biological ecology were appropriated by the Chicago School of sociology (a [University of Chicago](https://www.britannica.com/topic/University-of-Chicago) program focusing on urban studies, founded by Albion Small in 1892) to form the theory of [human ecology](https://www.britannica.com/topic/human-ecology) that endures as a viable study approach.

**The first social scientist to use the term sociology was a Frenchman by the name of Auguste Comte who lived from 1798-1857**. As coined by Comte, the term sociology is a combination of two words. **The first part of the term is a Latin, socius- that may variously mean society, association, togetherness or companionship. The other word, logos, is of Greek origin. It literally means to speak about or word.** However, the term is Introduction to Sociology generally understood as study or science (Indrani, 1998). Thus, the etymological, literal definition of sociology is that it is the word or speaking about society. A simple definition here is that it is the study of society and culture “sociology” was first used by the French social philosopher august Comte, the discipline was more firmly established by such theorists as **Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber (Nobbs, Hine and Flemming, 1978).**

Before going any further, let us note that the concepts “society and “culture” are central in sociology. While each concept shall be dealt with later in some detail, it appears to be appropriate here to help students differentiate between these two important concepts. Society generally refers to the social world with all its structures, institutions, organizations, etc around us, and specifically to a group of people who live within some Introduction to Sociology 4 type of bounded territory and who share a common way of life. This common way of life shared by a group of people is termed as culture (Stockard, 1997).

**Sociologist And Their Perspective**

**Auguste Comte**, French Social Philosopher **(1798- 1857) Comte was the first social philosopher to coin and use the term sociology** (Nobbs, Hine and Flemming, 1978). He was also the first to regard himself as a sociologist. He defined sociology as the scientific study of social dynamics and social static. He argued that sociology can and should study society and social phenomena following the pattern and procedures of the natural science. Comte believed that a theoretical science of society and the systematic investigation of human behavior were needed to improve society. He argued that the new science of society could and should make a critical contribution towards a new and improved human society. Comte defined sociology as the study of social dynamic and social static, the former signifying the changing, progressing and developmental dimensions of society, while the latter refers to the social order and those elements of society and social phenomena which tend to persist and relatively permanent, defying change.

**Karl Marx** (German, 1818-1883) Marx was a world-renowned social philosopher, sociologist and economic historian. He made remarkable contributions to the development of various social sciences including sociology. He contributed greatly to sociological ideas. He introduced key concepts in sociology like social class, social class conflict, social oppression, alienation, etc. Marx, like Comte, argued that people should make active efforts to bring about societal reforms. According to Marx, economic forces are the keys to underestimating society and social change. He believed that the history of human society has been that of class conflict. He dreamed of, and worked hard towards realizing, a classless society, one in which there will be no exploitation and oppression of one class by another, and wherein all individuals will work according to their abilities and receive according to their needs. Marx introduced one of the major perspectives in sociology, called social conflict theory (Macionis, 1997)

**Harriet Martineau**, British Sociologist (1802- 1876) At a time when women were greatly stereotyped and denied access to influential socio-political and academic arena, it is interesting to ha a female academic to be numbered among the pioneering sociologists. Harriet was interested in social issues and studied both in the United States and England. She came across with the writings of Comte and read them. She was an active advocate of the abolition of slavery and she wrote on many crosscutting issues such as racial and gender relations, and she traveled widely. She helped popularize the ideas and writings of Comte by translating them into English (Henslin and Nelson, 1995).

**Herbert Spencer**, British Social Philosopher, (1820-1903) Spencer was a prominent social philosopher of the 19th century. He was famous for the organic analogy of human society. He viewed society as an organic system, having its own structure and functioning in ways analogous to the biological system. Spencer's ideas of the evolution of human society from the lowest ("barbarism") to highest form ("civilized") according to fixed laws were famous. It was called "Social Darwinism", which is analogous to the biological evolutionary model. Social Darwinism is the attempt to apply by analogy the evolutionary theories of plant and animal development to the explanation of human society and social phenomena (Team of Experts, 2000).

**Emile Durkheim**, French Sociologist, (1858- 1917) Durkehiem was the most influential scholar in the academic and theoretical development of sociology. He laid down some of the fundamental principles, methods, concepts and theories of sociology; he defined sociology as the study of social facts. According to him, there are social facts, which are distinct from biological and psychological facts. By social facts, he meant the patterns of behavior that characterize a social group in a given society. They should be studied objectively. The job of a sociologist, therefore, is to uncover social facts and then to explain them using other social facts. Some regard Durkheim as the first sociologist to apply statistical methods to the study of social phenomena (Macionis, 1997; Clahoun, et al, 1994)

**Max Weber,** German Sociologist (1864-1920) Weber was another prominent social scientist. According to him, sociology is the scientific study of human social action. Social action refers to any “action oriented to influence or influenced by another person or persons. It is not necessary for more than one person to be physically present for action to be regarded as social action….” (Team of Experts, 2000). It is concerned with the interpretive understanding of human social action and the meaning people attach to their own actions and behaviors and those of others. Weber was a renowned scholar who like Marx, wrote in several academic fields. He agreed with much Marxian theses but did not accept his idea that economic forces are central to social change. Weber argues that we cannot understand human behavior by just looking at statistics. Every activity and behavior of people needs to be interpreted. He argued that a sociologist must aim at what are called subjective meanings, the ways in which people interpret their own behavior or the meanings people attach their own behavior (Henslin and Nelson, 1995; Rosneberg, 1987)

**Nature and scope of sociology**

The scope of sociology is extremely wide ranging, from the analysis of passing encounter between individuals on the street up to the investigation 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 (Indrani, 1998).

Sociologists are primarily interested in human beings as they appear in social interaction and the effects of this interaction on human behavior. Such interaction can range from the first physical contacts of the new born baby with its mother to a philosophical discussion at an international conference, from a casual passing on the street to the most intimate of human relationships (World Book Encyclopedia 1994. Vol. 18, PP. 564-567). Sociologists are interested to know what processes lead to these interactions, what exactly occurs when they take place, and what their short run and long run consequences are.

**The major systems or units of interaction that interest sociologists are social groups such as the family or peer groups; social relationships, such as social roles and dyadic relationships, and social organizations such as governments, corporations and school systems to such territorial organizations as communities and schools (Broom and Selzinki, 1973).** Sociologists are keen to understand, explain, and analyze the effect of social world, social environment and social interaction on our behavior, worldviews, lifestyle, personality, attitudes, decisions, etc., as creative, rational, intelligent members of society; and how we as such create the social reality.

**Levels of Sociological Analysis and Fields of Specializations in Sociology**

There are generally two levels of analysis in sociology, which may also be regarded as branches of sociology: **micro-sociology and macro- sociology** (Henslin and Nelson, 1995). Micro-sociology is interested in small lscale level of the structure and functioning of human social groups; whereas macro-sociology studies the large-scale aspects of society. Macro-sociology focuses on the broad features of society. The goal of macro-sociology is to examine the large-scale social phenomena that determine how social groups are organized and positioned within the social structure. Micro-sociological level of analysis focuses on social interaction. It analyzes interpersonal relationships, and on what people do and how they behave when they interact. This level of analysis is usually employed by symbolic interactionist perspective. Some writers also add a third level of analysis called meso-level analysis, which analyzes human social phenomena in between the micro- and macro-levels. Reflecting their particular academic interest sociologists may prefer one form of analysis to the other; but all levels of analysis are useful and necessary for a fuller understanding of social life in society.

Within these general frameworks, sociology may be divided into specific sub-fields on the basis of certain criteria. The most important fields of sociology can be grouped into six areas (World Book Encyclopedia, 1994: Vol. 18; Pp. 564-568).

• The Field of Social Organization and Theory of Social Order: focuses on institutions and groups, their formation and change, manner of functioning, relation to individuals and to each other.

• Social Control: 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 diffusion 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. Introduction to Sociology 19

• 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. Some of the problems may include: juvenile delinquency, crime, chronic alcoholism, suicide, narcotics addiction, racial prejudice, ethnic conflict, war, industrial conflict, slum, areas, urban poverty, prostitution, child abuse, problem of older persons, marital conflicts, etc.

Currently, sociology has got quite several specific subdivisions or fields of specialization in it: some of these include the following: criminology; demography; human ecology; political sociology; medical sociology; sociology of the family; sociology of sports; sociology of development; social psychology; socio- linguistics; sociology of education; sociology of religion; sociology of knowledge; sociology of art; sociology of science and technology; sociology of law; urban sociology; rural sociology; economic sociology; and industrial sociology.

**Major Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology**

Sociology as science employs perspectives or theories to understand, explain, analyze and interpret social phenomena. To interpret social facts, they must be subjected to a theoretical framework. A theory may be defined as a general statement about how some parts of the world fit together and how they work (Macionis, 1997). Scupin and DeCorse (1995) define a theory as a set of interconnected hypotheses that offer general explanations for natural or social phenomena. It should also be noted that the terms “perspectives” and “schools of thought” are often used interchangeably with the term “theory”.

There are three major theoretical perspectives in sociology that have provided an overall framework for sociological studies. These are structural functionalism, social conflict theory and symbolic interactionism. There are also theories that have emerged challenging these major ones .

