

Introduction to Sociology and Social Life

Key terms

absolute poverty	the state where one is barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities
amalgamation	the process by which a minority group and a majority group combine to form a new group
assimilation	the process by which a minority individual or group takes on the characteristics of the dominant culture
capital flight	the movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, via jobs and resources
caste system	a system in which people are born into a social standing that they will retain their entire lives
chattel slavery	a form of slavery in which one person owns another
class	a group who shares a common social status based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation
class system	social standing based on social factors and individual accomplishments
class traits	also called class markers, the typical behaviours, customs, and norms that define each class
conspicuous consumption	buying and using products to make a statement about social standing
core nations	dominant capitalist countries
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
cultural capital	cultural knowledge that serves (metaphorically) as currency to help one navigate a culture
cultural transmission	the way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture
culture of prejudice	the theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture
Davis-Moore thesis	thesis that argues some social stratification is a social necessity
debt accumulation	the build up of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals
debt bondage	when people pledge themselves as servants in exchange for money for passage, and are subsequently paid too little to regain their freedom
deindustrialization	the loss of industrial production, usually to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations where the costs are lower
dependency theory	theory which states that global inequity is due to the exploitation of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by core nations
discrimination	prejudiced action against a group of people
doing gender	when people perform tasks based upon the gender assigned to them by society and, in turn, themselves
dominant group	a group of people who have more power in a society than any of the subordinate groups
double standard	concept that prohibits premarital sexual intercourse for women but allows it for men

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downward mobility	a lowering of one's social class
education	a social institution through which a society's children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms
endogamous marriages	unions of people within the same social category
ethnicity	shared culture, which may include heritage, language, religion, and more
exogamous marriages	unions of spouses from different social categories
expulsion	when a dominant group forces a subordinate group to leave a certain area or even the country
first world	a term from the Cold War era that is used to describe industrialised capitalist democracies
formal education	the learning of academic facts and concepts
fourth world	a term that describes stigmatised minority groups who have no voice or representation on the world stage
gender	a term that refers to social or cultural distinctions of behaviours that are considered male or female
gender identity	an individual's sense of being either masculine or feminine
gender role	society's concept of how men and women should behave
genocide	the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group
global feminization	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
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
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
Head Start program	a federal program that provides academically focused preschool to students of low socioeconomic status
hidden curriculum	the type of non-academic knowledge that one learns through informal learning and cultural transmission
homophobia	an extreme or irrational aversion to homosexuals
income	the money a person earns from work or investments
informal education	learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviours through participation in a society
intergenerational	a difference in social class between different generations of a family

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mobility	
intersection theory	theory that suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes
intergenerational mobility	a difference in social class between different members of the same generation
meritocracy	an ideal system in which personal effort—or merit—determines social standing
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
No Child Left Behind Act	requires states to test students in prescribed grades, with the results of those tests determining eligibility to receive federal funding
peripheral nations	nations on the fringes of the global economy, dominated by core nations, with very little industrialization
pluralism	represented by 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 “flavour” of the whole
prejudice	biased thought based on flawed assumptions about a group of people
primogeniture	a law stating that all property passes to the firstborn son
queer theory	a scholarly discipline that questions fixed (normative) definitions of gender and sexuality
racial steering	when real estate agents direct prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighbourhoods 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
relative poverty	the state of poverty where one is unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in the country
scapegoat theory	suggests that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group
second world	a term from the Cold War era that describes nations with moderate economies and standards of living
segregation	the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions
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
sex	a term that denotes the presence of physical or physiological differences between males and females

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sexism	the prejudiced belief that one sex should be valued over another
sexual orientation	a person's emotional and sexual attraction to a particular sex (male or female)
sexuality	a person's capacity for sexual feelings
social construction of race	the school of thought that race is not biologically identifiable
social mobility	the ability to change positions within a social stratification system
social placement	the use of education to improve one's social standing
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
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
stereotypes	oversimplified ideas about groups of people
structural mobility	when societal changes enable a whole group of people to move up or down the class ladder
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
third world	a term from the Cold War era that refers to poor, unindustrialised countries
tracking	a formalised sorting system that places students on "tracks" (advanced, low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities
transgender	a term that refers to individuals who identify with the behaviours and characteristics that are opposite of their biological sex
transsexuals	transgendered individuals who wish to alter their bodies through medical interventions such as surgery and hormonal therapy
underground economy	an unregulated economy of labour and goods that operates outside of governance, regulatory systems, or human protections
universal access	the equal ability of all people to participate in an education system
upward mobility	an increase—or upward shift—in social class
wealth	the value of money and assets a person has from, for example, inheritance
white privilege	the benefits people receive simply by being part of the dominant group