Absolute monarchies: governments wherein a monarch has absolute or unmitigated power

Absolute poverty: the state where one is barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities

Achieved status: the status a person chooses, such as a level of education or income

Acting crowds: crowds of people who are focused on a specific action or goal

Activity theory: a theory which suggests that for individuals to enjoy old age and feel satisfied, they must maintain activities and find a replacement for the statuses and associated roles they have left behind as they aged

Age stratification theory: a theory which states that members of society are stratified by age, just as they are stratified by race, class, and gender

Ageism: discrimination based on age

Aggregate: a collection of people who exist in the same place at the same time, but who don’t interact or share a sense of identity

Agricultural societies: societies that rely on farming as a way of life

Alienation: an individual’s isolation from his society, his work, and his sense of self

Alternative movements: social movements that limit themselves to self-improvement changes in individuals

Amalgamation: the process by which a minority group and a majority group combine to form a new group

Ambilineal: a type of unilateral descent that follows either the father’s or the mother’s side exclusively

Anarchy: the absence of any organized government

Animism: the religion that believes in the divinity of nonhuman beings, like animals, plants, and objects of the natural world

Anomie: a situation in which society no longer has the support of a firm collective consciousness

Anticipatory socialization: the way we prepare for future life roles
Antipositivism: the view that social researchers should strive for subjectivity as they worked to represent social processes, cultural norms, and societal values

Anxiety disorders: feelings of worry and fearfulness that last for months at a time

Ascribed status: the status outside of an individual’s control, such as sex or race

Assembling perspective: a theory that credits individuals in crowds as behaving as rational thinkers and views crowds as engaging in purposeful behavior and collective action

Assimilation: the process by which a minority individual or group takes on the characteristics of the dominant culture

Asylum-seekers: those whose claim to refugee status have not been validated

Atheism: the belief in no deities

Authoritarian leader: a leader who issues orders and assigns tasks

Authority: power that people accept because it comes from a source that is perceived as legitimate

Automation: workers being replaced by technology

Baby boomers: people in the United States born between approximately 1946 and 1964

Bartering: a process where people exchange one form of goods or services for another

Beliefs: tenets or convictions that people hold to be true

Bigamy: the act of entering into marriage while still married to another person

Bilateral descent: the tracing of kinship through both parents’ ancestral lines

Biological determinism: the belief that men and women behave differently due to inherent sex differences related to their biology

Bourgeoisie: the owners of the means of production in a society

Bureaucracies: formal organizations characterized by a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonality

Cancer cluster: a geographic area with high levels of cancer within its population
Capital flight: the movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, via jobs and resources

Capitalism: a way of organizing an economy so that the things that are used to make and transport products (such as land, oil, factories, ships, etc.) Are owned by individual people and companies rather than by the government

Capitalism: an economic system in which there is private ownership (as opposed to state ownership) and where there is an impetus to produce profit, and thereby wealth

Career inheritance: a practice where children tend to enter the same or similar occupation as their parents

Carrying capacity: the amount of people that can live in a given area considering the amount of available resources

Case study: in-depth analysis of a single event, situation, or individual

Caste system: a system in which people are born into a social standing that they will retain their entire lives

Casual crowds: people who share close proximity without really interacting

Category: people who share similar characteristics but who are not connected in any way

Centenarians: people 100 years old or older

Charismatic authority: power legitimized on the basis of a leader’s exceptional personal qualities

Chattel slavery: a form of slavery in which one person owns another

Class consciousness: the awareness of one’s rank in society

Class system: social standing based on social factors and individual accomplishments

Class traits: the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class (also called class markers)

Class: a group who shares a common social status based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation
Clear division of labor: the fact that each individual in a bureaucracy has a specialized task to perform

Climate change: long-term shifts in temperature and climate due to human activity

Code of ethics: a set of guidelines that the American Sociological Association has established to foster ethical research and professionally responsible scholarship in sociology

Coercive organizations: organizations that people do not voluntarily join, such as prison or a mental hospital

Cohabitation: the act of a couple sharing a residence while they are not married

Cohort: a group of people who share a statistical or demographic trait

Collective behavior: a noninstitutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage

Collective conscience: the communal beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society

Colorism: the belief that one type of skin tone is superior or inferior to another within a racial group

Commodification: the changing of something not generally thought of as a commodity into something that can be bought and sold in a marketplace

Concentric zone model: a model of human ecology that views cities as a series of circular rings or zones

Conflict theory: a theory that examines social and economic factors as the causes of criminal deviance

Conflict theory: a theory that looks at society as a competition for limited resources

Conformity: the extent to which an individual complies with group or societal norms

Conspicuous consumption: the act of buying and using products to make a statement about social standing

Constitutional monarchies: national governments that recognize monarchs but require these figures to abide by the laws of a greater constitution

Constructivism: an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be
Content analysis: applying a systematic approach to record and value information gleaned from secondary data as it relates to the study at hand