**The Structural-Functionalist**

Theory This is one of the dominant theories both in anthropology and sociology. It is sometimes called **functionalism**. The theory tries to explain how the relationships among the parts of society are created and how these parts are functional (meaning having beneficial consequences to the individual and the society) and dysfunctional (meaning having negative consequences). It focuses on consensus, social order, structure and function in society. The structural-functionalist theory sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability; it states that our social lives are guided by social structure, which are relatively stable patterns of social behavior (Macionis, 1997).

Social structure is understood in terms of social function, which are consequences for the operations of society. All social structure contributes to the operation of society. The major terms and concepts developed by anthropologists and sociologists in this theory include (or the theory focuses on): order, structure, function (manifest or direct functions and latent or hidden, indirect functions), and equilibrium. Those who hold this view ask such questions as: what hold society together? What keeps it steady? The Structural functionalist theory pays considerable attention to the persistence of shared ideas in society. The functional aspect in the structural-functionalist theory stresses the role played by each component part in the social system, whereas the structural perspective suggests an image of society wherein individuals are constrained by the social forces, social backgrounds and by group memberships. Many of the great early founding sociologists such as August Comte, Emile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer and later American sociologists like Talkot Parsons and Robert K Merton. Structural -functionalist theorists in modern sociology are more likely to follow in the tradition of the writings of particularly Emile Durkheim, who is regarded as the pioneering proponent of this perspective (Hensiln and Nelson, 1995). After dominating sociology and anthropology for a long time, this theory was challenged by its main critics, notably those who proposed the social –conflict theory (see below). The theory was attacked for its emphasis on stability and order while neglecting conflict and changes which so vital in any society.

**The Social Conflict Theory**

This theory is also called Marxism; to indicate that the main impetus to the theory derives from the writings of Karl Marx This theory sees society in a framework of class conflicts and focuses on the struggle for scarce resources by different groups in a given society. It asks such questions as what pulls society apart. How does society change? The theory holds that the most important aspect of social order is the domination of some group by others, that actual or potential conflicts are always present in society. The writings of Karl Marx are generally in the spirit of conflict theory, and Marxism influences most of conflict theorists in modern sociology. The theory is useful in explaining how the dominant groups use their power to exploit the less powerful groups in society.

Key concepts developed in this perspective include: conflict, complementation, struggle, power, inequality, and exploitation. Although this theory gained fame in recent decades, it came under sharp criticism, for its overemphasis on inequality and division, for neglecting the fact of how shared values and interdependence generate unity among members of society; it is also criticized for its explicit political goals. Another critique, which equally applies also to structural functionalism, is that it sees society in very broad terms, neglecting micro-level social realities (Macionis 1997).

**Symbolic Interactionism**

This theory was advanced by such American sociologists as Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929) William I Thomas (1863-1947) and George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) in early 20th century. This perspective views symbols as the basis of social life. Symbols are things to which we attach meanings. The theory stresses the analysis of how our behaviors depend on how we define others and ourselves. It concentrates on process, rather than structure, and keeps the individual actor at the center. According to symbolic interactionism, the essence of social life and social reality is the active human being trying to make sense of social situations. In short, this theory calls attention to the detailed, person-oriented processes that take place within the larger units of social life (Calhoun et al, 1994; Henslin and Nelson, 1996; Soroka, 1995).

As indicated above, there are contemporary sociological theories that have emerged in recent decades that have heavily influenced sociological and anthropological thinking. These include the following:

**Feminism**

This theory takes as its central theme the place and facts of women’s underprivileged status and their exploitation in a **patriarchally** dominated society. Feminist sociology focuses on the particular disadvantages, including oppression and exploitation faced by women in society. This theory ranges from liberal feminism, which recognizes inequalities but believes that reform can take place without a fundamental restructuring of the social system, to radical feminism, which advocates the fundamental need for societal change (Marcus and Ducklin, 1998: 32)

**Social Exchange Theory**

This theory focuses on “the costs and benefits which people obtain in social interaction, including money, goods, and status. It is based on the principle that people always act to maximize benefit. However, to receive benefits, there must always be an exchange process with others” (Marcus and Ducklin, 1996: 26)

**Public Choice Theory:** This theory states that collective organizations such as political parties act rationally to maximize their own benefits. It argues that individual differences are best resolved by collective involvement within organizations. The role of the state is important in arbitrating between large-scale interests.

**Rational Choice Theory:** This theory assumes that individuals will operate in rational way and will seek to benefit themselves in the life choices they make (ibid).

**Structuralism**

This theory denies any basis for humans being active, since human consciousness is no longer seen as the basis of meaning in language. Structuralism differs from the mainstream traditional theories in that it rejects objective social facts and a concept of society as an objective, external entity. It defines social reality in terms of the relations between events, not in terms of things and social facts. Its basic principle is that the observable is meaningful only in so far as it can be related to an underlying structure or order (Swingwood, 1984). The equivalent of structuralism in anthropology, advanced by its famous French structuralist anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss, states that “the origin of universal principles that order the ways in which we behave and think about the world is to be found in the structure of human thought.”(Howard and DunaifHattis, 1992:373). The problem with this theory is that they view societies as static and do not help very much in explaining variation among societies. The theory treats culture as a given order and fails to explain the adaptive dimensions of culture.

**Post-Structuralism and Post-modernism**: Post –structuralism: focuses on the power of language in constructing knowledge and identity. The writers in this field have emphasized the role of language in human life, how language dictates the thoughts we have, and how it constructs meanings for us. Poststructuralists argue that humans cannot arrive anything they can confidently call the (universal) truth. There is no link between the words (language) ideas, and the real world. It denies the sociological idea that our concepts have some relationship to the real world. It is not possible to arrive at a sociological truth, and such attempts are dangerous (Bliton, et al. 1996; Kirby, et al. 2000).

**Post-modernism**: The basis of post-modernism was post-structuralism. Post-modernism is defined as a cultural and aesthetic phenomenon which mainly rejects order and progress, objective and universal truth; and supports the need for recognizing and tolerating different forms of reality. It tends to celebrate chaos and disorder, diversity and fragmentation in the modern global society rather than wanting to achieve order. This theory maintains that there is no ultimate reason in human life and existence (Bliton, et al. 1996; Kirby, et al. 2000). Postmodernists argue, “Power has become decentralized and fragmented in contemporary societies“ (Torres and Mitchel, 1998). The theorists of post- structuralism share a lost with post-modernists. A note on applying sociological theories to health, culture and society may be important here. Each of the above sociological theories may have its own views on medicine and society. But for the sake of brevity, I would just focus on the three major theories:

• Structural functionalism: the version of this theory as applied to medicine ad society may be termed as the “medical ecological approach. The structural functionalist theory views medicine and the systems of health care as important social institutions; and it focuses on the functions and roles played by the institution in maintaining odder and stability in society. The medical institutions whether scientific or traditional and the various practitioners exist to meet the needs of individuals and society (Henslin and Nelson, 1995).

• Symbolic interactionist theory: This theory as applied to medicine and society may be termed as the”cultural interpretationist approach. This approach focuses on the social and cultural constructions of health, illness and disease According to this theory, illnesses and health are not just things that exist “out there”; they are productions of the complex social interactions; and health and illness are highly shaped by the manner in which people as actors give meanings to them and how the actors respond to them in socio-culturally sanctioned ways.

• Conflict theory: The equivalent of this theory in medical sociology and anthropology may be termed as “the critical” or “radical political economy” approach. It is an approach which stresses on the socio-economic inequality in power and wealth which in turn significantly affects the health status and access to health care facilities. Individuals, groups, communities and even nations thus tend to have unbalanced share of health resources; and these often leads to the unequal distribution of morbidity and mortality patterns among a given society; those in power and dominance enjoy better health and the marginalized groups suffer from the burden of diseases (Turner, 1987).

**The Relationship between Sociology and Disciplines**

Sociology occupies an important position among the disciplines, usually called the social sciences. These include sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, political science, history and human geography. These disciplines are sometimes

also referred to as behavioral sciences, as they study the principles governing human social behavior. How is sociology related to other sciences? What are the similarities and differences? These are important questions. Sociology is similar with all other sciences in that it employs the scientific methods and its major aim is production of scientific knowledge. Sociology is related to other social and behavioral sciences in that all of them have more or less similar subject matter;they all in one way or another study society, human culture, social phenomena; and aim at discovering the laws that govern the social universe.

However, sociology differs from other social sciences in terms of its focus of study, approach of study, and the method of study. The closest discipline to sociology is social anthropology. The two share concepts, theories and methods, and have similar historical background. However, they are different in that sociology is primarily interested in the problems of modern society, whereas anthropology is primarily interested in the problem of traditional, non-western society. (It should be noted here that this conventional distinction between the two is now disappearing.)

Further, sociology focuses mainly on quantitative techniques where as anthropology on qualitative research techniques. Perhaps, the methods of research are more important in differentiating the two. Anthropology's heavy focus on qualitative method and sociology's on quantification are still persistent natures of the two disciplines. Further, one point of difference worth mentioning is that sociology is narrower in scope than anthropology, which has four sub fields; and anthropologists tend to stay in the field for long period (several months to few years) while sociologists prefer brief stay (weeks to few months).