Contested illnesses: illnesses that are questioned or considered questionable by some medical professionals

Continuity theory: a theory which states that the elderly make specific choices to maintain consistency in internal (personality structure, beliefs) and external structures (relationships), remaining active and involved throughout their elder years

Control theory: a theory that states social control is directly affected by the strength of social bonds and that deviance results from a feeling of disconnection from society

Conventional crowds: people who come together for a regularly scheduled event

Convergence theory: a sociological theory to explain how and why societies move toward similarity over time as their economies develop

Core nations: dominant capitalist countries

Cornucopian theory: a theory that asserts human ingenuity will rise to the challenge of providing adequate resources for a growing population

Corporate crime: crime committed by white-collar workers in a business environment

Corrections system: the system tasked with supervising individuals who have been arrested for, convicted of, or sentenced for criminal offenses

Correlation: when a change in one variable coincides with a change in another variable, but does not necessarily indicate causation

Countercultures: groups that reject and oppose society’s widely accepted cultural patterns

Court: a system that has the authority to make decisions based on law

Credentialism: the emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that a person has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, or has met certain job qualifications
Crime: a behavior that violates official law and is punishable through formal sanctions

Criminal justice system: an organization that exists to enforce a legal code

Crowd: a fairly large number of people who share close proximity

Crowdsourcing: the process of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people

Cults: religious groups that are small, secretive, and highly controlling of members and have a charismatic leader

Cultural capital: cultural knowledge that serves (metaphorically) as currency to help one navigate a culture

Cultural deviance theory: a theory that suggests conformity to the prevailing cultural norms of lower-class society causes crime

Cultural imperialism: the deliberate imposition of one’s own cultural values on another culture

Cultural relativism: the practice of assessing a culture by its own standards, and not in comparison to another culture

Cultural transmission: the way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture

Cultural universals: patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies

Culture lag: the gap of time between the introduction of material culture and nonmaterial culture’s acceptance of it

Culture of prejudice: the theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture

Culture shock: an experience of personal disorientation when confronted with an unfamiliar way of life

Culture: an error of treating an abstract concept as though it has a real, material existence

Culture: shared beliefs, values, and practices

Cyberfeminism: the application to and promotion of feminism online
Davis-moore thesis: a thesis that argues some social stratification is a social necessity

Debt accumulation: the buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals

Debt bondage: the act of people pledging themselves as servants in exchange for money for passage, and are subsequently paid too little to regain their freedom

Degradation ceremony: the process by which new members of a total institution lose aspects of their old identities and are given new ones

Deindustrialization: the loss of industrial production, usually to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations where the costs are lower

Demedicalization: the social process that normalizes “sick” behavior

Democracy: a form of government that provides all citizens with an equal voice or vote in determining state policy

Democratic leader: a leader who encourages group participation and consensus-building before moving into action

Demographic transition theory: a theory that describes four stages of population growth, following patterns that connect birth and death rates with stages of industrial development

Demography: the study of population

Denomination: a large, mainstream religion that is not sponsored by the state

Dependency ratio: the number of nonproductive citizens (young, disabled, elderly) to productive working citizens

Dependency theory: a theory which states that global inequity is due to the exploitation of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by core nations

Dependent variables: a variable changed by other variables

Depression: a sustained recession across several economic sectors

Design patents: patents that are granted when someone has invented a new and original design for a manufactured product

Deviance: a violation of contextual, cultural, or social norms
Diagnostic framing: a the social problem that is stated in a clear, easily understood manner

Dictatorship: a form of government in which a single person (or a very small group) wields complete and absolute authority over a government or populace after the dictator rises to power, usually through economic or military might

Differential association theory: a theory that states individuals learn deviant behavior from those close to them who provide models of and opportunities for deviance

Diffusion: the spread of material and nonmaterial culture from one culture to another

Digital divide: the uneven access to technology around race, class, and geographic lines

Disability: a reduction in one’s ability to perform everyday tasks; the world health organization notes that this is a social limitation

Discoveries: things and ideas found from what already exists

Discrimination: prejudiced action against a group of people

Disengagement theory: a theory which suggests that withdrawing from society and social relationships is a natural part of growing old

Doing gender: the performance of tasks based upon the gender assigned to us by society and, in turn, ourselves

Doma: defense of marriage act, a 1996 u.s. Law explicitly limiting the definition of “marriage” to a union between one man and one woman and allowing each individual state to recognize or deny same-sex marriages performed in other states

Dominant group: a group of people who have more power in a society than any of the subordinate groups

Double standard: the concept that prohibits premarital sexual intercourse for women but allows it for men

Downward mobility: a lowering of one’s social class

Dramaturgical analysis: a technique sociologists use in which they view society through the metaphor of theatrical performance
Dyad: a two-member group

Dynamic equilibrium: a stable state in which all parts of a healthy society work together properly

Dysfunctions: social patterns that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society

Ecclesia: a religion that is considered the state religion

Economy: the social institution through which a society’s resources (goods and services) are managed

Education: a social institution through which a society’s children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms

Elder abuse: the act of a caretaker intentionally depriving an older person of care or harming the person in their charge

Emergent norm theory: a perspective that emphasizes the importance of social norms in crowd behavior

Empirical evidence: evidence that comes from direct experience, scientifically gathered data, or experimentation

Endogamous marriages: unions of people within the same social category

Environmental racism: the burdening of economically and socially disadvantaged communities with a disproportionate share of environmental hazards

Environmental sociology: the sociological subfield that addresses the relationship between humans and the environment

Epidemiology: the study of the incidence, distribution, and possible control of diseases

E-readiness: the ability to sort through, interpret, and process digital knowledge

Established sects: sects that last but do not become denominations

Ethnicity: shared culture, which may include heritage, language, religion, and more

Ethnocentrism: the practice of evaluating another culture according to the standards of one’s own culture

Ethnography: observing a complete social setting and all that it entails
Evolutionary model of technological change: a breakthrough in one form of technology that leads to a number of variations, from which a prototype emerges, followed by a period of slight adjustments to the technology, interrupted by a breakthrough.

E-waste: the disposal of broken, obsolete, and worn-out electronics.

Exchange theory: a theory which suggests that we experience an increased dependence as we age and must increasingly submit to the will of others, because we have fewer ways of compelling others to submit to us.

Exogamous unions: unions of spouses from different social categories.

Experiment: the testing of a hypothesis under controlled conditions.

Explicit rules: the types of rules in a bureaucracy; rules that are outlined, recorded, and standardized.

Expressive crowds: crowds who share opportunities to express emotions.

Expressive function: a group function that serves an emotional need.

Expressive leader: a leader who is concerned with process and with ensuring everyone’s emotional wellbeing.

Expulsion: the act of a dominant group forcing a subordinate group to leave a certain area or even the country.

Extended family: a household that includes at least one parent and child as well as other relatives like grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Exurbs: communities that arise farther out than the suburbs and are typically populated by residents of high socioeconomic status.

False consciousness: a person’s beliefs and ideology that are in conflict with her best interests.

Family life course: a sociological model of family that sees the progression of events as fluid rather than as occurring in strict stages.

Family life cycle: a set of predictable steps and patterns families experience over time.

Family of orientation: the family into which one is born.

Family of procreation: a family that is formed through marriage.
Family: socially recognized groups of individuals who may be joined by blood, marriage, or adoption and who form an emotional connection and an economic unit of society

Fertility rate: a measure noting the actual number of children born

Feudal societies: societies that operate on a strict hierarchical system of power based around land ownership and protection

Field research: gathering data from a natural environment without doing a lab experiment or a survey

Figuration: the process of simultaneously analyzing the behavior of an individual and the society that shapes that behavior

Filial piety: deference and respect to one’s parents and ancestors in all things

First world: a term from the cold war era that is used to describe industrialized capitalist democracies

Flash mob: a large group of people who gather together in a spontaneous activity that lasts a limited amount of time

Folkways: direct, appropriate behavior in the day-to-day practices and expressions of a culture

Formal education: the learning of academic facts and concepts

Formal norms: established, written rules

Formal organizations: large, impersonal organizations

Formal sanctions: sanctions that are officially recognized and enforced

Fourth world: a term that describes stigmatized minority groups who have no voice or representation on the world stage

Fracking: hydraulic fracturing, a method used to recover gas and oil from shale by drilling down into the earth and directing a high-pressure mixture of water, sand, and proprietary chemicals into the rock

Frame alignment process: using bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation as an ongoing and intentional means of recruiting participants to a movement
Function: the part a recurrent activity plays in the social life as a whole and the contribution it makes to structural continuity

Functionalism: a theoretical approach that sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of individuals that make up that society

Gatekeeping: the sorting process by which thousands of possible messages are shaped into a mass media-appropriate form and reduced to a manageable amount

Gender dysphoria: a condition listed in the DSM-5 in which people whose gender at birth is contrary to the one they identify with. This condition replaces “gender identity disorder”

Gender identity: a person’s deeply held internal perception of his or her gender

Gender role: society’s concept of how men and women should behave

Gender: a term that refers to social or cultural distinctions of behaviors that are considered male or female

Generalized other: the common behavioral expectations of general society

Generalized others: the organized and generalized attitude of a social group

Genocide: the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group

Gentrification: the entry of upper- and middle-class residents to city areas or communities that have been historically less affluent

Geriatrics: a medical specialty focusing on the elderly

Gerontocracy: a type of social structure wherein the power is held by a society’s oldest members

Gerontology: a field of science that seeks to understand the process of aging and the challenges encountered as seniors grow older