**Sociological Research Methods**

**The Scientific Method Inductive vs. Deductive Approaches**

Sociology is a science. As such, it is concerned with systematically observing and classifying facts, and establishing verifiable laws. It, like any other science employs scientific method, which is the source for scientific knowledge. The scientific method is a logical system used to evaluate data derived from systematic observation. The scientific method as a precise way of designing and conducting research consists of the following basic steps:

1) establishing a hypothesis, a general statement based on observed facts;

2) determining ways to test the hypothesis, incorporating them in research design; 3) testing the hypothesis through research and further observation…” (Howard and Dunaif-Hattis, 1992:7)

Sociology as a science employs the two very important approaches in research design and in the overall research framework: inductive methods and deductive method.

Inductive method is a method by which the scientist first makes observation and collects data, on the basis of which he or she formulates hypothesis and theories (Scupin and DeCorse, 1995). The researcher tries to build theories from particular observations and instances. Induction moves from the particular to the general; where as deduction moves from the general to the particular. In deductive approach, the researcher attempts to derive specific assertions and claims from a general theoretical principle.

In short, deductive approach in research goes from general theory to particular claims (Dooley, 1995:65-66).

**Inductive vs. deductive approaches**

* Inductive method is a method by which the sientist first makes observation and collects data, on the basis of which he or she formulates hypothesis and theories
* In deductive approach, the researcher attempts to derive specific assertions and claims from a general theoretical principle.

As a science, the primary aim of sociology is doing research; to produce, accumulate, and disseminate scientific knowledge on society and social phenomena. **However, there are some people who question the scientific status of sociology and other social sciences. They argue that sociology is not strictly science because its subject matter is very much complex. It is not possible to subject human behavior into laboratory manipulations**. People have their own motives and hidden aspirations and other complex aspects. However, it is generally accepted that sociology is a science in the sense that its primary aim is doing scientific research to promote scientific knowledge. Sociology can and should employ the scientific methods.

The scientific method is defined as a method of observing the world critically, empirically and rationally to collect and analyze data systematically to arrive at a scientific knowledge.

**Steps in Sociological Research**

Generally, there are about seven steps in doing a sociological research. These steps are not, however, typical to sociology alone. It should also be noted that these steps are not fixed ones. Some steps may not necessarily be followed in some research projects. They steps may not necessarily be put in sequential order.

1. **Identification of Research Problems**

The first step in doing sociological research (for that matter, any other research) is to come up with a research problem. Identification of research problem basically involves choosing a research topic. The ways and manners in which researchers identify a research problem and choose a topic vary according to various factors. The research interests of sociologists are, often, triggered by their own life experiences and observations (Howard and Dunaif-Hattis, 1992). The initial ideas for research thus may occur at any time and place for a researcher. Walking down a street, reading through newspapers, watching television, etc may suggest a topic of research for an observing and curious person (Mann, 1976). Once a research topic comes to our mind, we should ask the following questions:

• Is it researchable?

• Is it sociologically/ socially significant?

• What is new about it?

• What gap will it fill?

• Is it manageable in terms of time, money, expertise and other resources?

In other words, do you have the needed resources to do the research? If you answer these and other related questions adequately, then you are on the right track to conduct the research.

1. **Literature Review**

This step involves familiarizing or orienting yourself with the concepts, theories and the works already done pertaining to the topic identified. Relevant available literature on the topic chosen should be reviewed; we should also check out what works have already been done by others, what gaps are remaining, what questions remain unanswered, etc. Research work normally proceeds by reviewing earlier works on a specific research problem one has identified. The researcher will need to review past works on the question he or she is raising (Dooley, 1995). The traditionally dominant source for literature review has been libraries and documentation centers where books and various references are found in card catalogued manner. Nowadays, most libraries maintain a computerized filing system, whereby references are made available via electronic online methods. Searching literature has become very easy, thus, with the computerization of library sources; one can easily access them if Internet connection is available (Rosnow and Rosenthal, 1996) Literature review is necessitated by the fact that a researcher is probably not the first person to develop an interest in a particular problem; and hence, he or she need to spend some time in the library reviewing what theories and methods others have used to the topic in the past and what findings are there (Macionis, 1997).

According to Marshal and Rossman (1989: 35), review of literature has the following four purposes: First, it demonstrates the underlying assumptions behind the general research question…. Second, it demonstrates that the researcher is thoroughly knowledgeable about related research and the intellectual traditions that surround and support the study. Third, it shows that the researcher has identified some gaps in previous research and that the proposed study will fill a demonstrated need. And finally, the review refines and redefines the research questions and related tentative hypotheses by embedding those questions in larger empirical traditions.

1. **Hypothesis Formulation**

Hypothesis is a statement that can be proved to be correct or incorrect. Hypothesis formulation involves identifying basic research objectives and determining research questions. This should be tested empirically. We put some guiding assumptions to the research in this step. We ask some basic research questions. However, we may note that this may not be always the case. The type of research may determine whether hypothesizing is needed or not. For example, in exploratory studies hypothesizing may not be needed.

1. **Selections and Designing of Methods of Data Collection**

Here the researcher determines data collection methods and prepares data collection instruments. He/she chooses from among the different data collection methods.

There are generally two categories of methods: Quantitative methods and qualitative methods.

Quantitative methods focus on measuring quantity of information: terms such as prevalence, scope, percentage, frequency, magnitude, etc are very important. On the other hand, qualitative methods focus on depth and quality of information. The complex, detailed and sensitive aspects; belief, attitudinal and knowledge dimensions etc are usually studied by qualitative methods.

1. **Conducting Data Gathering Activity**

This is the step in which the researcher engages in collecting the needed data by using the various methods and instruments. The researcher goes to the field and collects the data. He/ she trains data collectors, supervises the overall data collection process, and so on.

Data collected thus may be of two types: primary and secondary data.

Primary data are firsthand and original information; the researcher firsthand collects them. They are collected by the sociology themselves during their own research using research tools such as experiment, survey, questionnaire, interviews and observation (Chapman, 2000). On the other hand, secondary data are those which are already collected by some one else found in various sources as documents or archives. They include: official statistical documents, mass media sources (such as electronic media – radio, television, films, etc; and print media such as newspapers, magazines, journals, posters, brochures, leaflets, sign broads, etc.)

**Some of the methods of data collection in sociology include:**

**Surveys**

One of the dominant quantitative techniques is the survey method, which involves sampling, impersonal data collections, and sophisticated statistical analysis. Of all the social sciences research techniques, survey research probably seems to be the most visible and pervasive form research in the social and behavioral sciences (Jones, 1995). . In survey research, people who provide information are termed as **respondents**, (unlike in anthropology, where we call them **informants**); these respondents are often selected on random sample basis, wherein all members of a population have equal chances of being included in the study population.

**There are three types of survey research:**

cross sectional survey, which aims to find out what opinions research participants across sections of society have about a certain phenomena at a given point of time his survey represents fixed reflections of one moment in time.

Longitudinal survey is conducted on the same type of people over long period of time, as long as sometimes 20 to 30 years. This type provides us with a moving picture of the changes over time in a given area.

The third type is called panel surveys, which are alternative versions of longitudinal surveys. It usually lasts shorter period of time and asks questions of panel members on a frequent basis. A panel member may be asked question every month for a couple of years, while in longitudinal survey, people are asked often once a year (Moore, 2001).

Traditionally, the survey techniques has been considered the domain of disciplines such as sociology, psychology, political science, and economics, which often work mainly in large, complex and populous societies, unlike anthropologists, which have traditionally worked among small-scale societies.

**Experimentation:** This quantitative method is sometimes used in sociology. Sociologists conduct experimental studies, following the procedures and principles of experimentation. This is done usually to explore **cause and effect** relationship between one and the other social phenomena. What causes what? What is the effect of one social phenomenon on the other?

**Key Informant Interview**: This is a qualitative method in which a knowledgeable person in study site or community is contacted and interviewed by the researcher or data collector. Questions for the interview session may be prepared in advance, or sometimes only guiding themes are prepared for the session. This method is similar with in-depth interview, in that in most cases one individual person is contacted and interviewed at a time. However, in the latter, the researcher/ interviewer digs deep into issues (Macionis, 1997). Focus Group Discussion: This is a form of qualitative data collection method in which intends to make use of the explicit interaction dynamic among group members which may yield important information on certain topic. This qualitative method of data collection has become so popular particularly in the recent decades; it is highly being used by researchers from crosscutting fields such as public health, anthropology, and other behavioral sciences disciplines.

**Case Study**: This method involves investigating a certain issue as a case taking longer time and investigating the phenomenon in depth. A case study may be about an individual person, a social group, a family, or an organization. The case chosen is regarded as a representative of the wider group or context from which it is derived. This method may involve elements of both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

**Observation**: This qualitative method involves collecting data on social phenomena by carefully observing the social processes, events, activities, behaviors, actions, etc., they take place. All relevant events, actions, places, objects, etc must be observed and recorded (Marshal and Rossman, 1989). One of the key procedures in these techniques is called participant observation, the active involvement in community life while studying it. The researcher participates in a research setting while observing what is happening in that setting (Henslin and Nelson, 1995). A variant of this method is non-participant observation – collecting data without participating in what the informants or the subjects do.

**Unobtrusive Measures**: Most of the research techniques are obtrusive, meaning the data are gathered while the study subjects’ behaviors actions are directly observed, and they know that they are being researched. To avoid the risks of the research act intruding on the subject of study thereby affecting the research findings, sociologists have developed what is called unobtrusive measures. When a researcher takes unobtrusive measures, people's behavior is observed while they are not aware of it. Here, this method involves techniques that do not interfere with the objects or events studied. Sociologist study many social phenomena using this methods such how people behave in the public arena, the way people wear and decorate themselves, the way they sit or stand relative to others, etc (Rosenberg, et al, 1987).

**Data Organization, Analysis, Interpretation, and Report Writing**

The most challenging task is how to manage, handle, store and arrange the raw data as cautiously as possible. Data may get lost, if not handled well. The researcher here carefully stores the data, manages them, organizes and systematically arranges. Various ways of analyzing data are used both in qualitative and quantitative methods (Henslin and Nelson, 1995).

For quantitative data researchers use sophisticated statistical techniques using computer models. Plans for data analysis are often made as early before the data are collected (Mann, 1976). Analysis of qualitative data also actually begins while the researcher is in the field recording his/ her field notes, tape recording and transcribing the interviews. Tape-recording the interview process and transcribing are the essential components of analysis (Jones 1995)

In analyzing the data, the researcher must distinguish between his own views and the views of the people being studied (Scupin and DeCorse, 1995). There are many possible analytic schemes and some computer models for analyzing qualitative data are also available. Introduction to Sociology 53 After the data are entered into a computer for easy processing, tabulation, and analysis, the researcher interprets the data and writes up the findings. The hypotheses are tested, comparisons are made with similar kinds of studies conducted elsewhere or done before, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations are made, depending on the type of research, such as basic or applied. 7. Dissemination of Research Findings This is the final step in which the researcher shares the findings with all concerned bodies. Dissemination of the research findings is possible via scientific journals, seminars, symposiums, conferences and other forums.

**The Concept of Society**

The term society as mentioned earlier is derived from a Latin word socius. The term directly means association, togetherness, gregariousness, or simply group life. The concept of society refers to a relatively large grouping or collectivity of people who share more or less common and distinct culture, occupying a certain geographical locality, with the feeling of identity or belongingness, having all the necessary social arrangements or insinuations to sustain itself. We may add a more revealing definition of society as defined by Calhoun et al (1994): "A society is an autonomous grouping of people who inhabit a common territory, have a common culture (shared set of values, beliefs, customs and so forth) and are linked to one another through routinized social interactions and interdependent statuses and roles." Society also may mean a certain population group or community.

The common tendency in sociology has been to conceptualize society as a system, focusing on the bounded and integrated nature of society. Great founders of sociology had also focused on the dynamic aspect of society. Such early sociologists as Comte, Marx and Spencer grasped the concept of society as a dynamic system evolving historically and inevitably towards complex industrial structures (Swingwood, 1991:313).

The common tendency in sociology has been to conceptualize society as a system, focusing on the bounded and integrated nature of society. But in recent years such an approach has been criticized. Contemporary sociologists now frequently use the network conception of society. This approach views society as overlapping, dynamic and fluid network of economic, political, cultural and other relations at various levels. Such a conception is analytically more powerful and reflects the reality especially in the context of modern, globalizing world. (Personal communication: Dr Teketel Abebe, Addis Ababa University, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology)

**Basic Features of a Society**

First, a society is usually a relatively large grouping of people in terms of size. In a very important sense, thus, society may be regarded as the largest and the most complex social group that sociologists study.

Second, as the above definition shows, the most important thing about a society is that its members share common and distinct culture. This sets it apart from the other population groups.

Third, a society also has a definite, limited space or territory. The populations that make up a given society are thus locatable in a definite geographical area. The people consider that area as their own.

Fourth, the people who make up a society have the feeling of identity and belongingness. There is also the feeling of oneness. Such identity felling emanates from the routinized pattern of social interaction that exists among the people and the various groups that make up the society. (Henslin and Nelson, 1995; Giddens, 1996; Calhoun et al., 1994)

Fifth, members of a society are considered to have a common origin and common historical experience. They feel that they have also common destiny.

Sixth, members of a society may also speak a common mother tongue or a major language that may serve as a national heritage.

Seventh, a society is autonomous and independent in the sense that it has all the necessary social institutions and organizational arrangements to sustain the system.

However, a society is not an island, in the sense that societies are interdependent. There has always been inter– societal relations. People interact socially, economically and politically. It is important to note that the above features of a society are by no means exhaustive and they may not apply to all societies. The level of a society’s economic and technological development, the type of economic or livelihood system a society is engaged in, etc may create some variations among societies in terms of these basic features.

**Conceptualizing Society at Various Levels**

As indicated above, in a general sense and at an abstract level, all people of the earth may be considered as a society. The earth is a common territory for the whole world's people. All people of the earth share common origin; inhabit common planet; have common bio psychological unity; and exhibit similar basic interests, desires and fears; and are heading towards common destiny (Calhoun, et al., 1994). At another level, every continent may be considered as a society. Thus, we may speak of the European society, the African society, the Asian society, the Latin American society, etc. This may be because, each of these continents share its own territory, historical experiences, shared culture, and so on.

At a more practical level, each nation-state or country is regarded as a society. For example, the people of Ethiopia or Kenya, Japan are considered as a society. Going far farther still, another level of society is that within each nation-state, there may be ethno- linguistically distinct groups of people having a territory that they consider as their own. They are thus societies in their own right. Some Such society may extend beyond the boundaries of nation-states. Example, the Borana Oromo inhabit in both Ethiopia and Kenya.

**Types or Categories of Societies**

Sociologists classify societies into various categories depending on certain criteria. One such criterion is level of economic and technological development attained by countries. Thus, the countries of the world are classified as First World, Second World, and Third World; First World Countries are those which are highly industrially advanced and economically rich, such as the USA, Japan, Britain, France, Italy, Germany, and Canada and so on. The Second World Countries are also industrially advanced but not as much as the first category. The Third World societies are thus which are least developed, or in the process of developing. Some writers add a fourth category, namely, Fourth World countries. These countries may be regarded as the "poorest of the poor" (Giddens, 1996).

Another important criterion for classifying societies may be that which takes into account temporal succession and the major source of economic organization (Lensiki and Lensiki, 1995). When societies modernize they transform from one form to another.

The simplest type of society that is in existence today and that may be regarded the oldest is that whose economic organization is based on hunting and gathering. They are called hunting and gathering societies. This society depends on hunting and gathering for its survival.

The second types are referred to as pastoral and horticultural societies. Pastoral societies are those whose livelihood is based on pasturing of animals, such as cattle, camels, sheep and goats.

Horticultural societies are those whose economy is based on cultivating plants by the use of simple tools, such as digging sticks, hoes, axes, etc.

The third types are agricultural societies. This society, which still is dominant in most parts of the world, is based on large-scale agriculture, which largely depends on ploughs using animal labor. The Industrial Revolution which began in Great Britain during 18th century, gave rise to the emergence of a fourth type of society called the Industrial Society. An industrial society is one in which goods are produced by machines powered by fuels instead of by animal and human energy (Ibid.).

Sociologists also have come up with a fifth emerging type of society called post-industrial society. This is a society based on information, services and high technology, rather than on raw materials and manufacturing. The highly industrialized which have now passed to the post-industrial level include the USA, Canada, Japan, and Western Europe

**The Concept of Culture**

Before going any further, it may be important to note that common people often misuse the concept of culture. Some misconceptions about the to term culture include:

1. Many people in the western world use the term culture in the sense that some people are more "cultured" than others. This basically emanates from the idea associated with the root word of the term culture, “kulture” in German, which refers to “civilization". Thus, when one is said to be “cultured”, he or she is said to be civilized. For sociologists and anthropologists, "culture includes much more than refinement, taste, sophistication, education and appreciation of the fine arts. Not only college graduates but also all people are ‘cultured’” Kottak (2002: 272).

2. A second commonly used misconception is that which equates “culture" with things which are colorful, customs, cloths, foods, dancing, music, etc. As Kottak (op. cit p.525) argues, “… many [people] have come to think of culture in terms of colorful customs, music, dancing and adornments clothing, jewelry and hairstyles…. Taken to an extreme, such images portray culture as recreational and ultimately unserious rather than something that ordinary people live everyday of their lives not just when they have festivals” (Ibid. P. 525).

3. A third misconception about what culture is and what it constitutes is that which may be entertained by many common people here in Ethiopia. This misconception is similar to the second one, but it differs from it in that most people here think culture (as conceptualized in its local language for example, bahil in Amharic) is that which pertains to unique traditional material objects or non – material things of the past.