Gerotranscendence: the idea that as people age, they transcend limited views of life they held in earlier times

Gini coefficient: a measure of income inequality between countries using a 100-point scale, in which 1 represents complete equality and 100 represents the highest possible inequality
Global assembly lines: a practice where products are assembled over the course of several international transactions

Global commodity chains: internationally integrated economic links that connect workers and corporations for the purpose of manufacture and marketing

Global feminization of poverty: a pattern that occurs when women bear a disproportionate percentage of the burden of poverty

Global inequality: the concentration of resources in core nations and in the hands of a wealthy minority

Global stratification: a comparison of the wealth, economic stability, status, and power of countries as a whole

Global stratification: the unequal distribution of resources between countries

Globalization: the integration of international trade and finance markets

Grade inflation: the idea that the achievement level associated with an a today is notably lower than the achievement level associated with a-level work a few decades ago

Grand theories: an attempt to explain large-scale relationships and answer fundamental questions such as why societies form and why they change

Grief: a psychological, emotional, and social response to the feelings of loss that accompanies death or a similar event

Gross national income (gni): the income of a nation calculated based on goods and services produced, plus income earned by citizens and corporations headquartered in that country

Group: any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share some sense of aligned identity

Habitualization: the idea that society is constructed by us and those before us, and it is followed like a habit

Hate crimes: attacks based on a person’s race, religion, or other characteristics

Hawthorne effect: when study subjects behave in a certain manner due to their awareness of being observed by a researcher
Head start program: a federal program that provides academically focused preschool to students of low socioeconomic status

Heterosexism: an ideology and a set of institutional practices that privilege heterosexuals and heterosexuality over other sexual orientations

Hidden curriculum: the informal teaching done in schools that socializes children to societal norms

Hidden curriculum: the type of nonacademic knowledge that people learn through informal learning and cultural transmission

Hierarchy of authority: a clear chain of command found in a bureaucracy

High culture: the cultural patterns of a society’s elite

Homophobia: an extreme or irrational aversion to homosexuals

Horticultural societies: societies based around the cultivation of plants

Hospice: healthcare that treats terminally ill people by providing comfort during the dying process

Human ecology: a functional perspective that looks at the relationship between people and their built and natural environment

Hunter-gatherer societies: societies that depend on hunting wild animals and gathering uncultivated plants for survival

Hypothesis: a testable educated guess about predicted outcomes between two or more variables

Hypothesis: a testable proposition

Ideal culture: the standards a society would like to embrace and live up to

Impairment: the physical limitations a less-able person faces

Impersonality: the removal of personal feelings from a professional situation

Income: the money a person earns from work or investments

Independent variables: variables that cause changes in dependent variables

Individual mandate: a government rule that requires everyone to have insurance coverage or they will have to pay a penalty
Industrial societies: societies characterized by a reliance on mechanized labor to create material goods
Informal education: education that involves learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviors through participation in a society
Informal norms: casual behaviors that are generally and widely conformed to
Informal sanctions: sanctions that occur in face-to-face interactions
Information societies: societies based on the production of nonmaterial goods and services
In-group: a group a person belongs to and feels is an integral part of his identity
Innovations: new objects or ideas introduced to culture for the first time
Institutional racism: racism embedded in social institutions
Institutionalization: the act of implanting a convention or norm into society
Instrumental function: being oriented toward a task or goal
Instrumental leader: a leader who is goal oriented with a primary focus on accomplishing tasks
Intergenerational mobility: a difference in social class between different generations of a family
Internally displaced person: someone who fled his or her home while remaining inside the country’s borders
Interpretive framework: a sociological research approach that seeks in-depth understanding of a topic or subject through observation or interaction; this approach is not based on hypothesis testing
Intersection theory: theory that suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes
Interview: a one-on-one conversation between the researcher and the subject
Intimate partner violence (ipv): violence that occurs between individuals who maintain a romantic or sexual relationship
Intragenerational mobility: a difference in social class between different members of the same generation
Inventions: a combination of pieces of existing reality into new forms
Iron cage: a situation in which an individual is trapped by social institutions
Iron rule of oligarchy: the theory that an organization is ruled by a few elites rather than through collaboration
Kinship: a person’s traceable ancestry (by blood, marriage, and/or adoption)
Knowledge gap: the gap in information that builds as groups grow up without access to technology
Labeling theory: the ascribing of a deviant behavior to another person by members of society
Laissez-faire leader: a hands-off leader who allows members of the group to make their own decisions
Language: a symbolic system of communication
Latent functions: the unrecognized or unintended consequences of a social process
Leadership function: the main focus or goal of a leader
Leadership style: the style a leader uses to achieve goals or elicit action from group members
Legal codes: codes that maintain formal social control through laws
Legitimation: the act of a physician certifying that an illness is genuine
Liberation theology: the use of a church to promote social change via the political arena
Life course: the period from birth to death, including a sequence of predictable life events
Life expectancy: the number of years a newborn is expected to live
Literature review: a scholarly research step that entails identifying and studying all existing studies on a topic to create a basis for new research
Macro-level: a wide-scale view of the role of social structures within a society
Malthusian theory: a theory asserting that population is controlled through positive checks (war, famine, disease) and preventive checks (measures to reduce fertility)
Manifest functions: sought consequences of a social process

Market socialism: a subtype of socialism that adopts certain traits of capitalism, like allowing limited private ownership or consulting market demand

Marriage: a legally recognized contract between two or more people in a sexual relationship who have an expectation of permanence about their relationship

Mass: a relatively large group with a common interest, even if they may not be in close proximity

Master status: a label that describes the chief characteristic of an individual

Material culture: the objects or belongings of a group of people

Matrilineal descent: a type of unilateral descent that follows the mother’s side only

Matrilocal residence: a system in which it is customary for a husband to live with his wife’s family

Macdonaldization of society: the increasing presence of the fast food business model in common social institutions

Mechanical solidarity: a form of social cohesion that comes from sharing similar work, education, and religion, as might be found in simpler societies

Mechanical solidarity: a type of social order maintained by the collective consciousness of a culture

Media consolidation: a process by which fewer and fewer owners control the majority of media outlets

Media globalization: the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas

Media: all print, digital, and electronic means of communication

Medical sociology: the systematic study of how humans manage issues of health and illness, disease and disorders, and healthcare for both the sick and the healthy

Medicalization of deviance: the process that changes “bad” behavior into “sick” behavior

Medicalization: the process by which aspects of life that were considered bad or deviant are redefined as sickness and needing medical attention to remedy
Megachurch: a Christian church that has a very large congregation averaging more than 2,000 people who attend regular weekly services.

Megalopolis: a large urban corridor that encompasses several cities and their surrounding suburbs and exurbs.

Mercantilism: an economic policy based on national policies of accumulating silver and gold by controlling markets with colonies and other countries through taxes and customs charges.

Meritocracy: a bureaucracy where membership and advancement is based on merit—proven and documented skills.

Meritocracy: an ideal system in which personal effort—or merit—determines social standing.

Meta-analysis: a technique in which the results of virtually all previous studies on a specific subject are evaluated together.

Metropolis: the area that includes a city and its suburbs and exurbs.

Micro-level theories: the study of specific relationships between individuals or small groups.

Minority group: any group of people who are singled out from the others for differential and unequal treatment.

Model minority: the stereotype applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching higher educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without protest against the majority establishment.

Modernization theory: a theory that low-income countries can improve their global economic standing by industrialization of infrastructure and a shift in cultural attitudes towards work.

Modernization theory: a theory which suggests that the primary cause of the elderly losing power and influence in society are the parallel forces of industrialization and modernization.

Modernization: the process that increases the amount of specialization and differentiation of structure in societies.

Monarchy: a form of government in which a single person (a monarch) rules until that individual dies or abdicates the throne.
Money: an object that a society agrees to assign a value to so it can be exchanged as payment

Monogamy: the act of being married to only one person at a time

Monotheism: a religion based on belief in a single deity

Mood disorders: long-term, debilitating illnesses like depression and bipolar disorder

Moral development: the way people learn what is “good” and “bad” in society

Morbidity: the incidence of disease

Mores: the moral views and principles of a group

Mortality rate: a measure of the number of people in a population who die

Mortality: the number of deaths in a given time or place

Motivational framing: a call to action

Mutualism: a form of socialism under which individuals and cooperative groups exchange products with one another on the basis of mutually satisfactory contracts

Nature: the influence of our genetic makeup on self-development

Negative sanctions: punishments for violating norms

Neo-luddites: those who see technology as a symbol of the coldness of modern life

Net neutrality: the principle that all internet data should be treated equally by internet service providers

New media: all interactive forms of information exchange

New social movement theory: a theory that attempts to explain the proliferation of postindustrial and postmodern movements that are difficult to understand using traditional social movement theories

Ngo: nongovernmental organizations working globally for numerous humanitarian and environmental causes

Nimby: “not in my back yard,” the tendency of people to protest poor environmental practices when those practices will affect them directly
No child left behind act: an act that requires states to test students in prescribed grades, with the results of those tests determining eligibility to receive federal funding

Nonmaterial culture: the ideas, attitudes, and beliefs of a society

Nonreactive research: using secondary data, does not include direct contact with subjects and will not alter or influence people’s behaviors

Nonviolent crimes: crimes that involve the destruction or theft of property, but do not use force or the threat of force

Normative or voluntary organizations: organizations that people join to pursue shared interests or because they provide some intangible rewards

Norms: the visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured

Nuclear family: two parents (traditionally a married husband and wife) and children living in the same household

Nurture: the role that our social environment plays in self-development

Oligarchy: a form of government in which power is held by a small, elite group

Oligopoly: a situation in which a few firms dominate a marketplace

One person, one vote: a concept holding that each person’s vote should be counted equally