According to this view, the cultural may not include things (material or non – material), which are modern, more ordinary, day-to – day, life aspects. Here, the simple, ordinary social, economic and other activities, ideas and affairs are regarded as not cultural or somewhat “less cultural" although not clearly stated. The concept of culture is one of the most widely used notions in sociology. It refers to the whole ways of life of the members of a society. It includes what they dress, their marriage customs and family life, art, and patterns of work, religious ceremonies, leisure pursuits, and so forth. It also includes the material goods they produce:bows and arrows, plows, factories and machines, computers, books, buildings, airplanes, etc (Calhoun, et al, 1994; Hensiln and Nelson, 1995).

The concept of culture has been defined by hundreds of times by sociologists and anthropologists, emphasizing different dimensions. However, most often scholars have focused on eh symbolic dimension of culture; that culture is essentially symbolic.

**Basic Characteristics of Culture**

1. Culture is organic and supra-organic: It is organic when we consider the fact that there is no culture without human society. It is supra organic, because it is far beyond any individual lifetime. Individuals come and go, but culture remains and persists Calhoun (op cit).

2. Culture is overt and covert: It is generally divided into material and non-material cultures. Material culture consists of any tangible human made objects such as tools, automobiles, buildings, etc. Non- material culture consists of any non-physical aspects like language, belief, ideas, knowledge, attitude, values, etc.

3. Culture is explicit and implicit: It is explicit when we consider those actions which can be explained and described easily by those who perform them. It is implicit when we consider those things we do, but are unable to explain them, yet we believe them to be so.

4. Culture is ideal and manifest (actual): Ideal culture involves the way people ought to behave or what they ought to do. Manifest culture involves what people actually do.

5. Culture is stable and yet changing: Culture is stable when we consider what people hold valuable and are handing over to the next generation in order to maintain their norms and values. However, when culture comes into contact with other cultures, it can change. However, culture changes not only because of direct or indirect contact between cultures, but also through innovation and adaptation to new circumstances.

6. Culture is shared and learned: Culture is the public property of a social group of people (shared). Individuals get cultural knowledge of the group through socialization. However, we should note that all things shared among people might not be cultural, as there are many biological attributes which people share among themselves (Kottak, 2002).

7. Culture is symbolic: It is based on the purposeful creation and usage of symbols; it is exclusive to humans. Symbolic thought is unique and crucial to humans and to culture. Symbolic thought is the human ability to give a thing or event an arbitrary meaning and grasp and appreciate that meaning Symbols are the central components of culture. Symbols refer to anything to which people attach meaning and which they use to communicate with others. More specifically, symbols are words, objects, gestures, sounds or images that represent something else rather than themselves. Symbolic thought is unique and crucial to humans and to culture. It is the human ability to give a thing or event an arbitrary meaning and grasp and appreciate that meaning. There is no obvious natural or necessary connection between a symbol and what it symbolizes (Henslin and Nelson, 1995; Macionis, 1997). Culture thus works in the symbolic domain emphasizing meaning, rather than the technical/practical rational side of human behavior. All actions have symbolic content as well as being action in and of themselves. Things, actions, behaviors, etc, always stand for something else than merely, the thing itself.

**Basic features of culture**

* Culture is organic and supraorganic
* Culture is implicit and explicit
* Culture is stable and changing
* Culture is overt and covert
* Culture is learned and shared
* Culture is symbolic
* Culture is ideal and manifest.

**Elements of Culture**

Culture includes within itself elements that make up the essence of a society or a social group. The major ones include: **Symbols, values, norms, and language** (See Henslin and Nelson, 1995; Calhoun et al. 1994). Symbols Symbols are the central components of culture. Symbols refer to anything to which people attach meaning and which they use to communicate with others. More specifically, symbols are words, objects, gestures, sounds or images that represent something else rather than themselves. Symbolic thought is unique and crucial to humans and to culture. It is the human ability to give a thing or event an arbitrary meaning and grasp and appreciate that meaning. There is no obvious natural or necessary connection between a symbol and what it symbolizes.

**Language**

Language, specifically defined as a system of verbal and in many cases written symbols with rules about how those symbols can be strung together to convey more complex meanings, is the distinctive capacity and possession of humans; it is a key element of culture. Culture encompasses language, and through language, culture is communicated and transmitted. Without language it would be impossible to develop, elaborate and transmit culture to the future generation.

**Values**

Values are essential elements of non-material culture. They may be defined as general, abstract guidelines for our lives, decisions, goals, choices, and actions. They are shared ideas of a groups or a society as to what is right or wrong, correct or incorrect, desirable or undesirable, acceptable or unacceptable, ethical or unethical, etc., regarding something. They are general road maps for our lives. Values are shared and are learned in group. They can be positive or negative. For example, honesty, truth – telling, respect for others, hospitality, helping those in need, etc are positive values. Examples of negative values include theft, indecency, disrespect, dishonesty, falsehood, frugality, etc. The Hippocratic Oath in medical profession dictates that practitioners should among other things, keep the secrets of patients, provide them whatever help they can, do no harm to patients willingly, etc. This is an example of positive value. Values are dynamic, meaning they change over time. They are also static, meaning they tend to persist without any significant modification. Values are also diversified, meaning they vary from place to place and culture to culture. Some values are universal because there is bio- psychological unity among people everywhere and all times. In other words, they emanate from the basic similarity of mankind’s origins, nature and desires. For example, dislike for killing people, concepts and practices of disease management, cleanliness, personal hygiene, cosmetics, incest taboo, etc.

**Norms**

Norms are also essential elements of culture. They are implicit principles for social life, relationship and interaction. Norms are detailed and specific rules for specific situations. They tell us how to do something, what to do, what not to do, when to do it, why to do it, etc. Norms are derived from values. That means, for every specific norm, there is a general value that determines its content. Individuals may not act according to the defined values and norms of the group. Therefore, violation of values and norms and deviating from the standard values and norms are often common. Social norms may be divided into two. These are **mores** and **folkways Mores**: Are important and stronger social norms for existence, safety, well-being and continuity of the society or the group or society. Violation of, and deviation from these kinds of norms, may result in serious reactions form the groups. The strongest norms are regarded as the **formal laws** of a society or a group. **Formal laws are written and codified social norms**. The other kinds of mores are called **conventions**. Conventions are established rules governing behavior; they are generally accepted ideals by the society. Conventions may also be regarded as written and signed agreements between nations to govern the behaviors of individuals, groups and nations.

Folkways: are the ways of life developed by a group of people. They are detailed and minor instructions, traditions or rules for day-to-day life that help us function effectively and smoothly as members of a group. Here, **violating such kinds of norms may not result in a serious punishment unlike violating mores**. They are less morally binding. In other words, folkways are appropriate ways of behaving and doing things. Examples may include table etiquette, dressing rules, walking, talking, etc. Conformity to folkways usually occurs automatically without any national analysis and is based upon custom passed from generation to generation. They are not enforced by law, but by informal social control. They are not held to be important or obligatory as mores, or moral standards, and their violation is not as such severely sanctioned. Although folkways are less binding, people have to behave according to accepted standards. Some exceptional behaviors are regarded eccentric behaviors.

Folkways are distinguished from laws and mores in that they are designed, maintained and enforced by public sentiment, or custom, whereas laws are institutionalized, designed, maintained and enforced by the political authority of the society.

Folkways in turn may be divided into two sub types: fashion and custom.

**Fashion**: Is a form of behavior, type of folkways that is socially approved at a given time but subject to periodic change. Adherents combine both deviation and conformity to norm of a certain group.

**Custom**: Is a folkway or form of social behavior that, having persisted a long period of time, has become traditional and well established in a society and has received some degree of formal recognition. Custom is a pattern of action shared by most or all members of a society. Habit is a personality trait, where as the custom is a group trait. Fashion and customs can be differentiated in that while custom changes at slower rate, fashion changes at a faster rate. Culture Variability and Explanations Cultural variability refers to the diversity of cultures across societies and places. As there are different societies, there are different cultures. The diversity of human culture is remarkable. Values and norms of behavior vary widely from culture to culture often contrasting in radical ways (Broom and Sleznki, 1973). For example, Jews do not eat pork, while Hindus eat pork but avoid beef. Cultural diversity or variability can be both between societies and within societies. If we take the two societies, Ethiopia and India, there are great, sharp cultural diversities between the two societies. On the other hand, within both societies, there is remarkable cultural variability. Cultural variability between societies may result in divergent health and disease conditions. For example, variations in nutritional habits are closely linked to the types of diseases. The prevalence of tapeworm among raw-meat eating people may be a case in point. We use the concept of subculture to denote the variability of culture within a certain society. Sub culture is a distinctive culture that is shared by a group within a society (Stockard, 1997). We call it sub culture, because groups (with their sub cultures) exist within and as a smaller part of the main, dominant culture. Examples of subculture could be the distinctive culture of university students, street children and prostitutes in Addis Ababa, the culture of medical professionals, etc. Why cultures vary from society to society? Sociologists, anthropologists, cultural geographers and other social scientists have studied the causes for cultural variations among (between) societies. Various arguments have been provided the variation, including geographical factors, racial determination, demographic factors, span of interest and mere historic chances. Those who argued for racial determination believe that cultural variation is genetically determined.

Geographic factors include: climate, altitude, and so forth. Included in demographic factors are changes in population structure, population increase, etc., whereas by span of interest is meant cultures vary as people's interest in life also varies. Cultural variation is due to mere historical chances; a particular group of people may develop a culture as it is exposed to certain historical circumstances and opportunities. However, no one explanation is sufficient by itself; anthropologists now reject particular deterministic explanation such as those based on race; rather cultural variations are accounted for by more holistic explanations.

**Ethnocentrism, Cultural Relativism and Culture Shock Ethnocentrism**

We often tend to judge other cultures by comparison with our own. It is not logically possible and proper to underestimate or overestimate or judge other cultures on the basis of one's cultural standard. Ethnocentrism, in general, is an attitude of taking one's own culture and ways of life as the best and the center of all and on the other hand, regarding other ethnic groups and cultures as inferior, bad, full of errors, etc. It is the tendency to apply one's own cultural values in judging the behavior and beliefs of people raised in other cultures. It is a cultural universal. People everywhere think that familiar explanations, opinion, and customs as true, right, proper and moral. They regard different behavior as strange or savage (Macionis, 1997; Hensllin and Nelson, 1995).

**Cultural Relativism**

Every society has its own culture, which is more or less unique. Every culture contains its own unique pattern of behavior which may seem alien to people from other cultural backgrounds. We cannot understand the practices and beliefs separately from the wider culture of which they are part. A culture has to be studied in terms of its own meanings and values. Cultural relativism describes a situation where there is an attitude of respect for cultural differences rather than condemning other people's culture as uncivilized or backward (Stockard, 1997). Respect for cultural differences involves:

* Appreciating cultural diversity;
* Accepting and respecting other cultures;
* Trying to understand every culture and its elements in terms of its own context and logic;
* Accepting that each body of custom has inherent dignity and meaning as the way of life of one group which has worked out to its environment, to the biological needs of its members, and to the group relationships;
* Knowing that a person's own culture is only one among many; and
* Recognizing that what is immoral, ethical, acceptable, etc, in one culture may not be so in another culture. **Cultural relativism may be regarded as the opposite of ethnocentrism**. However, there is some problem with the argument that behavior in a particular culture should not be judged by the standards of another. This is because in its extremeness, it argues that there is no superior, international or universal morality.

To sum up the issues of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism, the concepts involve difficult choices, dilemmas and contradictions regarding cultural exchanges and relationships between and within societies. The dilemmas and contradictions become clear when we see that the traditional anthropological position maintains that every cultural beliefs and practice, including for example the ones which are termed as “harmful traditional practices” in Ethiopia, are part and parcel of the general cultural system of a society and therefore they should not be judged and undermined by any outsider. On the other hand, the dilemma is taken to the extreme. Cultural relativism appears to entail a fallacy, in that it implies that there are no universal cultural or moral standard by which actions and beliefs have to be judged. Yet still, even cultural anthropologists accept the idea that there are some cultural standards which are universally found everywhere, expressed for example in the world’s major religions. In any case there may be no ready made solutions to this dilemma; however, what we can at present maintain is that cultural diversity has to be respected and yet international standards of justice and human rights have to be taken into account.

**Culture Shock**

Culture shock is the psychological and social maladjustment at micro or macro level that is experienced for the first time when people encounter new cultural elements such as new things, new ideas, new concepts, seemingly strange beliefs and practices. No person is protected form culture shock. However, individuals vary in their capacity to adapt and overcome the influence of culture shock. Highly ethnocentric people are exposed widely to culture shock. On the other hand, cultural relativists may find it easy to adapt to new situations and overcome culture shock (Henslin and Nelson, 1995).

**Cultural Universals**

Although there are as many different and unique cultures as societies, there are some cultural practices that are universal. Amid the diversity of human cultural behavior, there are some common features that are found in virtually all societies. Cultural universality refers to those practices, beliefs, values, norms, material objects, etc., which are observed across all societies in the world, or across different social groups within a society. For example, every culture has a grammatically complex language. All societies have some recognized form of family system in which there are values and norms associated with the care of children. The institution of marriage, religious rituals, and property rights are all cultural universals. All societies have some form of incest prohibition. Anthropologist have identified variety of more cultural universals including the existence of art, dancing, bodily adornments, games, gift giving, joking and rules of hygiene. Cultural universals condition behavioral similarity among individuals in a given society or across societies. They do not allow differences in actions and behaviors, lifestyle, attitude, behaviors, etc (Broom and Selzenki, 1973).

**Cultural Alternatives and Specialties**

There are many different options for doing the same thing. For example, care for a patient is a universal aspect of cultures; but the way people care for patients varies. There are many diverse ways of doing the same thing. This is called cultural alternative. In other words, cultural alternatives refer to two or more forms of behavior in a particular society which are acceptable in a given situation. These alternatives represent different reactions to the same situations or different techniques to achieve the same end. Cultural alternatives are (also) the types of choices that allow for differences in ideas, customs and lifestyles. Modern industrialized societies offer far more cultural alternatives than had many societies of the past. On the other hand, cultural specialties refer to the specific skills, training, knowledge, etc. which is limited to a group or specific members of society. They are those elements of culture which are shared by the members of certain social groups but which are not shared by the total population. Cultural specialties cause behavioral differences among people as opposed to cultural universals.

**The Concepts of Culture Lag and Culture Lead**

Culture is dynamic. When culture change occurs, the change is usually not evenly distributed across material and non-material dimensions of culture. The rate of change is not balanced. Material culture may change at a faster rate than non- material culture. The growth in science and technology in western, industrialized societies for example, does not seem to be matched by the necessary changes and appropriate adjustment of adaptive culture. That is non-material culture changes slowly. This condition is termed as culture lag. Associated with the rapid growth in material culture are usually crisis in the realm of amorality, social and cultural dilemmas, which in turn result in various social pathologies such as extreme form of individualism, alienation, the state of normlessness, suicide, etc (Team of Experts, 2000). On the other hand, in some less developed societies, the change of non-material culture may outpace the material culture. When this occurs, it is called culture lead. Due to the effect of globalization and rapid assimilation processes, people in the Third World are accustomed to the ideology and cultures of the Western World, though their material culture is not changing keeping pace with non- material culture.

**Global Culture and Cultural Imperialism**

Before closing this chapter, it may be important to note few things on the issues of cultural exchange in today’s globalizing world. One of the main aspects of globalization is that a relatively uniform world culture is taking shape today in the world. The global culture may entail all speaking the some language, share the same values and norms, and sustain common und of knowledge as of residents of the same community (Kottak 2002). Global culture may also be associated with cultural imperialism, the unequal cultural exchange in the global system whereby western material and non-material cultures have come to occupy a dominating and imposing roles over the indigenous cultures of the Third World peoples. The global culture is often promoted by: - The global spread of capitalism - Consumerism and the consumer culture - The growth of transnational media, particularly electronic mass media such as BBC, CNN, etc. The transnational media have often promoted the aggressive promotion that its value system is superior and preferable to those of other non–western cultures

**Social Institutions**

**Definition and Main Features:**

Social institutions may be defined as practices based on similar principles that display some degree of regularity. More specifically, a social institution is an interrelated system of social roles and social norms, organized around the satisfaction of an important social need or social function (Team of Experts, 2000).

In general, a social institution is an established pattern of behavior that is organized to perpetuate the welfare of society and to preserve its form.

From the above definition, we can observe that social institutions have got some important functions. Three of such main functions are:

1. perpetuation of the welfare of society,
2. preservation and maintenance of the form of society, and
3. meeting the major needs of the members of society.

A society is functionally integrated and held together by social institutions. Social institutions are universal. They vary from time to time and across cultures, in terms of complexity, specialization, scope, formality and organization. But their basic nature and purpose are similar everywhere. These features are particularly true regarding the five major social institutions discussed below. Social institutions are resistant to change; they tend to persist. However, once a change occurs in particular social institution, it tends to affect the other institutions as well.

**Major Types and Functions of Social Institutions**

There are many principles around which institution are organized. The five social institutions of major significances are:

1. Economic institutions: those that deal with economic and property relations;
2. Polity and law: Those that are concerned with social control with politics and law government, the police, court, etc;
3. Religious institutions: Those concerned with the supernatural magic and religion;
4. Family: those based on principles of kinship, meaning, social relations created by descent and marriage; and
5. Educational institutions: those that deal with the need for training individuals in the roles, values, skills, knowledge, attitudes etc which are associated with being a citizen and a worker.

Each institution performs two types of social function. These are:

1. primary functions, which are also called manifest, explicit, or direct functions; and
2. secondary functions, which are also called indirect, hidden, or latent functions. Through these functions, social institutions fulfill important needs in the society.

The primary functions of the five major social institutions are as follows.