Operational definitions: specific explanations of abstract concepts that a researcher plans to study

Organic solidarity: a form of social cohesion that arises out of the mutual interdependence created by the specialization of work

Organic solidarity: a type of social order based around an acceptance of economic and social differences

Out-group: a group that an individual is not a member of, and may even compete with

Outsourcing: a practice where jobs are contracted to an outside source, often in another country
Panoptic surveillance: a form of constant monitoring in which the observation posts are decentralized and the observed is never communicated with directly

Paradigms: philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them

Participant observation: when a researcher immerses herself in a group or social setting in order to make observations from an “insider” perspective

Pastoral societies: societies based around the domestication of animals

Patrilineal descent: a type of unilateral descent that follows the father’s line only

Patrilocal residence: a system in which it is customary for the wife to live with (or near) the husband’s family

Patrimonialism: a type of authority wherein military and administrative factions enforce the power of the master

Peer group: a group made up of people who are similar in age and social status and who share interests

Peripheral nations: nations on the fringes of the global economy, dominated by core nations, with very little industrialization

Personality disorders: disorders that cause people to behave in ways that are seen as abnormal to society but seem normal to them

Physician-assisted suicide: the voluntary use of lethal medication provided by a medical doctor to end one’s life

Planned obsolescence: the act of a technology company planning for a product to be obsolete or unable from the time it’s created

Plant patents: patents that recognize the discovery of new plant types that can be asexually reproduced

Pluralism: the ideal of the United States as a “salad bowl:” a mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the “flavor” of the whole

Polarization: a practice where the differences between low-end and high-end jobs become greater and the number of people in the middle levels decreases
Police: a civil force in charge of regulating laws and public order at a federal, state, or community level

Politics: a means of studying a nation’s or group’s underlying social norms as values as evidenced through its political structure and practices

Pollution: the introduction of contaminants into an environment at levels that are damaging

Polyandry: a form of marriage in which one woman is married to more than one man at one time

Polygamy: the state of being committed or married to more than one person at a time

Polygyny: a form of marriage in which one man is married to more than one woman at one time

Polytheism: a religion based on belief in multiple deities

Popular culture: mainstream, widespread patterns among a society’s population

Population composition: a snapshot of the demographic profile of a population based on fertility, mortality, and migration rates

Population pyramid: a graphic representation that depicts population distribution according to age and sex

Population: a defined group serving as the subject of a study

Positive sanctions: rewards given for conforming to norms

Positivism: the scientific study of social patterns

Power elite: a small group of powerful people who control much of a society

Power elite: a small group of wealthy and influential people at the top of society who hold the power and resources

Power: the ability to exercise one’s will over others

Prejudice: biased thought based on flawed assumptions about a group of people

Primary aging: biological factors such as molecular and cellular changes

Primary data: data that are collected directly from firsthand experience
Primary deviance: a violation of norms that does not result in any long-term effects on the individual’s self-image or interactions with others

Primary groups: small, informal groups of people who are closest to us

Primogeniture: a law stating that all property passes to the firstborn son

Private healthcare: health insurance that a person buys from a private company; private healthcare can either be employer-sponsored or direct-purchase

Prognostic framing: social movements that state a clear solution and a means of implementation

Proletariat: the laborers in a society

Public healthcare: health insurance that is funded or provided by the government

Public: an unorganized, relatively diffuse group of people who share ideas

Qualitative data: comprise information that is subjective and often based on what is seen in a natural setting

Qualitative sociology: in-depth interviews, focus groups, and/or analysis of content sources as the source of its data

Quantitative data: represent research collected in numerical form that can be counted

Quantitative sociology: statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants

Queer theory: an interdisciplinary approach to sexuality studies that identifies western society’s rigid splitting of gender into male and female roles and questions its appropriateness

Racial profiling: the use by law enforcement of race alone to determine whether to stop and detain someone

Racial steering: the act of real estate agents directing prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race

Racism: a set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others

Random sample: a study’s participants being randomly selected to serve as a representation of a larger population
Rationalization: a belief that modern society should be built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition

Rational-legal authority: power that is legitimized by rules, regulations, and laws

Real culture: the way society really is based on what actually occurs and exists

Recession: two or more consecutive quarters of economic decline

Redlining: the practice of routinely refusing mortgages for households and business located in predominately minority communities

Reference groups: groups to which an individual compares herself

Reform movements: movements that seek to change something specific about the social structure

Refugee: an individual who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster

Reification: an error of treating an abstract concept as though it has a real, material existence

Relative poverty: the state of poverty where one is unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in the country

Reliability: a measure of a study’s consistency that considers how likely results are to be replicated if a study is reproduced

Religion: a system of beliefs, values, and practices concerning what a person holds to be sacred or spiritually significant

Religious/redemptive movements: movements that work to promote inner change or spiritual growth in individuals

Representative democracy: a government wherein citizens elect officials to represent their interests

Resistance movements: those who seek to prevent or undo change to the social structure

Resocialization: the process by which old behaviors are removed and new behaviors are learned in their place

Resource mobilization theory: a theory that explains social movements’ success in terms of their ability to acquire resources and mobilize individuals
Revolutionary movements: movements that seek to completely change every aspect of society

Role conflict: a situation when one or more of an individual’s roles clash

Role performance: the expression of a role

Role strain: stress that occurs when too much is required of a single role

Roles: patterns of behavior that are representative of a person’s social status

Role-set: an array of roles attached to a particular status

Samples: small, manageable number of subjects that represent the population

Sanctions: a way to authorize or formally disapprove of certain behaviors

Sanctions: the means of enforcing rules

Sapir-whorf hypothesis: the way that people understand the world based on their form of language

Scapegoat theory: a theory that suggests that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group

Scientific method: an established scholarly research method that involves asking a question, researching existing sources, forming a hypothesis, designing and conducting a study, and drawing conclusions

Second world: a term from the cold war era that describes nations with moderate economies and standards of living

Secondary aging: aging that occurs due to controllable factors like exercise and diet

Secondary data analysis: using data collected by others but applying new interpretations

Secondary deviance: deviance that occurs when a person’s self-concept and behavior begin to change after his or her actions are labeled as deviant by members of society

Secondary groups: larger and more impersonal groups that are task-focused and time limited

Sect: a small, new offshoot of a denomination
Sedimentation of racial inequality: the intergenerational impact of de facto and de jure racism that limits the abilities of black people to accumulate wealth

Segregation: the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions

Selective optimization with compensation theory: a theory based on the idea that successful personal development throughout the life course and subsequent mastery of the challenges associated with everyday life are based on the components of selection, optimization, and compensation

Self: a person’s distinct sense of identity as developed through social interaction

Self-fulfilling prophecy: an idea that becomes true when acted upon

Self-report study: a collection of data acquired using voluntary response methods, such as questionnaires or telephone interviews

Semi-peripheral nations: in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but acting as a major source of raw materials and an expanding middle class marketplace

Senescence: the aging process, including biological, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual changes

Sex ratio: the ratio of men to women in a given population

Sex: a term that denotes the presence of physical or physiological differences between males and females

Sexism: the prejudiced belief that one sex should be valued over another

Sexual orientation: a person’s physical, mental, emotional, and sexual attraction to a particular sex (male or female)

Sexuality: a person’s capacity for sexual feelings

Shaken-baby syndrome: a group of medical symptoms such as brain swelling and retinal hemorrhage resulting from forcefully shaking or impacting an infant’s head

Sick role: the pattern of expectations that define appropriate behavior for the sick and for those who take care of them

Significant others: specific individuals that impact a person’s life
Social change: the change in a society created through social movements as well as through external factors like environmental shifts or technological innovation.

Social construction of race: the school of thought that race is not biologically identifiable.

Social construction of sexuality: socially created definitions about the cultural appropriateness of sex-linked behavior which shape how people see and experience sexuality.

Social control: a way to encourage conformity to cultural norms.

Social control: the regulation and enforcement of norms.

Social disorganization theory: a theory that asserts crime occurs in communities with weak social ties and the absence of social control.

Social epidemiology: the study of the causes and distribution of diseases.

Social facts: the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and all of the cultural rules that govern social life.

Social gerontology: a specialized field of gerontology that examines the social (and sociological) aspects of aging.

Social institutions: patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs.

Social integration: how strongly a person is connected to his or her social group.

Social mobility: the ability to change positions within a social stratification system.

Social movement industry: the collection of the social movement organizations that are striving toward similar goals.

Social movement organization: a single social movement group.

Social movement sector: the multiple social movement industries in a society, even if they have widely varying constituents and goals.

Social movement: a purposeful organized group hoping to work toward a common social goal.

Social order: an arrangement of practices and behaviors on which society’s members base their daily lives.
Social placement: the use of education to improve one’s social standing

Social solidarity: the social ties that bind a group of people together such as kinship, shared location, and religion

Social stratification: a socioeconomic system that divides society’s members into categories ranking from high to low, based on things like wealth, power, and prestige

Socialism: an economic system in which there is government ownership (often referred to as “state run”) of goods and their production, with an impetus to share work and wealth equally among the members of a society

Socialization: the process wherein people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society’s beliefs, and to be aware of societal values

Socialized medicine: when the government owns and runs the entire healthcare system

Society: a group of people who live in a definable community and share the same culture

Society: a group of people who live in a defined geographical area who interact with one another and who share a common culture

Society: people who live in a definable community and who share a culture

Sociological imagination: the ability to understand how your own past relates to that of other people, as well as to history in general and societal structures in particular

Sociology: the systematic study of society and social interaction

Sorting: classifying students based on academic merit or potential

Standard of living: the level of wealth available to acquire material goods and comforts to maintain a particular socioeconomic lifestyle

Status consistency: the consistency, or lack thereof, of an individual’s rank across social categories like income, education, and occupation

Status: the responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to his or her rank and role in society
Stereotype interchangeability: stereotypes that don’t change and that get recycled for application to a new subordinate group

Stereotypes: oversimplified ideas about groups of people

Stigmatization of illness: illnesses that are discriminated against and whose sufferers are looked down upon or even shunned by society

Stigmatization: the act of spoiling someone’s identity; they are labeled as different, discriminated against, and sometimes even shunned due to an illness or disability

Strain theory: a theory that addresses the relationship between having socially acceptable goals and having socially acceptable means to reach those goals

Street crime: crime committed by average people against other people or organizations, usually in public spaces

Structural mobility: a societal change that enables a whole group of people to move up or down the class ladder

Structural unemployment: a societal level of disjuncture between people seeking jobs and the jobs that are available

Subculture of aging theory: a theory that focuses on the shared community created by the elderly when they are excluded (due to age), voluntarily or involuntarily, from participating in other groups

Subcultures: groups that share a specific identification, apart from a society’s majority, even as the members exist within a larger society

Subjective poverty: a state of poverty composed of many dimensions, subjectively present when one’s actual income does not meet one’s expectations

Subordinate group: a group of people who have less power than the dominant group

Subsistence farming: farming where farmers grow only enough to feed themselves and their families

Suburbs: the communities surrounding cities, typically close enough for a daily commute

Supercentenarians: people 110 of age or older
Surveys: collect data from subjects who respond to a series of questions about behaviors and opinions, often in the form of a questionnaire

Sustainable development: development that occurs without depleting or damaging the natural environment

Symbolic interactionism: a theoretical perspective through which scholars examine the relationship of individuals within their society by studying their communication (language and symbols)

Symbols: gestures or objects that have meanings associated with them that are recognized by people who share a culture

Technological diffusion: the spread of technology across borders

Technological globalization: the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology

Technology: the application of science to solve problems in daily life

Technophiles: those who see technology as symbolizing the potential for a brighter future

Thanatology: the systematic study of death and dying

Theory: a proposed explanation about social interactions or society

Third world: a term from the cold war era that refers to poor, unindustrialized countries

Thomas theorem: how a subjective reality can drive events to develop in accordance with that reality, despite being originally unsupported by objective reality

Total institution: an organization in which participants live a controlled lifestyle and in which total resocialization occurs

Totalitarian dictatorship: an extremely oppressive form of dictatorship in which most aspects of citizens’ lives are controlled by the leader

Totemism: the belief in a divine connection between humans and other natural beings

Tracking: a formalized sorting system that places students on “tracks” (advanced, low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities
Traditional authority: power legitimized on the basis of long-standing customs

Transgender: an adjective that describes individuals who identify with the behaviors and characteristics that are other than their biological sex

Transsexuals: transgender individuals who attempt to alter their bodies through medical interventions such as surgery and hormonal therapy

Triad: a three-member group

Underemployment: a state in which a person accepts a lower paying, lower status job than his or her education and experience qualifies him or her to perform

Underground economy: an unregulated economy of labor and goods that operates outside of governance, regulatory systems, or human protections

Underinsured: people who spend at least 10 percent of their income on healthcare costs that are not covered by insurance

Unilateral descent: the tracing of kinship through one parent only.

Universal access: the equal ability of all people to participate in an education system

Universal healthcare: a system that guarantees healthcare coverage for everyone

Upward mobility: an increase—or upward shift—in social class

Urban sociology: the subfield of sociology that focuses on the study of urbanization

Urbanization: the study of the social, political and economic relationships of cities

Utilitarian organizations: organizations that are joined to fill a specific material need

Utility patents: patents that are granted for the invention or discovery of any new and useful process, product, or machine

Validity: the degree to which a sociological measure accurately reflects the topic of study

Value neutrality: a practice of remaining impartial, without bias or judgment during the course of a study and in publishing results
Value-added theory: a functionalist perspective theory that posits that several preconditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur

Values: a culture’s standard for discerning what is good and just in society

Victimless crime: activities against the law, but that do not result in injury to any individual other than the person who engages in them

Violent crimes: crimes based on the use of force or the threat of force

Wealth: the value of money and assets a person has from, for example, inheritance

White flight: the migration of economically secure white people from racially mixed urban areas toward the suburbs

White privilege: the benefits people receive simply by being part of the dominant group

Xenocentrism: a belief that another culture is superior to one’s own

Xenophobia: an illogical fear and even hatred of foreigners and foreign goods

Zero population growth: a theoretical goal in which the number of people entering a population through birth or immigration is equal to the number of people leaving it via death or emigration