1. The Family The family is the most important social unit in any society. It is the building block of any society. The family fulfills two basic functions. These are reproduction and socialization. Society reproduces or recreates itself through the family. Children are born in the family to join the society. Parents play the roles of nurturing, caring for, teaching and training children; children are expected to play the roles of good and teachable trainees. The way parents nurture, train and care for their children vary according toe forms of family organization. Nuclear family is a dominant form of family organization in modern, industrialized and urban societies. It usually consists of husband wife and dependent children. In traditional, agrarian and rural societies, Extruded family form dominates. It consists of husband, wife/ wives, their children, and other relatives (Henslin and Nelson, 1995; Calhoun et al. 1994)

2. Economic Institution Every society needs to make effective use of the scarce resources. Goods and services have to be produced to meet the basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, etc. Economic institutions are responsible for organizing the production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods and services.

3. Religious Institution This asocial institution is responsible for meeting (providing) spiritual needs of the members of the society. There are puzzling questions about the meaning of the human life, human destiny, the universe, and other questions. Religion and related institutions like magic provide explanations for these puzzling paradoxes of life and provides meaning and purpose for life. It helps people to cope with purposelessness, meaninglessness and sense of alienation and frustration. These institutions also help members of society conform to social values and norms, and play their expected social roles Introduction appropriately. They also provide a sense of social solidarity among members of society.

4. Political Institution (Government and Law) These social institutions are responsible for protecting the society from internal disorder, crime and chaos; as well as from external threats and invasion. They are responsible for maintaining peace and order at micro and macro levels; enforcing social control; and maintaining the welfare and well-being of society.

5. Educational Institution This social institution is responsible for providing training for the members of society. It serves as center of knowledge production, exchange, and distribution. Generally, educational institutions are responsible for the vertical and horizontal transmission of material and non-material cultures. Vertical transmission means over time from one generation to another generation; where as horizontal transmission means over geographical space or from one society to another. Educational institutions also play the role of preparing members of society for the statuses and roles that re associate with being good citizens and workers, holding various occupations.

Before ending this section it is important to note that although the foregoing way of presenting the nature and function of social institutions is often common in some of standard text books in introductory sociology, we also need to view them in a critical and conflict theory approach. From such perspectives, social institutions may be functional for some and dysfunctional (meaning positively harmful and damaging) for other individuals and groups in a society. This is partly because they often exist and operate in the context of class division and social stratification, unequal access to power and resources. From this point of view, social institutions may not be functional to al members of society equally. They may exist to promote the interests and privileges of some sections of society

**Major social institutions with primary functions**

1. The family: procreation and socialization of children
2. Economic institution: organizing production, exchange and consumption of goods and services
3. Political Institution: Maintaining peace and order in society
4. Educational institution: centers of knowledge creation and transmission; transmission of culture from generation to generation
5. Religious institution: Meeting spiritual needs; serving as source of explanatory authority on difficult questions facing human life.

**The Concept of Social Control**

**Definition and Necessity**

In any human society, there are deviations from the accepted norms of a society or group. This movement away from the accepted social standards is called **social deviance**. Each society or group expects and attempts to ensure conformity of its members to its norms. Those members of a society or a group who abide by the rules and norms of the society (or the group) are called **conformists**, while those who don't are called **non-conformists**. A society or a group applies some formal and informal mechanisms to achieve conformity. Individuals may not act according to the defined values and norms of the group. Therefore violation of values and norms and deviating from the standard values and norms are often common.

Social control is thus simply defined as all the mechanisms and processes employed by a society to ensure conformity. In other words, social control is any cultural or social means by which restraints are imposed upon individual behavior and by which people are initiated to follow the traditions and patterns of behavior accepted by society. It is, simply, a means by which conformists are rewarded and non-conformists are punished.

**Types of Social Control**

There are two major types of social control mechanisms. These are: negative and positive social control mechanisms.

Negative Social Control: This involves punishment or regulating behavior of deviants. A deviant is a person whose views and actions are different in moral or social standards from what is considered normal or acceptable in the context of a certain social group. This social control may be at micro/ informal level and macro/ formal levels. Micro/ informal level social control occurs at the level of small groups such as peer groups, family, and interpersonal relationships. Examples of negative social control at micro levels include: simple gossip or backbiting, a simple frowning, reprimanding, pinching, beating, ridiculing, scolding, ostracizing, etc. The punishments can be in the psychological, social or physical/ material forms. Punishments at macro or formal level include: fining, firing, demotion, imprisonment, banishment or excommunication, capital punishment and so on.

**Positive Social Control**: These mechanisms involve rewarding and encouraging those who abide by the norms. It involves rewarding the model behavior. The informal psychosocial reward mechanisms include simple smiles, saying encouraging word, shaking hands, thanking, showing appreciation, etc. Formal positive social control mechanism may include giving awards, promoting to a higher level of status, etc.

**Socialization**

**The Concept of Socialization**

**Definition and Necessity:**

In any society there are socially recognized ways in which the norms and values of the society are inculcated in the human infant who comes into this world as a biological organism with animalistic needs or impulses. Individuals learn group-defined ways of acting and behaving, and what they socially learn becomes part of their personality. Socialization is a process of making somebody social and fully human. Or more appropriately, it is a process whereby individual persons learn and are trained in the basic norms, values, beliefs, skills, attitudes, way of doing and acting as appropriate to a specific social group or society. It is an on-going, never ending process- from cradle to the grave. That means an individual person passes through various stages of socialization, from birth to death. Thus, we need socialization as infants, preschool children, schoolboys/girls, pubescents, adolescents, adults and older persons.

From the point of view of individual persons, especially a newly born baby, socialization is a process whereby a biological being or organism is changed into a social being. In terms of the group, society or any professional organizations, socialization is a process whereby the organizations', social groups' and society's structure and well-being are kept and sustained. It is the process whereby the culture, skills, norms, traditions, customs, etc., are transmitted from generation to generation - or from one society to another.

Socialization may be formal or informal. It becomes formal when it is conducted by formally organized social groups and institutions, like schools, religious centers, mass media universities, work places, military training centers, internships, etc. It is informal when it is carried out through the informal social interactions and relationships at micro-levels, at interpersonal and small social group levels. The most important socialization for us is that we get through informal agents like family, parents, neighborhood and peer group influences. It has a very powerful influence, whether negative or positive, in our lives. The process of socialization, whether it is formal or informal, is vitally important to both individuals and society. Without some kind of socialization, society would cease to exist. Socialization, thus, can be labeled as the way by which culture is transmitted and individuals are fitted into the society's organized way of life.

**The Goals of Socialization**

In terms of individual persons, the goal of socialization is to equip him or her with the basic values, norms, skills, etc, so that they will behave and act properly in the social group to which they belong. Socialization has also the following specific goals (Broom and Sleznki, 1973)

* To inculcate basic disciplines by restraining a child or even an adult from immediate gratification; a child who is toilet-trained will delay relieving himself/ herself until the proper environment is created.
* To instill aspirations;
* To teach social roles;
* To teach skills;
* To teach conformity to norms; and
* To create acceptable and constructive personal identities.

Despite the inculcation of values and norms is significant in the process of social integration, we need to also note that social values are not equally absorbed by members of a society or group. The integrative function of socialization is also not equally beneficial to all people. There is always the question of whose values have to be inculcated? This question particularly becomes crucial in an increasingly globalizing society. Hence, the ideological role of socialization with the issues of differential power, control, domination and conflict become important.

**Human Biological Bases of, and Capacity for, Socialization**

From among the animal kingdom, humans are the only ones who are capable of socialization because they are endowed with the necessary biological bases that are lacking in other animals. The following are the key biological characteristics of human beings on which socialization is based: Absence of instincts, social contact needs, longer period of childhood dependence, capacity to learn and language (Broom and Sleznki, 1973; Henslin and Nelson, 1995)

Absence of Instincts: The term "instinct" in its current social science usage refers to the complex behavior patterns for which some animal species as biologically programmed. For example, nest-building among birds is an indistinct. But humans have no comparable behavior patterns which are biologically fixed, although they have innumerable built-in physiological reflexes. Human have biological drives or impulses such as hunger, thirst, sex, etc, rather than instincts. This absence of instincts makes humans dependent on social direction and their behaviors are amenable to such direction. The openendedness of humans is thus the biological ground for social conformity.

Social Contact Needs: Humans need sustained social contacts. Studies conducted on primates and human infants revealed that lack of body stimulation and contact in infancy appear to inhibit and prevent the development of higher learning functions. Satisfaction of the social contact and initiations needs in humans is a strong biological imperative.

Longer Period of Childhood Dependence: A third biological condition that makes extensive socialization essential for humans is that the human infant need much longer period of physical dependence and sexual immaturity than other animals. The need to acquire the techniques and skills of social living further prolongs the dependence. Such longer period of dependence, during which the child is cared for and controlled by others, results in an intense emotional dependence that remains throughout life.

Capacity to Learn: A high level of intelligence is an innate human biological potential. Hence, humans are highly educable; they can learn much more than other animals and can continue to learn more over a longer period of time.

Language: Man's ability to learn is a function of his capacity for language. Other animals may have some degree of intelligence but only humans have reasoning capacity because they have language. Language expresses and arouses emotion; conveys feelings, values and knowledge. Whether as vehicle for knowledge or for attitude, language is the key factor in the creation of human society. Symbolic communication, which is possessed only by humans, makes language possible. Humans innately possess the potential and capacity to create culture and to be guided by cultural and social norms. At the center of all these is language.

**Modes of Social Learning**

What are the mechanisms by which socialization is accomplished? Fuller answer is not yet found to this question. Sociologists have, however, identified four modes of social learning. These are: conditioning, identity taking, modeling-after and problem solving (Ibid.).

Conditioning: This involves learning based on the principle of association. Conditioning refers to the response pattern which is built into an organism as a result of stimuli in the environment. There is what is called classical conditioning in which the response remains constant while the stimuli vary, as in Pavilovian experiment. In contrast, in operant or instrumental conditioning, response is controlled. The term "operant" signifies a behavior which is guided by an anticipated result. Thus, operant conditioning entails the "creation of built-in responses a result of systematic reinforcement. Conditioning is important in socialization in that through classical conditioning children learn to respond to various social and man-made stimuli; and through operant conditioning, they learn to inhibit certain response and adopt others as habitual. Identity Taking: Studies show that children begin to identify themselves and others by sex and learn to behave in the normative gendered ways according to the society of which they parts. This happens by age five. Researchers of socialization believe that sex-type behavior emerges through operant conditioning. However, it is not the case that conditioning alone accounts for sex-differences in behavior, although the individuals take their identity of maleness and femaleness through approval and disapproval as well as reward and punishment. As their linguistic and cognitive skills gradually develop, children begin to learn that they are being called boys or girls, accept what others label, learn by observation, and report what boys and girls do and behave accordingly.

Modeling After: Children learn to model their behavior after someone who is an admired, loved or feared figure. This is considered as a typical stage in personality formation and in the development of personal autonomy and social involvement. Through modeling after someone, our behavior acquires meaning and coherence.

Problem Solving: The above three mechanisms of social learning are ways in which individuals internalize the values and norms of society. They may be termed as modes of internalization. However, social learning transcends beyond simply internalizing values and norms. It also includes learning to involve in cooperative and conflict-ridden activities, to cope with new situations and to achieve one's goals. Problem solving mode of social learning is essential particularly in societies where complexity and fluidity dominate the social world. Problem solving is not to be understood as a kind of mathematical puzzle solving, but it is one which is applied to a problematic social situation in which individuals find themselves uncomfortable and need a context -based response. While each mode of social learning is important, it is to be noted that each has its own limitation. No single mode of social learning thus fully accounts for socialization.

**Patterns of Socialization**

There are two broadly classified patterns of socialization. These are: Repressive and participatory socialization. Repressive socialization is oriented towards gaining obedience, while participatory socialization is oriented towards gaining the participation of the child. Punishment of wrong behavior and rewarding and reinforcing good behavior are involved in the two kinds of socialization, respectively.

There are different types of socialization; the major ones include: primary or childhood socialization, secondary or adulthood socialization, de-socialization and resocialization. Other minor types of socialization include: anticipatory socialization and reverse socialization (Calhoun et al, 1994; Henslin and Nelson, 1995; Soroka, 1996; Macionis, 1997)

**Primary or Childhood Socialization**

This is also called basic or early socialization. The terms "primary", "basic" or "early" all signify the overriding importance of the childhood period for socialization. Much of the personality make-up of individuals is forged at this period in life. Socialization at this stage of life is a landmark; without it, we would cease to become social beings. The human infant who is a biological being or organism is changed into a social being mainly at this early stage. Hence, children should be appropriately socialized from birth up to particularly five years of age, because this period is basic and crucial one. A child who does not get appropriate socialization at this stage will most likely be deficient in his/her social, moral, intellectual and personality development. Some grew up developing anti-social attitudes, aspirations and practices.

**Secondary or Adult Socialization**

While socialization is an overbidding issue for children and adolescents, it is a never-ending process that continues through out life. Secondary or adult socialization is necessitated when individual take up new roles, reorienting themselves according to their changes social statuses and roles, as in starting marital life. The socialization process at this stage may sometimes be intense. For example, fresh college graduates entering the world of work to start their first jobs, there are quite many new roles to be mastered. Intense adult socialization may also occur among immigrants. When they go to other countries, they may need to learn the language, values, norms, and a host of other custom and folkways, coupled with experiencing economic hardships may prove to be truly stressful and most challenging. Although it may be fairly stated that childhood socialization experiences what kind of people we become, the challenges of socialization thus continues in late adolescent and adult stages. This happens to be so particularly in the context of fast changing world in complex societies.

**Re-socialization and De-socialization**

In the lives of individuals, as they pass through different stages and life experiences, there is the need for resocialization and de-socialization. Re-socialization means the adoption by adults of radically different norms and lifeways that are more or less completely dissimilar to the previous norms and values.

Resocialization signifies the rapid and more basic changes in the adult life. The change may demand abandonment of one lifeway with a new one, which is completely different from, and also incompatible with, the former. This quite so often happens as adult life in modern societies demands sharp transitions and changes.

De-socialization typically precedes re-socialization. Desocialization 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.

De-socialization and re-socialization often take place in what is called total institutions, which are an allencompassing and often isolated from the community. They demand a thorough de-socialization of the new entrants before they assume full-fledged membership. Total institutions include: mental hospitals, prisons, religious denominations and some other political groups, and military units. In each case, persons joining the new setting have first to be de-socialized, before they are resocialized. 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 time in total institutions. This is because they might have forgotten most of the basic values and skills of the former group or society. This kind of resocialization may also be regarded as reintegration, helping the ex-community members renew their memories of their former lifeways, skills, knowledge, etc.

**Anticipatory Socialization**

Anticipatory socialization refers to the process of adjustment and adaptation in which individuals try to learn and internalize the roles, values, attitudes and skills of a social status or occupation for which they are likely recruits in the future. They do this in anticipating the actual forthcoming socialization. It involves a kind of rehearsal and preparations in advance to have a feel of what the new role would look like. However, anticipatory socialization may not be adequate when the nature and scope of life transition is complex. It may be difficult to fully anticipate what will happen.

**Reverse Socialization**

Reverse socialization refers to the process of socialization whereby 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 socializees that directly or indirectly induce change the attitudes and behaviors of the socializers themselves. In reverse socialization, children, for example, may happen to socialize their parents in some roles, skills, and attitudes which the latter lack.

**Agents and Components of Socialization**

Agents of socialization are the different groups of people and institutional arrangements which are responsible for training new members of society. Some of them could be formal, while others are informal. They help individual members get into the overall activities of their society. There are three components to socialization process. There is the socializee who could be either a newborn child, a recruit to the army or the police force or a freshman in a college or an intern in medical service. Then again there are the socializers who may be parents, peer groups, community members, teachers or church members. Both the socializee and the socializer interact with one another not in a vacuum but in a social environment which plays an important role in the socialization process. These different socializing environments are called socialization settings. The most socializing agencies are the family, peer relationships, schools, neighborhoods (the community), the mass media, etc. The institution of family is generally regarded as the most important agent of socialization.

In the process of socialization, the most important contacts are between a child and his/her parents and siblings. The contacts could also be between the child and surrogate parents when actual parents are not available. Besides the child's parents, there are other agents of socialization (in modern societies) such as day-care-centers, nurseries Introduction and kindergarten, as well as primary and secondary schools and universities. It seems that these various agents of socialization have partially taken over the function of the parents, particularly in modern societies, where women are increasingly leaving their traditional home-based responsibilities by engaging in employment outside home. The school represents a formal and conscious effort by a society to socialize its young. Other than parents and schools, peer groups play very significant roles in the socialization process. Sometimes, the influence of the peer group, be it negative or positive, can be as powerful as that of parents. The peer group may transmit prevailing societal values or develop new and distinct cultures of its own with peculiar values. The mass media such as television, radio, movies, videos, tapes, books, magazines and newspapers are also important agents of socialization.

The most crucial effect on children comes from television, as studies show. The effects are both negative and positive. Negative impact seem to be greater that parents and other concerned bodies worry about the way television is socializing children. For example, studies show that watching violence on television can encourage aggressive behavior in children

**Multiple and Contradictory Influences of Socialization**

So far, the picture of socialization presented may seem to be biased towards the structural functionalist view of society and socialization. Hence, it would be useful to add few ideas that may help balance the picture. In a critical conceptualization of socialization, the contradictory and ambiguous sources and influences of socialization need to be highlighted. If we take a good example interesting for health science students, it would be important in this regard. A case in point could be alcohol and tobacco consumption. Evidences show that the consumption of tobacco and alcohol is rapidly increasing in the Third world. There are underlying and contradictory processes of socialization behind this phenomenon. The conflicting influences arise when on the one hand, families, schools, and medical institutions warn youngsters not to consume these products; and on the other hand, the global companies producing these products are powerfully waging the war of getting the products to the youth, through the lure of television advertisement. This example shows us that often conflicting, competing messages pass from the various sources of socialization. The various agents of socialization are also not accorded balanced share of power, control and domination. The international companies, who forcefully promote the culture of consumerism thorough the aid of the powerful global media, tend to play dominating roles in influencing the attitudes and lifestyles of youngsters (Personal communications. Dr Teketel Abebe, Addis Ababa University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology)