

## **LECTURE NOTES**

For Health Science Students

# *Introduction to Sociology*



**Ethiopia Public Health  
Training Initiative**

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## PREFACE

Sociology is a discipline that belongs to what conventionally is called the social science. The discipline plays a leading role in the social sciences. The term *sociology* literally means the science of society; for the term itself in its direct sense denotes that. Sociology as an academic discipline arose in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century (in 1837, to mention the exact year) as a special science dedicated to unravel the fundamental laws governing the societal phenomena and human social relationship with primary interest in analyzing the problems and societies of the modern, western world. It has, thus, conventionally been accepted to associate sociology with the study of the modern, industrialized societies of western world.

Health science students learning this discipline have a great advantage of gaining fresh insights and practical benefits in their personal lives and professional practices. Sociology along with other sisterly disciplines such as anthropology, economics, social psychology, human/ cultural geography, history and political sciences has now become an essential component of

the health and medical sciences curricula in universities and other training institutions abroad. Following this example, similar institutions in Ethiopia have also included this course in their curricula.

These lecture notes on introductory sociology are prepared for the health and medical sciences students in institutions of higher learning in Ethiopia. Its purpose is to provide the students with basic ideas and knowledge in the science of sociology. By learning the materials presented in this lecture notes, it is believed that students will be able to understand and appreciate the basic issues, principles and approaches of sociology. Students may also gain an indirect benefit of appreciating the social, cultural, and behavioral dimensions of health and disease.

Specifically, the main learning objective of introduction to sociology is to familiarize the students with the basic ideas, issues, concepts and principles of sociology. Students will be able to describe the meaning, scope, methods, history and importance of sociology, and its relations to other disciplines. The students will also be able to appreciate the relevance of sociology in their

personal and future professional practice. A brief discussion of the survey of social problems in contemporary Ethiopian society will also help them understand their nature, causes and types; and their relations to health and disease.

The lecture notes are organized into seven chapters: the First Chapter introduces important introductory issues such as the definition, subject-matter, theories, history importance and basic research methods of sociology, and its relationship to other disciplines. Chapter Two discusses the concepts of society and culture that are central to sociology. In Chapter Three, the concept of socialization is discussed. Here, the meaning, bases, necessity, goals and types of socialization are important issues of the chapter. Chapter Four deals with some aspects of social organization and social interaction. Three important dimensions of social processes, namely, social stratification, social mobility and social change will be discussed in Chapter Five, while an overview of social pathologies (focusing on Ethiopia) and methods of social action and intervention will be dealt in the Sixth and Seventh Chapters, respectively.

Each chapter begins with learning objectives, ends with a chapter summary and has review questions. Inside the text, there are illustrative boxes, tables and figures which are meant to aid the students in utilizing the notes more effectively. Throughout the text, key terms and concepts are highlighted in bold and they are put in glossary section for easy reference. Important references used in preparing these lecture notes are also cited in the text and they are put in bibliographical section. However, it is advisable to use the lecture notes as *complementary* materials. Students should refer to the textbooks and other references for detailed and richer knowledge.

The author wishes an enjoyable and fruitful reading for the students.

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*Zerihun D. Doffana, MA, Social Anthropology*

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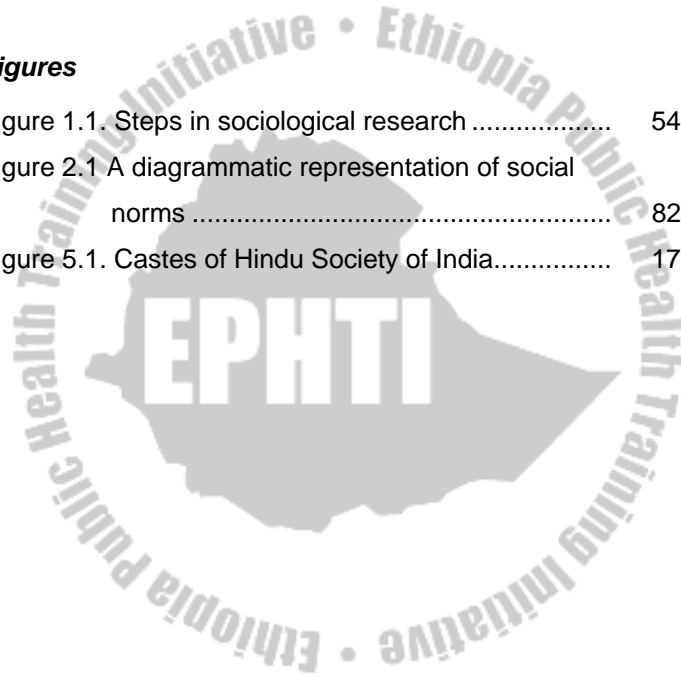


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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, students will be able to:

- Define the term sociology;
- Describe the subject-matter, scope and basic concerns of sociology;
- Understand how sociology emerged and developed;
- Appreciate the personal and professional benefits derived from learning sociology;
- Understand the methods and approaches of sociology;
- Describe macro-sociology and micro-sociology;
- Appreciate the various views and concepts formulated by the founding fathers of sociology;
- Describe the relationship of sociology with other fields of study; and
- Appreciate the application of sociology in addressing contemporary societal problems.

## 1.1. Definition and Subject Matter of Sociology

### 1.1.1. What is Sociology?

Before attempting to define what **sociology** is, let us look at what the popular conceptions of the discipline seem. As may be the case with other sciences, sociology is often misconceived among the populace. Though many may rightly and grossly surmise that sociology is about people, some think that it is all about “helping the unfortunate and doing welfare work, while others think that sociology is the same as socialism and is a means of bringing revolution to our schools and colleges” (Nobbs, Hine and Flemming, 1978:1).

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

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**.

**Box 1.1. A simple definition of sociology**

Sociology is the study of society

Although the term “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

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).

**Box 1.2. Distinguishing between society and culture**

**Society:** a group of people who live within some type of bounded territory and who share a common way of life

**Culture:** is common way of life shared by a society or a group.

Now, turning to the definitional issues, it is important that in addition to this etymological definition of the term, we need to have other substantive definitions. Thus, sociology may be generally defined as a social science that studies such kinds of phenomena as:

- The structure and function of society as a system;
- The nature, complexity and contents of human social behavior;
- The fundamentals of human social life;

- Interaction of human beings with their external environment;
- The indispensability of social interactions for human development;
- How the social world affects us, etc.

A more formal definition of sociology may be that it is a social science which studies the processes and patterns of human individual and group interaction, the forms of organization of social groups, the relationship among them, and group influences on individual behavior, and *vice versa*, and the interaction between one social group and the other (Team of Experts, 2000).

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.”

### **1.1.2. Brief Historical Overview**

Sociology and other social sciences emerged from a common tradition of reflection of social phenomena; interest in the nature of human social behavior and society has probably always existed; however, most people in most past societies saw their culture as a fixed and god-given entity. This view gradually was replaced by more rational explanations beginning from the 17<sup>th</sup> century especially in Western Europe (Rosenberg, 1987). The sociological issues, questions and problems

had been raised and discussed by the forerunners starting from the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers' and Hebrew prophets' times.

Sociology as an academic science was thus born in 19<sup>th</sup> century (its formal establishment year being 1837) in Great Britain and Western Europe, especially in France and Germany, and it greatly advanced through out 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The development of sociology and its current contexts have to be grasped in the contexts of the major changes that have created the modern world (Giddens, 1986). Further, sociology originated in 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophy, political economy and cultural history (Swingwood, 1991)

The major conditions, societal changes, upheavals and social ferments that gave rise to the emergence and development of sociology as an academic science include the Industrial Revolution which began in Great Britain, the French Political Revolution of 1789, the **Enlightenment** and advances in natural sciences and



technology. These revolutions had brought about significant societal changes and disorders in the way society lived in the aforementioned countries. Since sociology was born amidst the great socio-political and economic and technological changes of the western world, it is said to be the science of modern society.

The pioneering sociologists were very much concerned about the great changes that were taking place and they felt that the existing sciences could not help understand, explain, analyze and interpret the fundamental laws that govern the social phenomena. Thus sociology was born out of these revolutionary contexts.

The founders or the pioneering sociologists are the following (Henslin and Nelson, 1995; Giddens, 1996; Macionis, 1997):

- **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 understanding 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 have 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)**

Durkheim 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).

**Box 1.3. Pioneering founders of sociology**

August Comte, French, 1798-1857; key concepts:  
social static and social dynamic

Karl Marx, German, (1818-1883), key concepts:  
class conflict, alienation, historical materialism, etc

Emile Durkheim, French, 1858-1917; key concept:  
social fact

Max Weber, German, 1864=1920; key concepts:  
social action; subjective meanings

Herbert Spencer, British, 1820-1903; key concept:  
social Darwinism

Harriet Martineau, British, 1802-1876; active  
advocate of abolition of slavery and gender issues

**1.1.3. Subject Matter, Scope and Concerns 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.

#### **1.1.4. 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-scale 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.

**Box 1.4. Levels of analysis in sociology**

Micro-sociology: Analyzing small scale social phenomena

Macro-sociology: analyzing large-scale social phenomena

Meso-sociology: analysis of social phenomena in between the micro- and macro- levels.

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.

- **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 sub-divisions 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.

### **1.1.5. 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 (see below).

### **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 holds society together? What keeps it steady? The Structural-functional theory pays considerable attention to the persistence of shared ideas in society. The functional aspect in the structural-functional 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 Talcott 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 (Henslin 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 (*ibid, same page*).

**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 Dunaif-Hattis, 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. Post-structuralists 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 lot 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 and 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 order 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).



**Table 1.1. Summary of sociological theories**

| S. No. | Name of the theory       | What does it state?   | Key concepts  | Its weaknesses   |
|--------|--------------------------|---|---|--|
| 1.     | Structural Functionalism | Sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability  | Consensus, social order, structure and function in society. | Emphasis on stability and order while neglecting conflict and changes which so vital in any society  |
| 2.     | Social conflict theory   | Sees society in a framework of class conflicts and focuses on the struggle for scarce resources by different groups in a given society  | Class conflict; alienation; competition; domination         | 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. |
| 3.     | Symbolic interactionism  | 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. | Symbols; processes; interaction; meaning                    | Too much emphasis on micro-level analysis; neglect of larger social processes  |

|    |                        |   |   |   |
|----|------------------------|---|---|---|
| 4  | Feminism               | Feminist sociology focuses on the particular disadvantages, including oppression and exploitation faced by women in society   | Women; gender; exploitation; male supremacy | Some extreme views such as radical feminism seem unrealistic  |
| 5. | Social Exchange 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. | -   | -   |
| 6. | Rational choice theory | Assumes that individuals will operate in rational way and will seek to benefit themselves in the life choices they make   | --  | --  |
| 7. | Structuralism          | Denies any basis for humans being active, since human consciousness is no longer seen as the basis of meaning in language   | Underlying structures; language             | Views societies as static and do not help very much in explaining variation among societies; treats culture as a given order and fails to explain the adaptive dimensions of culture. |

|    |                    |  |   |   |
|----|--------------------|--|---|---|
| 8. | Post-structuralism | Argues 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 | --  | --  |
|    | Post-modernism     | Argues power has become decentralized and fragmented in contemporary societies   | Modernity; post-modernity; subjective reality | Denial of objective, sociological knowledge |

## 1.2. The Significance of Learning Sociology

Generally, learning sociology provides us with what sociologists call the ***sociological imagination***. Sociological imagination is a particular way of looking at the world around us through sociological lenses. It is a way of looking at our experiences in light of what is going on in the social world around us. This helps us to appreciate the social and non-biological forces that affect, influence and shape our lives as individuals, groups, and communities (Giddens, 1982). Sociological

imagination helps us look beyond individual psychology to the many and varied facets of social and cultural forces, and "the recurring patterns in peoples' attitudes and actions, and how these patterns vary across time, cultures and social groups." (Henslin and Nelson, 1995)

Learning sociology helps us understand how social forces influence our goals, attitudes, behavior, and personality. We become more sensitive towards the social issues. Furthermore, learning sociology helps to cast aside our own biased assumptions, stereotypes and ethno-centric thinking and practices to become more critical, broad-minded and respectful in our interpersonal and inter-group relationships. By learning sociology, we can be more humane and people – centered; we give high value to human dignity.

In general, sociology increases our self-knowledge. Learning sociology can provide us with self-enlightenment. When we learn sociology, we gain more knowledge about the conditions of our own lives, and about the way our society and social system function. As such knowledge increases, we can be more

empowered to influence the direction of forces and circumstances that affect our lives. We can also be more responsive to the various policies set by governments; and can suggest our own policy initiatives and alternatives (Giddens, *op cit*).

In addition to the aforementioned theoretical benefits, sociology has certain practical benefits. There is what we call **applied sociology**, the application of sociological knowledge, principles, methods, concepts and theories to provide the solutions to the contemporary social pathologies. Sociology plays practical roles to tackle social pathologies.

Sociological knowledge is highly applicable in dealing with today's most crucial social problems, and in facilitating developmental activities in socioeconomic sectors.

Before closing this section, it is important to note why health/ medical sciences students need to take a course in introductory sociology. The following are some of the arguments for the necessity of such a course:

1. Health, disease and illness are as much sociocultural in their nature as they are physical.
2. So far, despite certain steps being taken, the dominant trend in the medical/ health sciences training is to highly focus on the biomedical and ecological dimensions of health and disease. However, given the bio-psycho-social nature of human being and health, this is very partial. This restricted approach to health disease does not provide the students with appropriate and whole picture about the issue. Such highly narrow focus in the training of health professionals and design of health policies and strategies is not appropriate.
3. In the objective realities of developing societies such as Ethiopia human health and well-being are deeply linked to sociocultural factors such as the entrenched poverty, the roles of traditional values and institutions in shaping people's worldviews about health and disease.

## 1.3. Sociological Research Methods

### 1.3.1. 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).

**Box 1.5. Inductive vs. deductive approaches**

- 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
- 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.

### **1.3.2. 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.

## **2. 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.

### **3. 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.

#### **4. 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.

#### **5. 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 boards, 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 (Marshall 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).

## **6. 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).

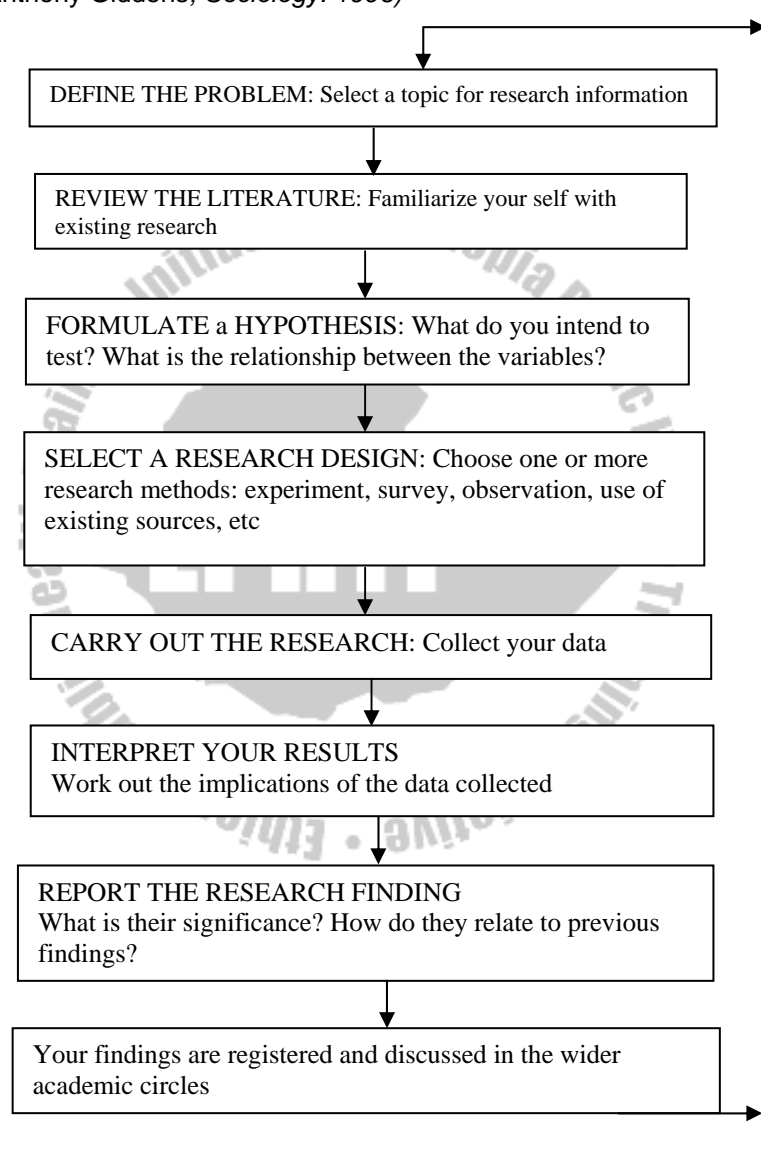
Analysis of qualitative data also actually begins while the researcher is in the field recording his/ her field notes, tape recording and transcribing the interviews. Tape-recording the interview process and transcribing are the essential components of analysis (Jones 1995). In analyzing the data, the 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.

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.

Figure 1.1 Steps in the Research Process (Adapted from Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*. 1996)



## **1.4. 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).

## 1.5. Chapter Summary

The term *sociology* is a combination of two words, *socius* and *logos*, which mean respectively *society* and *study*. Thus, a simple etymological definition of sociology is that it is the science of society. Sociology is a social or behavioral science that originated in the 19th century in Western Europe; its main concern is discovering the basic laws and principles that govern human social life, the social world, the working and development of society and its institutions. It grew out of the great revolutionary contexts, with great concern to address the social changes, disorders and problems of the modern world.

Micro-sociology studies the *micro* aspects of human society, that is the social processes and phenomena taking place at small scale levels; macro-sociology studies the *macro* aspects, that is, the overall structure, functioning, change, development and processes of social phenomena at large-scale levels. The six major fields of study in sociology are social organization and

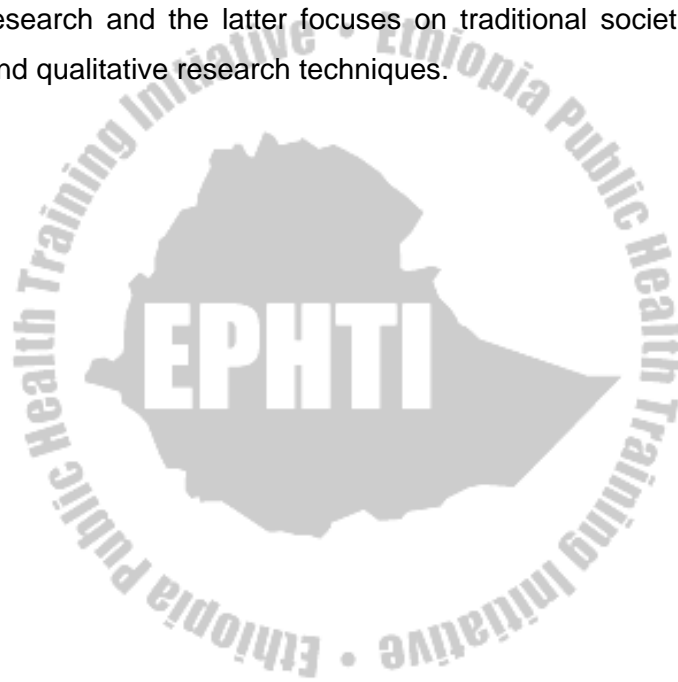
social theory, social change, social problems, social processes, social groups, and social control.

Learning sociology provides us with *sociological imagination*, an illuminating way of understanding the forces and factors that affect our lives as individuals, groups, communities and nations. Sociology provides us with much practical benefit and it contributes greatly to the solutions for contemporary societal problems.

Research is very important in sociology. Although some challenge its scientific status, it uses the scientific method to produce, store and disseminate scientific knowledge on society and social phenomena. A typical sociological research may involve seven steps, and each step is very important and has to be carefully followed to do standard and quality research.

Sociology is not an island; it is interdependent with other sciences; and as to its subject matter it is more or less similar with the other social or behavioral sciences such as anthropology, social psychology, political science, economics, and human geography. However, as to its

methods, focus, unit of analysis, and approaches, it is different. The closest discipline to sociology is social anthropology; they share similar historical development, concepts, theories, and approaches; although the former focuses on modern societies and quantitative research and the latter focuses on traditional societies and qualitative research techniques.



## Review Questions

1. What is *sociology*? Explain it using your own words.
2. How can we differentiate sociology from other social sciences, which also study society and human culture?
3. Discuss the main sociopolitical and economic factors behind the emergence of sociology.
4. Mention at least five issues of sociological relevance in the contemporary society of Ethiopia.
5. Discuss the personal and professional benefits of learning sociology.
6. Consider the issue of students' sexual behavior in your University. Discuss those aspects that would be interesting to study for a sociologist. What aspects might *not* be interesting sociologically? Why?
7. Discuss the main differences between qualitative and quantitative methods of doing research.
8. Identify the factors to be considered when one is considering choosing a certain issue or issues as research topic.

## CHAPTER TWO

# SOCIETY AND CULTURE

### Learning Objectives

At learning this chapter, students will be able to:

- Define the concept of society;
- Describe the basic characteristics of a society;
- Conceptualize society as having different levels;
- Describe the different types of society on the basis of various parameters;
- Explain how society functions as a system;
- Define the concept of culture;
- Describe the basic features of culture;
- Identify the key elements of culture; and
- Understand other main concepts related to culture

## 2.1. The Concept of Society

### 2.1.1. Definition

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, a 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*)



### **2.1.2. 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 feeling 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.

### 2.1.3. 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.

#### **2.1.4. 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.

## **2.2. The Concept of Culture**

### **2.2.1. Definition**

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; Henslin 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 the symbolic dimension of culture; that culture is essentially symbolic (*see below*).

### **2.2.2. 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.

**Box 2.1. 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*

**2.2.3. 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 from 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.

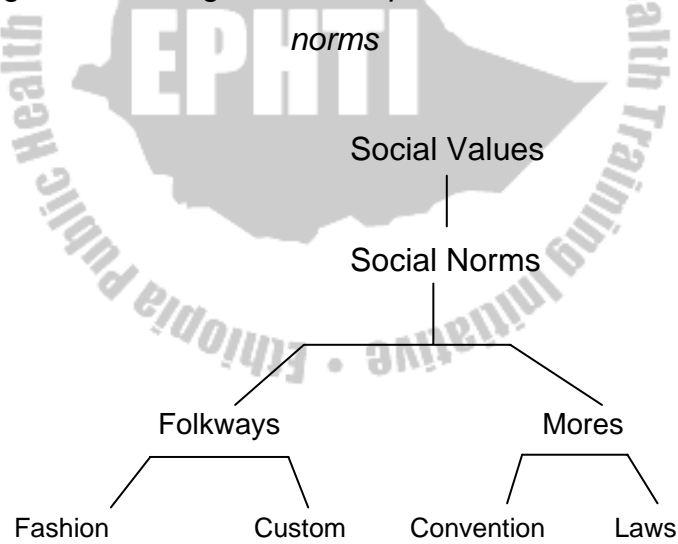
Conformity to folkways usually occurs automatically without any national analysis and is based upon custom passed from generation to generation. They are not enforced by law, but by informal social control. They are not held to be important or obligatory as mores, or moral standards, and their violation 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.

Figure 2.1 A diagrammatic representation of social norms



**Box 2.2. Elements of culture**

- *Values*
- *Norms*
- *Symbols*
- *Language*
- *Folkways*
- *Mores*
- *Customs*
- *Fashion*
- *Laws*

**2.2.4. 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 Slezni, 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.

### **2.2.5. 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; Henslin 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 from 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).

### **2.2.6. Cultural Universals, Alternatives and Specialties**

#### ***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. Anthropologists 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).

**Table 2.1. A list of some cultural universals**

---

|                        |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| age grading            | faith healing       |
| joking                 | pregnancy usages    |
| athletics              | family              |
| kin groups             | property rites      |
| bodily adornments      | feasting            |
| kin terminology        | puberty customs     |
| calendar               | fire making         |
| language               | religious rituals   |
| community organization | folklore            |
| magic                  | residence rules     |
| cooking                | food taboos         |
| marriage               | sexual restrictions |
| cooperative labor      | funeral rites       |

|                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| mealtimes            | soul concepts          |
| cosmology            | games                  |
| medicine             | status differentiation |
| courtship            | gestures               |
| modesty              | trade                  |
| dancing              | gift giving            |
| mourning             | tool making            |
| decorative labor     | greetings              |
| music                | visiting               |
| division of labor    | hair styles            |
| mythology            | weaning                |
| dream interpretation | hospitality            |
| numerals             | weather control        |
| education            | housing                |
| obstetrics           | ethics                 |
| hygiene              | personal names         |
| ethnobotany          | incest taboos          |
| population policy    | etiquette              |
| inheritance rules    | postnatal care         |

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Source: Scupin, Raymond and Christopher R. DeCorse (1995). *Anthropology, a Global Perspective*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

### ***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.

### **2.2.7. 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.

### **2.2.8. 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 same language, share the same values and norms, and sustain common and 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

### **2.3. Chapter Summary**

The concepts of society and culture are central to sociology. 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. Societies may be conceptualized as having different levels: at global, continental, regional, nation-

state and ethnic group levels. Depending on various criteria, societies may be classified into various categories, such as First World, Second World, Third World and Fourth World Societies (based on economic development and overall socio-economic status); and hunting and gathering, pastoral, agrarian, industrial and post industrial societies (based on temporal succession and major means of livelihood).

The term "culture" 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. Culture has various dimensions such as material and non-material, implicit and explicit, organic and supra organic, ideal and actual, dynamic and static and overt and covert. The essential elements of culture include symbols, language, values and norms. Other important aspects of culture such as culture variability; ethnocentrism, cultural relativism and culture shock; cultural universals, alternatives and specialties; and culture lag and lead are discussed.

## Review Questions

1. Define the term "society".
2. "In a broader perspective, the people of the planet earth maybe regarded as a society." Explain.
3. Mention the criteria for classifying societies into different categories. Where would you put Ethiopia as a society according to both criteria? Why?
4. Define the term "culture".
5. List and discuss the elements of culture.
6. Discuss the main characteristics of culture.
7. Why do cultures vary between societies?
8. What are subcultures? How are sub-cultures created? Think of a certain health service rendering set up. Mentions some of the examples of sub-cultures in such set up
9. What are cultural universals? Why and how do cultural universals condition behavioral similarities among persons of a similar society or social group?
10. Why and how does culture shock occur?
11. Discuss the examples of culture lead and culture lag in our contemporary Ethiopian culture.

## CHAPTER THREE

# SOCIALIZATION

### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, students will be able to:

- Define the term "socialization";
- Appreciate the aims of socialization;
- Describe human biological bases of, and capacity for, socialization;
- Understand the modes of social learning;
- Identify the modes and /or patterns of socialization;
- Describe the major types of socialization; and
- Describe the components and agents of socialization.

### 3.1. 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 thorough 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.

### **3.2. 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 Slezni, 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.



### 3.3. 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 Slezni, 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 open-endedness 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.

**Box 3.1. The five human biological bases of socialization**

- *Absence of instinct*
- *Social contact needs*
- *Capacity to learn and teachability*
- *Capacity for language*
- *Longer period of childhood dependence*

### **3.4. 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 Pavlovian 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.

### 3.5. 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. The following is a tabular representation of the two modes of socialization.

**Table 3.1: Two modes of socialization, adapted from Broom and Selznick (1973)**

| <i>Repressive Socialization</i>          | <i>Participatory Socialization</i>      |
|--|---|
| • Punishing wrong behavior               | • Rewarding good behavior               |
| • Material rewards and punishment        | • Symbolic rewards and punishment       |
| • Obedience of child                     | • Autonomy of child                     |
| • Non-verbal communication               | • Verbal communication                  |
| • Communication as command               | • Communication as interaction          |
| • Parent-centered socialization          | • Child-centered socialization          |
| • Child's discernment of parents' wishes | • Parents' discernment of child's needs |
| • Family as significant other            | • Family as generalized other           |

### 3.6. Major Types of Socialization

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



### 3.6.1. 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.

### **3.6.2. 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.

### **3.6.3. Re-socialization and De-socialization**

In the lives of individuals, as they pass through different stages and life experiences, there is the need for re-socialization and de-socialization. Re-socialization means the adoption by adults of radically different norms and lifeways that are more or less completely dissimilar to the previous norms and values. Re-socialization 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. De-socialization refers to stripping individuals of their former life styles, beliefs, values and attitudes so that they may take up other partially or totally new life styles, attitudes and values. The individuals have to abandon their former values and take up new ones in order to become part of the new social group.

De-socialization and re-socialization often take place in what is called **total institutions**, which are an all-encompassing 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 re-socialized.

Re-socialization may also mean socializing individuals again into their former values and norms, after they rejoin their former ways of life, spending a relatively longer period of 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 re-socialization may also be regarded as reintegration, helping the ex-community members renew their memories of their former lifeways, skills, knowledge, etc.

### **3.6.4. 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.

### **3.6.5. 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.

**Box 3.2. Major types of socialization**

- *Primary or childhood socialization*
- *Secondary or adult socialization*
- *Re-socialization*
- *De-socialization*
- *Anticipatory socialization*
- *Reverse socialization*

### **3.7. 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

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 than 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

### **3.8. 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 through 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)*

### **3.9. Chapter Summary**

Socialization is a life long, never ending process whereby individuals are trained and fitted into the normal functioning of their societies and groups. Only

human beings are biologically capable for socialization. Thus, biological bases that make socialization in humans possible include: absence of instincts, social contact needs, capacity to learn, prolonged childhood dependence and language. Researchers of socialization have identified the mechanisms by which socialization takes place; these are called modes of social learning. They include: classical and operant conditioning; identity taking; modeling-after and problem solving. The patterns of socialization vary from society to society; there are two broad patterns of socialization; these are: repressive socialization which focuses on punishment and reward mechanism, emphasizing obedience of children; and participatory socialization, which focuses on participating children, by stressing child-centered socialization.

The goals of socialization include: inculcating basic disciplines, instilling aspirations as well as disciplines, providing individuals with identities, teaching social roles and their supporting attitudes, and teaching skills. The major types of socialization are: primary, childhood socialization; secondary, adult socialization; de-

socialization and re-socialization. Other minor types include: anticipatory socialization and reverse socialization. Socialization can be carried out at informal and formal levels; of these, informal socialization through the agency of parents, siblings, peer groups and interpersonal relationships plays a very powerful role in shaping our attitudes, goals, lifestyles, knowledge and overall personality development. Other formal agents of socialization also play very important roles; these are: schools at different levels and mass media, of which television stands out the most powerful agent of socialization relating to children, often with negative effects.

## Review Questions

1. Define the term "socialization".
2. Why are humans biologically capable of socialization?
3. Mention and discuss the goals of socialization.
4. Discuss the mechanism by which social learning in humans takes place.
5. Compare and contrast the two modes of socialization.
6. Mention and discuss the major and minor types of socialization.
7. "A greater proportion of an individual's personality is a reflection of the type of socialization process he or she has gone through during primary socialization." Explain.
8. "Without socialization a person is a mere biological being." Discuss.
9. Identify the aspects of your personality which you regard as the results of parent socialization, peer influences and the mass media,
10. Discuss the negative and positive effects of television as agent of socialization in your life.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

#### Learning Objectives

After learning this chapter, students will be able to:

- Describe the meaning of social organization;
- Understand that humans are by nature social animals and apart from sustained social relationship, humans would not enjoy life in isolation;
- Appreciate the influence of group life on individual behavior, and *vice versa*; and the role of primary social groups in shaping the personality, attitude, lifestyle and mentality of individuals;
- Describe the meaning social interaction and social relationship;
- Identify the basic symbolic interactionist perspective of social interaction in everyday life;
- Define the concepts of social status and social roles; and understand the fact that individuals interact within the framework of status and role relationships;

- Define the concept of social institution; and
- Describe the meaning and types of social control.

#### 4.1. The Concept of Social Organization

The health science student should be introduced to the idea of how we as social beings organize ourselves and how individual persons, communities and societies are related to one another. Human beings are social animals by nature and whatever we do or say are related to social environment. Our lives as human beings have their meanings in organized relationships. Whether we eat, drink, work, play, worship, recreate or learn, we do it in social group context. No one enjoys alone outside organized network of social interaction and relationships. Although we have the capacity for privacy, no one can enjoy him / herself for a sustained period of time, without inflicting upon oneself adverse effects

By ***social organization***, we refer to the pattern of individual and group relations. The term "organization" signifies technical arrangement of parts in a whole, and

the term "social", indicates the fact that individual and group relations are the outcomes of social processes (Broom and Slezinky, 1973). Thus, one of sociology's main concerns is to study and analyze the behavior of human society as it appears in its structured and organized ways and relationships. Specifically, sociologists are here interested in discovering and analyzing:

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



## **4.2. Social Groups**

In our day-to-day life and social activities, we interact with each other, belonging to a group of some kind. The study of group is central to any sociological investigation.

### **4.2.1. Definition of a Social Group**

The term group has a special meaning in sociology because it represents a concept that is central to any sociological analysis. Quite several definitions have been given to the term group by different sociologists. Generally, a social group is defined as the collectivity or set of people who involve in more or less permanent or enduring social interactions and relationships. Members of a social group have common basis for interaction and shared characteristics, a feeling of identity or belongingness, shared psychology or consciousness and a definite set of norms to govern the behaviors of the individual participant in the group

#### 4.2.2. Basic Features of a Social Group

In their sociological analysis of the group behavior of human society, sociologists have identified some essential elements of a social group. For a set or collectivity of people to be a social group, it has to have the following essential traits or features (Calhoun *et al*, 1994)

1. Members of the group continue to interact with one another;
2. Membership requires living by norms that are special to the group;
3. Members view each other as part of the group; members feel some sense of identification with the group and with one another; and there is a social boundary between members and non-members;
4. Members are functionally integrated through role and status relationship in the group structure; and
5. Others see members as group.

Social interaction among the members is relatively permanent; it is not causal. Common interests should characterize as a basis for interaction. There are shared

values, beliefs and lifestyles. The emotional, shared consciousness is also important. The feeling of belongingness is very important. Social norms and values govern behavior of group members.

All of the following are examples of social groups, from the smallest possible level to the largest possible. A dyad (made up of two persons like fiancés, husband and wife), a family, a group of students in a dormitory, peer group, a friendship, an ethnic group, a community, a nation, a continent, a university, an organization, etc.

### 4.2.3. Classification of Groups

Sociologists have classified groups into two basic classifications, namely, **primary** and **secondary** groups. The classification of groups into primary and secondary is mainly based on: (a) the quality of relationship between or among the members of the group, and (b) the degree of group identity. People, for example, generally feel more loyal to their family and close friends than to the companies for which they work (Henslin and Nelson, 1995).

### ***Primary Groups and Their Main Features***

Charles H. Cooley was the first sociologist to use the term primary groups to describe such groups as family, neighborhood and children's play groups. Such groups were the "nursery of human nature" where the essential sentiment of human group loyalty and concern for others could be learned. Primary groups are distinguished by some of the following characteristics:

- There is face-to-face interaction among members.
- There is high sentiment or loyalty.
- Identification (group identity) and close cooperation among members
- There is a high level of emotional, spiritual satisfaction to be derived from involvement in primary social groups.
- Concern for friendly relations as an end in themselves, not as a means to an end.
- Primary groups are often small in size.
- Primary group gives its members (individuals) their "first acquaintance with humanity".

- Primary groups, for a child, are a school for learning the ways of human interaction and the give and take of working and playing together.

### ***Secondary Groups and Their Main Features***

Secondary groups are the more formal types of groups to which peoples belong. To start with clearly definitive examples, the Federal Army, Lion's Club, Ethiopian Commercial Bank, etc, are secondary groups. As organizations, secondary groups do not give people the feeling of close identity that primary groups give. Considerable effort must be devoted to making people proud of the corporation for which they work, and this type of pride, if it is achieved at all, is not primary group sentiment. One can still be lost in the great organization; there is not the same sense of psychological security.

Main features (traits) of secondary social groups include:

- There is little or no emotional involvement.
- Members are more competitive than cooperative.
- Members are less intimate.
- Group identity is less relevant.

- Economic efficiency is given higher emphasis than psychological identity.
- The group is mainly a means to an end rather than an end in itself.
- Membership is unlimited.

Some critical observations must be made concerning the classification of groups.

- i) Primary and secondary groups are ideal types, i.e. types represented as opposite poles for the sake of analysis. In concrete life situations, most relations are not purely primary or secondary, but come some where between, examples: school, church, etc.
- ii) A second reservation about primary-secondary group classification is that primary groups may be formed within secondary groups.

In other words, the classification of social groups into primary and secondary should not be taken as a sort of dichotomy. It should rather be considered as a continuum, i.e. at the two extreme ends, there may be

crystallized primary and secondary groups, and in between the two extremes, there are mixtures of the two types.

#### **4.2.4. Quasi-Social Groups**

Quasi-groups are those kinds of social groupings which lack the essential features of social groups. In this kind of grouping, there may be no functional integration among members. There are little or no structured and patterned social relationships. This kind of social interactions is common in modern, industrial and complex societies. It is more common in urban heterogeneous settings. They characterize individualistic societies. Such groups lack meaningful social structures and social interaction. There are two types of quasi groups: aggregates and categories.

##### ***Aggregates***

A social aggregate is quasi-social grouping in which two or more people are physically together at a certain time and at a certain place. There is physical proximity without enduring social interaction. There is no shared psychological-identity. However, out of this kind of

grouping a real social group can emerge. Examples of an aggregate include: two or more people in a- taxi, bus, air plane, an elevator, a busy city street, in a cafeteria, a stadium, in a market, in a hospital ward, etc.

Anonymity in the midst of crowd behavior usually characterizes aggregates. Such condition may lead to the problem of sense of alienation, dehumanization, sense of being lost, depression, social stress and other psychosocial problems. Suicide is very common in urban than rural areas and mental illness is more increased in societies characterized by anonymity, individualism, and heterogeneity.

***Categories***

This is a quasi-group which consists of a plurality or collectively of people who are physically dispersed, but who share common traits and interests. It refers to a social class; or a group of people who are more or less of similar lifestyles, and physical and psychosocial characteristics. There may be little or no social interaction, social structure, social norms, etc; but there is the feeling of belongingness, even though the people



may never know each other. However, gradually, a meaningful social grouping can grow out of a category. Examples of a social category include: all female students in higher learning institutions in Ethiopia; all female engineers in Ethiopia; all students from rural background, HIV positive persons, etc.

**Table 4.1. Summary of types of groups**

|    | Type of group           | Basic features  | Examples   |
|----|-------------------------|---|--|
| 1. | Primary social groups   | Face-to-face interaction;<br>informal and personal interaction;<br>Small size;<br>An end in itself<br>Common values, norms and belief system;<br>Feeling of unity | A family; a peer group; a dormitory of students; etc |
| 2. | Secondary social groups | Relatively large group size;<br>impersonal and formal social interaction; a means to an end; bureaucratic structure;  | An anti-AIDS club; a university; a hospital; etc     |

|    |            |   |   |
|----|------------|---|---|
| 3. | Aggregates | A quasi social group; mere physical proximity/ togetherness; lack of unifying features; not functionally integrated | A group of people standing on queues; a group people taking a taxi or a bus; people walking a in busy city street; a group of patients sitting or standing in a waiting room of a hospital, etc |
| 4. | Category   | Quasi social group; dispersed collectivity; members belonging to similar socioeconomic background                   | All women aged 60 an above; all HIV patients in the world; all rural people in Ethiopia; etc  |
| 5. | Dyads      | A two-person, primary social group;   | Husband and wife; a two –person peer group; etc   |

### **4.3. Social Interaction and Social Relationship**

To understand social organizations in a society, sociologists study social structures and the function of social events and processes. This involves studying social interaction and relationships at broader (macro) and micro levels. Social interaction and relationship may be studied as they occur between the whole societies linked in the world system down to those between two individuals. Here our focus is on social interaction and relationship in the everyday life of individuals.

Individuals are the main components of society; they make up the building blocks; as, in a very important sense, society is the product of the actions of individuals. We may further state that society is a representation of the collective behavior of individual actors. It is the product of decisions people make concerning when, how, and with whom they are going to interact. However, individuals are social actors who act in a social environment; their social interactions are influenced by the social environment and existing social

pattern. In other words, the actions of individuals are not haphazard ones; they take place in patterned relationships.

**Social relationship** refers to any routinized, enduring patterns of social interactions between individuals in society under the limits and influences of the social structure. The term "social relationship" elicits two important questions: between whom does social relationship take place? About what are social relationships? Answers to these questions lead us to the concepts of social status and role (Henslin and Nelson, 1995).

#### **4.3.1. Social Status and Social Roles**

##### ***The Concept and Types of Social Status***

In the social structure of a society or a group, there are various defined positions to be occupied by a group of individuals. This position is termed as **social status**. It is the position or rank a person or a group of persons occupy in the social system. Some of these positions are naturally given and they are called **ascribed social**

**status.** They are acquired by birth. For example, being a male or female, boy or girl, black or white person, son or daughter, father or mother, etc. Some positions in society are to be attained by competitions, making efforts, commitments, choices, decisions, and other mechanisms. Such kinds of status are called **achieved statuses.** Examples include being a husband or wife, a student or teacher, a physician, a nurse, an athlete, etc. However, there are some of the statuses which may be both ascribed and achieved. For example, one can be an Ethiopian by birth or through other mechanisms.

Achieved social status may be regarded as the characteristics of modern, industrial societies. In a traditional society, most social statuses are naturally acquired. E.g. a potter family may produce potter son or daughter. But in modern society, this is not usually the case.

Every person has at least two social statuses. A person, for example, may be at the same time a student, a daughter, a mother, an employee, etc. Of these various statuses, one or two may be more dominant than others.

The most dominant of all is called a **salient status**. It is that which defines a person's position in most cases at most occasions (Calhoun *et al.*, 1994; Rosenberg, 1987; Stockard, 1997).

### ***The Concept of Social Roles***

**Social roles** are the expectations, duties, responsibilities, obligations, etc, which are associated with a given social status. Every person/ group of persons is/ are expected to behave, act and demonstrate skills, knowledge and attitude that are fitting to the given status or statuses. Every person is expected to play two or more roles.

Multiple statuses are associated with multiple roles. The different roles associated with a single status are called **role set**. Sometimes, there are role conflicts, meaning the clashing of one role with the other. These role conflicts may be **inter-role**, i.e. conflict between two or more roles. There are also **intra-role** conflicts, i.e. conflicts that occur when a person feels strains and inadequacies in accomplishing a certain role, or when there is a gap between what a person does and what a

group expects of him or her. Intra-role conflict may also be called role strain. In other words, there is a clash between **ideal role**, that which a person is expected to perform theoretically, and **actual role**, that a person accomplishes according to his or her level of understanding, capacity and personality.

#### **4.3.2. Social Interaction in Everyday Life**

Micro-sociology focuses on understanding and analyzing the processes and dynamics of social interaction in every day life. Social interaction may simply mean what people do when they are in the presence of one another. Four symbolic interactionist micro-sociological perspectives are developed to understand social interaction in everyday life (Henslin and Nelson, 1995). These are:

**1. Symbolic Interaction:** Symbolic interactionism as indicated earlier focuses on social interaction as the most significant part of life in society. What interest scholars in this perspective are symbols people use to define their worlds. Here, three important concepts

are used to explain the symbolic basis and nature of social interaction; these are: **stereotypes in every day life, personal space, and touching.**

- **Stereotypes in Everyday Life:** Stereotypes are the assumptions we have about people; they determine and shape our reactions and behaviors towards people. Our first impressions about people are shaped by the assumptions we make about such characteristics as the person's sex, age, skin color, physical appearance, social status, etc. The assumptions not only influence our ideas about the person, but the way we interact with that person.
- **Personal space:** Individuals have, and maintain, an important sense of personal space in social interaction; every person has thus personal space. Our personal spaces are open to only those whom we are intimate with such as children, parents, close friends and spouses. Otherwise, we keep others out of this personal space making sure that we do not touch, and are



touched by, others. Anthropological research findings show that the use of personal space varies from culture to culture; four different distance zones are identified, for example, as used in North America (*Ibid*). These are:

- I. **Intimate Distance** (50 centimeter from our bodies; reserved for lovemaking, wrestling, comforting, protecting, etc.);
- II. **Personal Distance** (extends from 50 centimeter to 120 centimeter surrounding our bodies; these spaces are reserved for friends, acquaintances and conversations);
- III. **Social Distance** (extends from 120 centimeter to 3.6 meters for impersonal or formal relationships; e.g., for job interviews); and
- IV. **Public Distance** (this zone extends from 3.6 meters; it marks a more formal relationship. This is used to separate dignitaries and public speakers from the general public.)

- **Touching:** Each society has rules about touching in social interaction. Frequency of touching and the meaning people attach to it vary between and within cultures. However, in impersonal social interactions, higher status individuals are more likely to touch those of lower status; e.g. teacher his/ her students; a boss his secretary, etc.
2. **Dramaturgy:** Symbolic interactionists use the term “dramaturgy” to refer to the way individuals present themselves in everyday life. The term was coined by sociologist Erving Goffman (1922 – 1982) to refer to dramaturgical analysis of how people act and behave in social situations. Thus, social life is likened to a drama or stage. Individuals are born into the stage of everyday life. Our everyday social life consists of playing our assigned roles. Every person learns how to perform in the stage. Our everyday life is filled with stages where we perform; each person is expected to play his/ her drama taking many roles; e.g. a student, a wife, a mother, a daughter, a worker, etc. The actions and roles played on the stage are called **role performances** (*ibid.*).

**3. Ethno-methodology:** literally means *the study of people's methods*. Ethno-methodologists study how people make sense of life. Ethno-methodology involves uncovering people's basic assumptions as they interpret their everyday world. Sociologists like Harold Garfinkel (who coined the term) have made extensive studies of how people use commonsense understandings to make sense out of their lives. What form the bases of social interaction in our everyday life are the assumptions individual actors have about the way life is and the way things ought to work (*Ibid.*)

**4. The Social Construction of Reality:** Symbolic interactionists argue that individuals define their own reality and try to live according to that definition. Reality is not something that exists "out there", independently. It is created socially. By "social construction of reality", we mean the process by which we take the various elements available in our society and put them together to form a particular view of reality. Every individual's definition of reality derives from his/ her society's own definition. The

definitions we learn from our cultures form the basis of not only what we do, but also what we perceive, feel or think.

## 4.4. Social Institutions

### 4.4.1. 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: (a) perpetuation of the welfare of society, (b) preservation and maintenance of the form of society, and (c) 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.

#### **4.4.2. Major Types and Functions of Social Institutions**

There are many principles around which institutions are organized. The five social institutions of major significance 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: (a) **primary functions**, which are also called manifest, explicit, or direct functions; and (b) **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 to 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



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 all members of society equally. They may exist to promote the interests and privileges of some sections of society (*Personal communication: Dr Teketel Abebe, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University*).

**Box 4.1. Major social institutions with primary functions**

***The family:*** procreation and socialization of children

***Economic institution:*** organizing production, exchange and consumption of goods and services

***Political Institution:*** Maintaining peace and order in society

***Educational institution:*** centers of knowledge creation and transmission; transmission of culture from generation to generation

***Religious institution:*** Meeting spiritual needs; serving as source of explanatory authority on difficult questions facing human life.

## **4.5. The Concept of Social Control**

### **4.5.1. 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.

#### 4.5.2. 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.

#### 4.6. Chapter Summary

Social organization refers to the way people are socially grouped in an enduring network of social interaction and relationship. The appropriate living and working environment of a person is group life. As a ship does not function outside water, a human being as a social animal does not live for any meaningful sustained period of time in isolation from social group context. Whatever we do, say, behave, or act gets its right meaning in the context of a social group.

The social organizational life of people may be explained in terms of social groups, aggregates, categories, etc. The organic life of society is cemented or glued together by forces of social interaction and relationship. The nature and dynamic of social interaction in our everyday lives are discussed. Key symbolic interactionist concepts and perspectives such as dramaturgy, stereotypes in everyday interaction, ethnomethodology and the social construction of reality are also discussed.

Social status locates individuals and groups in the social structure, of which some locations are defined by birth and others are obtained by choice, efforts and competitions. Statuses are associated with roles, which may be ideal or actual. There are usually tensions and clashes between ideal and actual roles. When such tensions take place within one role it is intra-role conflict or role strain, and when it occurs between the different roles of a person, it is inter-role conflict.

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.

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.



## Review Questions

1. Explain the term *social organization* using your own words
2. What is *social relationship*?
3. Explain the following statement: "No one enjoys aloneness."
4. Discuss the difference between social groups and quasi-social groups.
5. Identify the elements of social group influence that you think have become part of your personality, life style, life choices and goals. Which of your life philosophies, likes and dislikes are *not the products of social influence, i.e., that are just your own idiosyncrasies*?
6. Mention and discuss the four key concepts developed by symbolic interactionists to analyze the nature of social interaction in everyday life.

7. Differentiate between intra-social and inter-social role conflicts. Explain cases of, if any, inter-social role and intra-social role conflicts you have encountered. Have these conflicts had any negative impact on your health? How?
8. Why do you think social control is necessary?



## CHAPTER FIVE

# SOCIAL PROCESSES

### Learning Objectives

Having completed this chapter, the students will be able to:

- Understand the meaning of social processes and their analogy with biological processes;
- Describe the modes of social processes, such as competition, conflict, cooperation, assimilation and accommodation;
- Understand the concept of social stratification, its roots, forms and consequences.
- Define the concept of social mobility, and differentiate between the various forms of mobility;
- Describe the concept of social change, its causes, characteristics, and the social changes that are taking place in the contemporary Ethiopian society.

## 5.1. The Concept of Social Processes

As members of a society or different societies interact with each other, different social processes take place. As there are processes in the natural world, social processes are bound to take place in the organized life of society. In the social system, these social processes are necessary for the very life, existence and smooth functioning of the system. Sociologists are interested in studying and analyzing these repetitive forms or patterns of behaviors, actions, and reactions.

**Social processes** are certain repetitive, continuous forms of patterns in the social systems that occur as individuals, groups, societies, or countries interact with each other. They are interaction patterns or modes, among members (individual) within a society or a group involving particular repetitive features, occurring both at micro and macro levels. They help us interpret and understand our social behavior.

## **5.2. Modes of Social Processes**

Social processes may be manifested in a number of ways. There are generally five modes of social processes. These are competition, conflict, cooperation, accommodation and assimilation. These are universal modes; they take place at micro and macro levels. One mode of social process may balance another; e.g., competition by cooperation. One may also yield another- they take place in an unending cycle. For example, competition may yield conflict.

### **5.2.1. Competition**

Competition as a social process seems to be more pronounced than others. It is real in our day-to-day interpersonal encounters, as well as in the global situations. Competition is the process where by individuals, groups, societies, and countries make active efforts to win towards getting their share of the limited resources. It is an impersonal attempt to gain scarce and valued resources of wealth, land, health care services, etc. As a result of competition, stratification,

physical separation and so on may happen in a given society. Competition involves struggle, efforts, decisions, actions, etc., to survive. Competition is balanced by cooperation.

### **5.2.2. Cooperation**

Cooperation is a social process whereby people join hands towards achieving common goals. Competition is more likely to occur in advanced, modern, industrialized societies than in traditional, homogenous societies where cooperation appears to be more important.

### **5.2.3. Conflict**

In the process of competition for power (which could be economic, social, and political) and resources, conflict is bound to take place. Conflict involves disagreement and disharmony, which results due to differences in ideology, living standard, and other social factors. It is a universal phenomenon, an ever-present reality, taking place both at micro and macro levels. Conflict involves clash of interest between individuals in a social group

like in a family or between groups or societies. It results due to power imbalance, due to unfair distribution of resources. Here, it produces social class and stratification. Conflict may be between males and females, youngster and older generation; between different religious, ethnic and, political groups.

#### **5.2.4. Accommodation**

People may decide to consciously avoid the source of conflict thereby arriving at an agreement to live accepting one another, co-exist at relative peace, avoiding overt conflict. Accommodation is a social process whereby people try to accept one another, avoiding the sources of conflict to live in peaceful coexistence. It is a conscious adjustment and compromise among conflicting groups so that they can live with one another without overt conflict.

#### **5.2.5. Assimilation**

Assimilation is a social process whereby a group of individuals learns and accepts the values, norms, etc., of another group and becomes sometimes virtually

identical with the dominant groups. Assimilation involves the acceptance or the internalizing of the larger or dominant group's culture, values and life styles by the smaller or minority group. Assimilation could imposed or voluntary. In this age of globalization there are westernization processes, whereby peoples of the Third World are taking up the values, notions and practices of the Industrialized West.

**Box 5.1. Modes of social processes**

- *Competition*
- *Cooperation*
- *Conflict*
- *Accommodation*
- *Assimilation*

### **5.3. Social Stratification**

#### **5.3.1. Definition**

Social stratification is one of the outcomes of the continuous occurring of social processes. Every society is segmented in to different hierarchies. In virtually all



societies, some people are regarded as more important than others (more worthy of respect than others), either within the society as a whole or in a certain situations.

Social stratification is the segmentation of society into different hierarchical arrangement or strata. It refers to the differences and inequalities in the socioeconomic life of people in a given society. It represents the ranking of individuals or social positions and statuses in the social structure. The term is borrowed from geology where it is used to explain the hierarchical arrangement of rocks and mineral in the earth's surface. When applied to the world of people, it refers to hierarchical arrangement of people into different classes or *strata* which is the division of a population into two or more layers, each of which is relatively homogenous, between which there are differences in privileges, restrictions, rewards and obligations (Maconis, 1997; Henslin and Nelson, 1995; Calhoun *et al* 1994).

### **5.3.2. The Importance of Studying Social Stratification**

The study of social stratification is particularly important for sociologists. Some of the reasons for this may include (Giddens, 1995):

- To investigate the class membership of individuals in society with the aim of understanding the type of life people live. That is, knowing what type of life individuals in a given social group or stratum live is very important for sociological analysis.
- To explore the bases for the assignment of individuals into various hierarchies of the social structure. What are the bases for stratifying individuals into a specific stratum?
- To understand the relationship between individuals assigned into different hierarchies. What kind of interaction and relationship exist between individuals located into different strata?
- To investigate the relationship between individuals or groups belonging to the same

hierarchy. What kinds of relationship exist between people in the same stratum?

- To understand what type of social system gives rise to what or which types of hierarchies. That is, the type of social stratification varies across cultures, times and types of social systems.

### **5.3.3. Theories of Social Stratification**

There are various theories of social stratification concerning its importance, origin and value, of which two important theories are the following.

1. The functionalist theory of social stratification
2. The conflict theory of social stratification

According to the proponents of the functionalist theory, segments or hierarchies and social inequalities exist in all societies. Moreover, their main argument is that social stratification is functional and purposeful and also essential in any society. They contend that no society is classless or unstratified, and social stratification is universally necessary. Social stratification in short is

universal, functional, inevitable, and beneficial and something which can't be avoided.

The proponents of the conflict theory of social stratification also accept the fact that social inequality exists in every society. But they do not believe that social stratification is functional. According to conflict theorists, it is the way of oppressing one group of people by another (Calhoun *et al.*, 1994).

#### **5.3.4. Forms of Social Stratification**

##### ***Social Class***

Social classes are groups of people who are stratified into different categories. In a more general sense, social class can be defined as a category or level of people found in similar positions in the social hierarchy. The criteria or the bases for dividing people in a given society into different social classes may include wealth, occupation, education, sex, family background, religion, income, among others. The societies in modern world have been divided usually into three; low class, middle class and upper class. Each of these three classes is usually divided in to sub-classes.

Social class is often characterized as an open and flexible system. Thus, we have societies which can be characterized as open system, as opposed to societies having closed system. This form of social class is common in industrialized, modern, heterogeneous and literate societies. Such system generally works in most contemporary societies of the world (Stockard, 1997).

### **Caste**

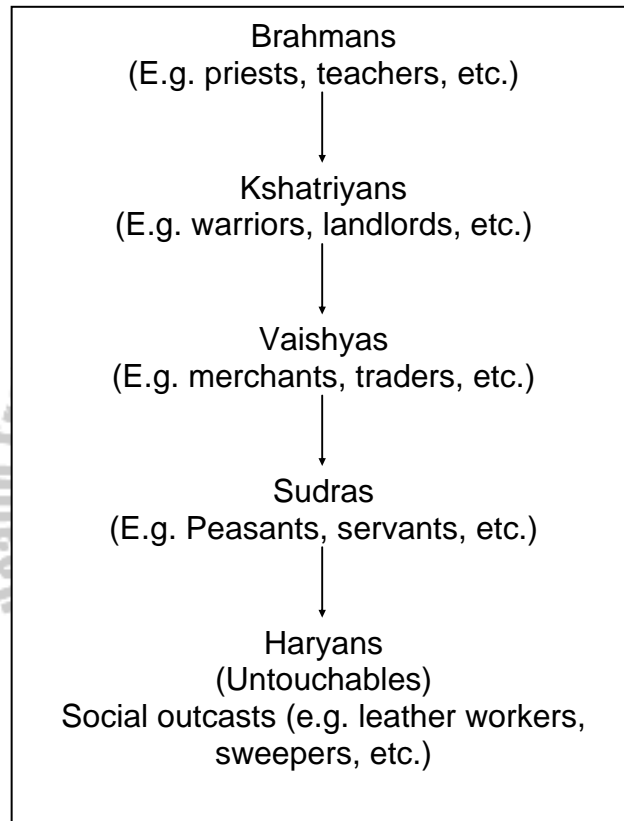
Another well-known form of social stratification is the caste system. The system is based on religious and other strongly rooted traditional belief that cannot be changed or are very difficult to change. This is the form of social stratification whereby classification of people into different strata is made on the basis of usually religious and other very strong conventions/ traditions that are difficult to change. Some of the features of caste system include:

- It is a very rigid and closed system.
- People belonging to the same stratum practice endogamy.
- Intermarriage between strata is not permitted.

- There are occupational differences between strata; i.e., each stratum is usually assigned a particular type of occupation.
- Food sharing, social drinking, friendships, etc., are permitted only within a stratum, not between strata.

This form of social stratification characterizes most traditional, agricultural societies. However, the best example of caste is the Hindu caste system of India. This has existed for some 3000 years and was only officially nullified in 1947. Hindu caste system divides the society into five major strata. These are Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Sudras and Haryans (Indrani, 1998)

**Figure 5.1. Castes of the Hindu Society of India**



*Adapted from Henslin and Nelson, 1995. Down-to-Earth Sociology. Canadian Edition. Ontario: Allyn and Bacon*

In ancient Roman and Hebrew societies and other ancient and medieval civilizations, slaves, woman and children were often given lower and stigmatized positions in society. They were not, for example, considered when the population census was conducted.

In rural Ethiopian society, this form of stratification has existed for centuries and it still persists. Individuals in such traditional occupations as pottery, blacksmith, tannery, weaving, carpentry, and others such as so called slaves have been given lower places and are often denied free membership and social participation in various social affairs. Among the Wolayta, for example, such kinds of people are called by various names such as the *chinasha* (potters), *degella* (tanners), *wogachia* (blacksmiths), *shimagnia* (weavers) and *aylia* (slaves). These groups of people are not allowed to create marital and other important social bonds with the *gokka* (meaning the decent groups). Similar types of stratification may also be found among the Sidama, Kambata, Guraghe in the southern region of Ethiopia, and elsewhere in other regions throughout the country.



It is believed that such conditions have contributed to the slow socio-economic development of the country.

### **5.3.5. Consequences of Social Stratification on the Lives of Individuals**

Social stratification has crucial implications for the health and well-being of people. Social stratification is directly related to the issue of inequality, power imbalance etc, and these directly or indirectly influence the life chances of individuals in the social strata. Health status of individuals is among one of these life chances which can be significantly affected by one's location in the stratification system.

The different stratification systems on the basis of age, sex, gender, ethnicity, religion, occupation, etc, directly or indirectly promote unequal chances of living standards.

The key concepts in the relation between health and social stratification are the concepts of vulnerability, risk and hazard. **Vulnerability** is a sociological concept

which refers to the “characteristics of individuals and social groups [along the lines of gender, age, ethnicity, occupation etc;] that determine [their capacity] to protect themselves, withstand and recover from disasters, including health hazards based on their access to material and non-material resources” (*Personal communication: Dr Teketel Abebe, Department of Sociology and Social Administration, Addis Ababa University*).

## **5.4 Social Mobility**

### **5.4.1. Definition of Social Mobility**

Every society has different strata in it. The different individuals and groups who occupy a certain social position may not remain in that position permanently. Some may move from one position to another, from higher social class position to lower social class position, and vice versa. Social mobility implies a set of changes in opportunities, incomes, lifestyles, personal relationships, social status and ultimately class membership.

Social mobility is a type of movement but it is not physical movement over geographical space although social mobility could involve, and be brought about by, physical mobility. It is movement in the social space, the shifting or changing of statuses or class positions. Social mobility is a social process that takes place among individual members or groups in a society, as they interact with each other. It is a process by which individuals or groups move from one status to another; or from one class or stratum to another.

Social mobility describes the volume and quality of movement among strata. That is the kind of movement that people make between the different social classes. Our unit of analysis in social mobility may be an individual, or a social group or a nation.

### **5.4.2. Types of Social Mobility**

Sociologists have identified different types of social mobility. The following is a brief discussion of the different types of social mobility (Team of Exeprts, 2000).

#### ***Vertical Social Mobility***

Vertical social mobility is a type of social mobility that individuals experience when they move from their social status to other higher or lower social status. It is a radical social change in an individual's position. It is a movement between different social classes and it involves a change in social position of an individual, a family or a group. It may be upward or downward.

#### ***Horizontal Social Mobility***

Horizontal social mobility is also called lateral social mobility. It is movement within a social class or a social position where the individual slightly improves and/or declines in his social position with in his/ her class level. Unlike vertical social mobility, it doesn't involve drastic changes.

***Inter-generational Social Mobility***

This type of social mobility involves the movement up or down, between the social class of one or two generations of a family, or a social group. In this mobility, our focus of attention is a social group, like the family. Here we look at change in the status position of the family over two or more generations, i.e., the social position of the grandfather, the father and the son.

If a child, for example, whose father was an upper class person as a result of his wealth becomes only a laborer in his own time, then he has experienced a downward intergenerational social mobility.

***Intra-generational mobility***

This concerns individual changes in positions during one's lifetime. It may also refer to the change that occurs in social groups or a country's socioeconomic position over a specified period of time. In other words, through achievement or other means one can move up from being a poor primary school teacher to a high court judge. Unlike the Inter-generational social mobility, intra-

generational social mobility is with in one generation. But like inter-generational social mobility, it may be an upward or downward social mobility. Unlike the inter-generational social mobility, our focus here is on a specific individual or group. Here, we observe change in the social position of an individual or a group over the life cycle of the individual himself or the group either upward or in some cases downward. For example, a person in his/her lifetime may rise up from a lower position such as shoeshining, and climb up the social ladder until he or she becomes a member of privileged social and economic position. Or, others may happen to lose their once prestigious socio-economic position and as a result move down until they end up in destitution.

#### **5.4.3. Avenues of Social Mobility**

The avenues of social mobility are the doors through which a person moves upward in the social hierarchy. The major avenue to social mobility in most modern societies is access to appropriate modern education. Change of profession/ occupation and geographical mobility are also avenues. There are also some sudden

or short cut avenues to social mobility. These include windfall gains in terms of inheritance, gambling, theft or financial corruption, winning a lottery game, etc. Such mobility is rare, bearing in mind that most inheritance is within the same social group.

The opportunities for upward social mobility are great in modern societies which have open systems. In such societies, there is freedom of vertical social mobility, and any member of a society may move up or down the social hierarchy. There are no legal and/or traditional restrictions that are put on social mobility on either direction. What count a lot are personal merits, competitions and efforts for achievement. On the other hand, in societies with closed system vertical, especially upward, is very difficult. In such societies, individuals born to a certain social position remain within that category for their lifetime. The most important determinants here are not individual's achievements, merits or personal effort, but what counts most are one's ancestry, racial background, family background, religion, sex, ethnicity, etc. (Henslin and Nelson, 1995)

#### 5.4.4. Barriers to Upward Social Mobility

These are factors that make it difficult to individual families or groups to move from one status position to another. Such barriers may include various social, psychological, cultural, economic, political and other related factors. Lack of opportunity, motivation, commitment, interest, or positive attitude, etc., is very crucial psychosocial factors. Other most important barriers may include one's own physical condition, lack of access to an appropriate modern education; inequality in the distribution of inherited wealth; one's color or ethnic origin, religion, etc. These are the most obvious barriers to social mobility.

**Box 5.2. Types of social mobility**

- *Vertical social mobility*
- *Horizontal social mobility*
- *Intra-generational social mobility*
- *Inter-generational social mobility*



## 5.5. Social Change

### 5.5.1. Definition and Basic Characteristics of Social Change

**Social change** may be defined as the alteration or transformation at large scale level in the social structure, social institutions, social organization and patterns of social behavior in a given society or social system. Social change can also be defined as the alteration, rearrangement or total replacement of phenomena, activities, values or processes through time in a society in a succession of events. The alteration or rearrangement may involve simple or complex changes in the structure, form or shape of the social phenomena. Sometimes it may mean the complete wiping out of the phenomenon and their total replacement by new forms (Calhoun *et al*, 1994).

Some minor changes that take place in the lives of individuals and small, limited groups may not be regarded as social changes although these kinds of changes may be the manifestations or effects of

changes that are taking place at larger scale. Changes in the material and non- material contents of a culture also may not be regarded as social changes. However, it is very difficult to separate social changes from cultural change. Because the two are usually interdependent, social change may usually introduce cultural changes, and vice versa.

Some of the basic characteristics of social change are the following (Indrani, 1998; Team of Experts, 2000):

- Social change occurs all the time. Its process may be imperceptible and can be cumulative, i.e., one may not easily perceive the processes of social change, although it is always taking place.
- There is no society that is static and unchanging. All societies are susceptible to social change. In other words, social change is a universal phenomenon (it is every where and anywhere). It is spread both over time and space.

- Change occurs both at micro-level and macro-level. The point here is that while social change often refers to noticeable changes in social phenomena, we must not lose sight of the fact that small changes in minor relationships can also be significant
- The influence of change in one area can have an impact on other related areas. That is, social change is contagious, like infectious diseases.
- Social change has a rate; it can be rapid or slow.

### **5.5.2. Theories of Social Change**

Theories of social change have generally been concerned with the direction of change and the manner in which change occur. Sociologists want to explain the nature, direction, cause and effects of social change. Some of the theories of social change are the following (Calhoun *et al*, 1994; Rosenberg, 1987; Macionis, 1997).

***Structural Functionalist Theory***

This theory states that social change takes place as the diversification and division of labor increases in the social system of a given society. Structural functionalists focus on the cohesion, order and stability of social system. Change disrupts the orderly functioning of the system. Structural- functionalist theory focuses on the effect of social change on the structure of society, the function and dysfunction of change, stability and equilibrium of the social system. When change takes place, it affects the order and equilibrium of the social system and thus the system has to bring itself back to the equilibrium, to smooth functioning of the system.

***Conflict Theory***

This theory states that social change takes place due to the ever-present class conflicts in the social system for the better or worse. According to this theory, thus, social change is the result of social conflicts and is essential and beneficial. Every social system contains within itself the seeds of change as far as it is a system wherein exploitation of one group by another exists. Social

change continues to become inevitable until a classless society emerges, one in which conflicts cease to exist.

***Cyclic Theory***

This theory states that society undergoes change in circular manner. Social change takes a cyclic form, from worse to better, back again from better to worse. Social change is not always for the better. Societies may grow, advance, and reach peak stage of development, and then they may stagnate and finally collapse, with the potential for rising again.

***Linear Theory***

This theory states that change takes place in a linear manner. The direction of social change is from worse to better, simple to complex and backward to modern. In other words, according to linear theory, social change is evolutionary; it is always towards the better way until perfection is achieved.

### ***Modernization Theory***

This theory of social change may be regarded as an extension of linear, evolutionary theory. It states that the change that is being experienced by most Third World societies is by imitating or copying the values, experiences, and models of already modernized societies. It is by adopting; assimilating and internalizing those aspects of the industrialized societies which if copied would bring about an improved social, economic and political development to the society.

### **5.5.3. Factors That Facilitate and Hinder Positive Social Change**

The various factors that promote or hinder social change may be generally categorized as socio-cultural, psychosocial, economic, natural, demographic, political, and so on. Natural factors may include climate changes, the discovering of natural resources such as, minerals, petroleum, etc., are those which are considered as having positive effects on society. Other natural factors are natural disasters such as earthquake, flood, famine, drought, and pestilence and so on. The

emergence of HIV /AIDS as pestilence is for example having great effects on the social arrangement and organization of societies.

Demographic factors-migration, urbanization, population growth, etc., are also important ones in bringing about socio-cultural change. Political factors such as planned change by government, change of state ideology, etc., are also important. Other factors such as war, scientific invention and discoveries, diffusion of non-material and material elements of culture through education and trade relations, etc., also promote social change.

Last but not the least psychosocial factors like beliefs, vested interests, sacred values, attitudes, resistance to change or to accept and entertain new things and intending to maintain the *status quo* are also very important forces.

## **5.6. Chapter Summary**

In the organized social relationship of human groups, social processes take place. Social processes are repetitive forms of actions, patterns of social behaviors.

Social processes manifest themselves through various modes such as competition, conflict, cooperation, accommodation and assimilation. These processes take place on continuous basis at micro and macro levels. These modes of social processes are interrelated and each may yield the other, and they take place in cyclic manner.

Social stratification, social mobility and social change are the three important aspects of social processes. Social stratification refers to the classification of society into different social strata that involve inequalities or differences in lifestyle and living standards of people. They refer to power imbalance and unequal distribution of resources among people. The word stratification is originally used in geology to differentiate one rock type from the other. By the same token, that is, society in general is segmented. There are two forms of social stratification. These are social class and caste system. The former refers to a category of people belonging to the same stratum- having more or less similar socio-economic standards. The latter is a closed and rigid kind of social stratification. The position or ranks of



individuals in the stratum or groups is determined by age-old, traditional, religious values, norms and principles, which are strong and difficult to change.

Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals and groups in the social space. Physical mobility is not social mobility but may contribute to social mobility. Social mobility may be vertical or horizontal and intra-generational or intergenerational.

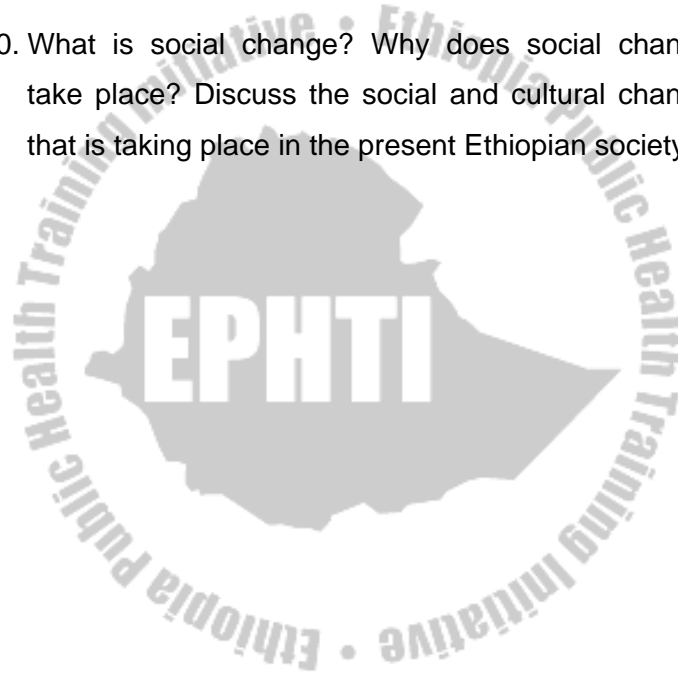
The other aspect of social processes is social change. The study of social change has been a major concern in the discipline of sociology. Sociologists are particularly interested in this dynamic aspect of social system. Social change refers to large-scale (significant) alterations in the organization and institution of a population (a society). A change which is limited to individuals or certain groups, families, etc, is not a social change although it is important. However, we cannot dissociate social and cultural changes for they are interdependent; social change may bring with it cultural change, and vice versa.

There are many theoretical explanations of social change. Of this, structural-functionalist theory focuses on social order, consensus and stability. It states that social change occurs due to growth, complexity in social structure-due to growth in social differentiation. Modernization theory focuses on the idea of modernization/Modernization is increasing ability to master environment. According to this theory, change occurs in Third World societies when they make effort to imitate advanced western societies in various respects. The conflict school of thought stands against the school of structural functionalism. According to the latter, conflict is the main factor behind social change and is useful and necessary for change.

## Review Questions

1. What are social processes? Compare social processes with biological processes.
2. Discuss the necessity of competition and conflict as social processes.
3. Discuss the micro- and macro aspects of assimilation as a social process.
4. What is social stratification? How does the concept of social stratification compare with stratification in the world of rocks and minerals?
5. How is social stratification created? What is the necessity of social stratification in society?
6. Discuss the different forms of social stratification.
7. What is the effect of caste as a social stratification on the living standards of individuals and social groups? Do you think that there are diseases individuals suffer from that are the results of social stratification? If yes mention and discuss some of them.

8. What is social mobility? Discuss why social mobility takes place, the effects of it on the well being of individuals in a given society.
9. Discuss the type of social immobility you or your family has experienced or is experiencing.
10. What is social change? Why does social change take place? Discuss the social and cultural change that is taking place in the present Ethiopian society.



## CHAPTER SIX

### AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES

#### ***Learning Objectives***

After learning this chapter, students are expected to:

- Define the concept of social pathology/ problem;
- Appreciate the social and non-biological determinants of the various forms of problems that individuals suffer from in society;
- Understand why social pathologies occur in a given society;
- Describe the various forms of social pathologies of the contemporary society; and
- Be aware of the range, extent and major types of social problems/ pathologies in contemporary Ethiopia; and explain the socio-political and historical factors and bases of these problems.

## 6.1. The Concept of Social Pathology

Social scientists usually talk about *social pathologies* or social problems. Social pathologies have existed as long as humans began living in groups. In other words, they are as antique as humans themselves. The kinds of social pathologies that baffle social scientists and moral philosophers today were also topics of philosophical inquiry for ancient and medieval philosophers and religious thinkers. However, it may be appropriate to argue that the profundity and scope of today's social problems are unmatched with those of the past (Ranchman, 1991; Zastrow, 1996).

The term *pathology* is a Greek word, which is composed of *pathos* and *logos*. It literally means *the study of diseases and disease processes*. The term social pathology generally refers to the *pathos of society*, i.e., the "social diseases" that affect society. However, a more explanatory term is *social problems*. Social problems are those diseased conditions of society that affect its normal functioning. A problem that is limited only to the level of an individual person or to only few

groups may not be regarded as a social problem. A social pathology affects society, or its institutions and organizations at large. However, the very term *social problem* may mean any problem that has social origins, affecting at least two persons, that goes beyond mere psychological and physiological levels (Kornblum and Julian, 1995)<sup>1</sup>.

Sociologists argue that social problems are best understood in the social institutional context. Although the causes for social problems are multiple, sociologists contend that they are usually the manifestations of the failure in the social institutions themselves. When an institution fails to address the basic needs of people, social problems occur. It is usually easy for an ordinary person to blame the cause of a certain social problem on the failure of individuals themselves. For example, if we take the problem of begging or drug addiction, the individual victims are blamed for the actions. However, we need to look into the broader sociological and cultural contexts (Indrani, 1998).

## **6.2. The Universality and Locality of Some Social Pathologies**

It may be right to state that some social problems are universal in their nature; this means that they occur everywhere across all societies. They may derive from the fundamental similarity of the nature, origin and destiny of all human societies. As anthropologists argue, all human beings share common bio-psychological problems and as such they have more or less similar basic interests, questions, fears, etc. Although they may vary in terms of scale, all societies face such kinds of social problems as for example, juvenile delinquencies, marriage breakdown and divorce, parent-children conflicts, tensions over limited resources between groups, wars and inter-group skirmishes, alcoholism, environmental pollution, prostitution, homelessness, begging, etc.

However, some of the social problems seem to emanate from the local conditions; they are the manifestations of the specific cultural and ecological settings of a society, as well as the reflections of the socio-historical and



political dimensions of the society. They also reflect the level of technological advancement a society has arrived at. For example, the major social problems that abound in the industrially complex society of the West include environmental pollution, marital breakdown and familial conflicts, juvenile delinquencies, suicide, drug addiction, and the collapse of morality, among others. These seem to be more rampant in the Western societies. On the other hand, the Third World societies suffer from such kinds of social problems as urban slums, housing shortage, urban and rural poverty, sanitation problems, famine, ethnic conflicts, lack of good governance and corruption, streetism and homelessness, among others.

### **6.3. Social Deviance and Crime**

Deviance is behavior that members of a group or society see as violating their norms. Definition of deviance varies according to groups. Whether an action or behavior is considered deviant depends on time, place and social situations (Henslin and Nelson, 1995).

There are psychological and sociological explanations of deviance. Psychological theories focus on the personality of individuals. Certain genetic and biochemical abnormalities lead individuals to commit deviance and criminal acts. Sociological theories focus on the forces beyond the individual. **Differential association theory** maintains that people learn deviant acts through socialization; **structural strain theory** maintains that deviance occurs when conformity to widely accepted norms of behavior fails to satisfy legitimate, culturally approved desires. According to the **control theory**, every person is naturally prone to make deviance, but most of us conform to norms because of effective system of inner and outer control. It is those who have less effective control who deviate. Another sociological theory called **labeling theory** states that behaviors are deviant when and only because people label them as such (Caffrey and Mundy, 1995).

In general biologists and psychologists look into the individual, while sociologists look outside of the individual for explanations of why people commit deviance and crime,

## 6.4. A Survey of Some Social Problems in Ethiopia

A cursory look at the streets of major urban centers in Ethiopia shows that this is a time when our contemporary Ethiopian society is hosting a multiplicity of social problems. The nature, type, intensity and complexity of the social problems in contemporary Ethiopia are reflections of:

- The country's long history of underdevelopment;
- Socio-cultural backwardness;
- Poor level of scientific and technological development;
- Lack of good governance and political instability;
- Uncontrollable natural conditions, such as droughts, famine, etc;
- The mismatch between rapidly growing population and economic development; and
- Urbanization and economic growth, among others (Fasil, 1993).

The following are some of the major social problems in Ethiopia.

#### **6.4.1. Vulnerability to Famine and the Problem of Food Insecurity**

Our country has been experiencing vulnerability to famine. It has successively been hit by severe droughts and resulting famine which claimed the lives of innumerable citizens and those of animals. The trend in recent years has worsened so much that in 2001/ 2002, there were about 14 million Ethiopians exposed to the danger of famine. The famines of early 1970s and 1984 were so severe that they were talking issues for the whole world. The problem is now one of the top agenda items for the Government of Ethiopia. It is no wonder that many people associate Ethiopia with famine, drought and poverty. The name of Ethiopia was so much popularized that some world famous individuals have amassed money through fund raising campaigns in the name of helping the starving Ethiopians and used

the money for their personal gains (Mesfin, 1984; Nigussie, 2004).

The rural population is more vulnerable to famine. The quality of life of the rural people has as a result deteriorated very much. The most important sections of society that are more affected by the famine and drought are often children, women and the aged. Of the death toll due to famine, these categories constitute of the largest proportion (Fasil, *op cit*). Vulnerability to famine as a social problem, thus, results in a number of adverse consequences on health. "Famine and food insecurity aggravate the spread of diseases; it is now well known that the mass death and famine induced mortality are caused not only by starvation but also by the spread of diseases among the already vulnerable population" (*Personal communication, Dr Teketel Abebe, AAU, Department of Sociology and Social Administration*). Thus, many of the cases of morbidity and mortality are associated with famine and lack of adequate nutrition particularly in rural Ethiopia. Diseases like kwashiorkor, marasmus, and poor physical conditions like stunted growth, emaciation, etc, are

cases in point. Such conditions are at the other extreme to some health problems like obesity in affluent societies.

#### **6.4.2. Prostitution**

Prostitution as a social problem seems to be associated with the growth of urbanization and urbanism as a way of life. Although it has existed throughout history, it has become rampant in this age of modernization. Some cities in south East Asian countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand are notorious for the sex industry. The term prostitution now appears to be outdated and a more humane term is now *commercial sex work*. This term is introduced to indicate that like any other work, prostitution is also an industry, where individuals are, mainly due to factors beyond their individuals' capacity, forced to sell their bodies to earn money for a living.

As some studies indicate, the history of prostitution in Ethiopia goes back to the rise of urbanization and the introduction of Italian colonization. Commercial sex work

has now become a major social pathology in the country. Urban centers like Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, Nazareth, Shashemene, Dire Dawa, among others are major centers of commercial sex work. A recent media dispatch disclosed that in Nazareth Town, there are about 3500 commercial sex workers. Multiple sexual partnership and commercial sex work are thus the most visible pathways for the spread of STIs and HIV/AIDS. Addressing this social problem at its root causes might, therefore, would help very much in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The root causes of commercial sex work are usually poverty, harmful traditional practices such as early marriage, forced marriage and marriage by abduction, among others. Dysfunctional marriages, entrenched poverty and economic dependency often drive females to prostitution; and this may in turn contribute to the spread of STIs including HIV/AIDS among women and the general population. Young girls from rural areas often flee to urban centers from harsh social and cultural conditions in the rural areas. They end up engaging in commercial sex work to earn a living.

### **6.4.3. Unemployment**

Governments in developed and undeveloped countries alike these days face the mounting social problem of unemployment. In Ethiopia, too, unemployment has become one of the major social problems. The unemployed are those who currently in search of a gainful job and are dependent on somebody else for their living. There are other categories like the underemployed; these are those who are engaged in a job that does not match their level of expertise or training (Team of Experts, 2000).

The youth seem to suffer the most from this social problem. Of those who complete the 10th or 12th grades in Ethiopia, limited number join colleges and universities. Even of those who graduate with diplomas and degrees, many stay long in search of job. The problem of unemployment has many adverse ramifications on the unemployed and the society at large. Desperation and disappointments may lead many to self-destructive and anti-social behaviors and actions,



such as drug addictions, alcoholism, organized crimes (like robbery), suicide, and violence against women, theft and begging (Youth Affairs Coordination Office, Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, 2002).

#### **6.4.4. The Youth and Drug Addiction**

The problem of drug addiction is now a number one social problem, particularly in developed societies. The problem is becoming rampant in Ethiopia as well. It is now common to hear from the electronic media and to read from the print media that the tradition of drug usage is a growing one in many large urban centers in the country. Recent radio news (November, 2004) disclosed that in the town of Nazareth, there were about 75 clandestine houses where various types of harmful drugs are sold and used. The drug tradition is often associated with the growth of overnight clubs, bars and the chance for multiple sexual partnerships also becomes very high.

*Chat*, a local mild narcotic plant, has become a very common type of drug for many youth as well as adults. Many have become dependent on the stimulant drug and it seems that without it some fail to efficiently carry out their tasks. Studies show that *chat* chewing is associated with many adverse mental and physical health problems. The growing number of the mentally disturbed persons, holding a piece of *chat* plant, roaming the streets of some urban centers like Jimma, Awassa, Dilla and other towns in Southern Ethiopia (Youth Affairs Coordination Office, Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, 2002).

#### **6.4.5. Rural to Urban Migration, the Refugee Problem and Health**

Ethiopia as a Sub-Saharan African country has experienced the sweeping influence of the wave of migration that is better understood in the political, economic, ecological and socio-cultural contexts of the contemporary world. The most significant event in the place of Ethiopians in international migration is the period following the downfall of the (Ethiopian) imperial

rule and the onset of the communist-oriented, revolutionary rule by the Dergue regime. What might be called the Ethiopian Diaspora came into the world scene in the late 1960s and 1970's (Bekele, 2002). Innumerable Ethiopians constituting particularly the intellectuals fled the country as forced migrants mainly to the USA, and scattering well over the world. The incessant flow of Ethiopian migrants, as part of the international migration, mainly spurred by the search for better living opportunities, often masked under the facade of fleeing political persecution, has still continued unabated. The impact of this on the country's socio-economic landscape, be it negative or positive, is incalculable, particularly the migration of intellectuals and the ensuing brain drain is no simple matter (Dutoit, 1990).

The various ethno-linguistic groups in the country have engaged in migration and population movements since time immemorial for a multiplicity of reasons. Migration at both the micro- and macro levels between regions and within regions, from rural to urban and vice versa, from urban to urban and rural to rural, all these have

continued until today. The following have significant places in the drama of internal migration in the country,

- The government actions of resettling people from one region to another such as the rather massive, involuntary villagization program of the Dergue or the current EPRDF resettlement program as part of the country's socio-economic development efforts;
- The civil wars that have raged between the various bodies for long period of time;
- The conquest of the demised successive imperial systems as an empire building agenda;
- The ever-recurring drought and the perennial, romanticized famine question and food insecurity of the country;
- The rapidly growing population and the resultant resource depletion and ecological deterioration;
- The increasing urbanization and the seeming presence of better opportunities therein that act as pull factors; and
- The weakening of the traditional social-cultural and political structure of the various ethnic groups; among others.

The issue of rural to-urban migration in Ethiopia is high on the federal and regional governments' agenda. Ethiopia's 1993 National Population Policy clearly stipulated negative ramifications of migration on the country's socio-economic development efforts. The quality of life in the migrant sending rural communities as well in the receiving urban areas of Ethiopia has deteriorated tremendously. The large, steady flow of the mainly productive male sections of the rural communities to urban areas has many bad consequences. The sending areas would face serious productive labor shortages. The receiving areas, where there are little or no adequate social services and employment opportunities, will face the problem of crimes, housing shortages, growth of urban slums, and other undesirable, anti-societal phenomena (Abdullahi, 1994).

When we come to health, migration is an important factor in determining the health status of individuals and groups. People migrate with expectations of better living and health conditions. But very often, many individuals

end up in poor living and health conditions. This is particularly common among the refugees and the lower level labor migrants. The recent ETV dispatch (December, 2004) on the harsh conditions of the Ethiopian women who live as labor migrants in the Arab World is a case in point. Many are subjected to harsh treatments, poor pay, physical and mental abuses. Many refugees are subjected to unhygienic living conditions, poor nutrition, to the extent of starvation, and outbreaks of infectious diseases. There are also cases of sexual harassment and rapes.

Uncontrolled rural to urban migration (boosted by population growth) and rapid urbanization also lead may lead to the mushrooming of squatter settlements and slums which in turn increase peoples' vulnerability to epidemic diseases.

While migration may thus have adverse consequences the lives of individuals, we should not also forget the positive, developmental effects of migration, be it internal or international migration. In fact, it is all too well known that people migrating from the Third World to the

West are making significant contributions to the economic development of their home countries (Dutoit, 1990).

#### **6.4.6. Population Explosion and Ecological Degradation**

The Ethiopian population has grown from a mere 30 million in the early 1960s to about 70 million currently. At the present rate of annual growth, which is close to 3%, demographers predict that the number will double itself in a short period of time. The country is the third most populous in Africa, next to Nigeria and Egypt (Faisal, 1993).

The country's population growth is not matched with a correspondent growth in economy. The country is one of the poorest in terms of many development parameters such as per capita income, life expectancy, literacy, access to basic health and social services, etc. The uncontrolled population explosions have now become a major threat to the natural resources and ecology of the country. It is accompanied by deteriorating ecological

conditions, due to deforestation, over-utilization of resources, environmental pollutions, etc. The recurrent drought and famine is one of the effects of the deteriorating ecological conditions (Fasil, *op cit*).

The issues of population explosion and ecological deterioration are now major social issue and the Ethiopian Government has taken them as priority areas.

#### **6.4.7. Growth of Urbanization, Urban Poverty, Housing Problem, Homelessness and Begging**

About 15% of the population of Ethiopia lives in urban areas. With growth of urbanization, many social problems have emerged. The problem of urban slums, increasing poor quality of life and poverty, shortage of basic social services such as clean water, electricity, communications facilities, housing, etc, and the growing rate of crimes and deviance. Urban slums are centers for undesirable social behaviors such as commercial sex work, theft, robbery, drug trafficking and use, sanitation problems, among others.



With the growing number of urban population, access to good housing is becoming increasingly problematic. Studies indicate that many urban people live in substandard houses and many more even lack accesses to housing. Thus, homelessness has now become a growing social problem in many urban centers.

Many people are thus forced to spend their entire lives in the streets. Available data show that number of people taking to the streets is increasing rapidly, particularly in major urban centers. Here, we can talk about a category of people known as the **street children**. These are those who are born to homeless people or those who come from various parts of the country to urban centers and live in the streets. The number of older persons living in the streets is also growing.

The health and living conditions of these categories of people is very appalling. The street children and adolescents are often among the risk groups to

contracting STIs including HIV/AIDS. They lack access to basic social and health services. The main means of making a living for these categories of people is usually begging and sometimes engage in commercial sex. Begging itself has become a major social pathology in some large urban centers. The problem of begging is especially visible during the religious ceremonial days in some big urban centers like Addis Ababa (Zerihun, 2000; see also Woubshet, 2003).

**Box 6.1. Some social problems in Ethiopia**

- *Famine, drought and food insecurity*
- *Unemployment, drug abuse*
- *Juvenile delinquency, streetism, homelessness and begging*
- *Commercial sex work*
- *Population explosion, urbanization and uncontrolled rural-to urban migration*
- *Environmental degradation and natural resource depletion*

## 6.5. Chapter Summary

The terms *social pathology* and *social problem* are often interchangeably used. They refer to the diseased conditions of society. As the physical body suffers from various ailments, the society as a system also suffers from various pathologies that threaten its proper functioning and very existence. Sociologists prefer to use “social problems” to “social pathologies”.

Problems that are limited to an individual’s psychological dimension or micro level social groups may not constitute social problems *per se* although they are the manifestation of the diseased conditions of society. Some social problems have universal or global nature and others are tied to a society’s level of economic and technological development, history, ecology, socio-political and cultural set-up. Some social problems are thus more rampant in industrialized societies and others prevail in less industrialized societies.

The major social problems in our contemporary Ethiopia include famine, prostitution, unemployment, drug addiction, homelessness, begging, urban poverty, and population explosion and ecological deterioration, among others. These problems have escalated since recent decades. They are the reflections of the country's socio-political history, harmful traditional beliefs and practices, poverty, and natural factors, among others.



## Review Questions

1. What do you understand by the terms *social pathologies* and *social problems*?
2. Why do social pathologies occur in a given society?
3. What are some of the main social pathologies that appear to be universally occurring in all societies?
4. Which of the social pathologies are more common in developed societies? Why?
5. Mention and discuss some of the social pathologies that are seriously facing our contemporary Ethiopian society.
6. Why do some of the social problems appear to be more rampant and challenging in today's society than in the past?
7. Discuss the HIV/AIDS pandemic as social pathology in Ethiopia and the Sub-Saharan Africa today.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

# **METHODS OF SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AS CHANGE AGENTS**

### **Learning Objectives**

After completing this chapter, students will be able to:

- Describe the concepts of social work;
- Understand why social work and social work are necessitated;
- Identify the different types of methods of social work;
- Define the concepts of change agents and client groups and appreciate the role of health professionals as change agents;
- Identify the different roles of health professionals as change agents;
- Understand the principles of professional behaviors of change agents; and

- Describe and internalize the fundamental guiding principles of social work and its relevance for health professionals.

## 7.1. What is Social Action?

As can be understood from the name itself, there are three fundamental points in the concept: first the existence of social action, then those who do the action and third those who are expected to benefit from the action.

**Social action** is described as an individual's, group's, or community's effort within the framework of social philosophy and practices that aim at achieving social progress to modify social policies to improve social legislation, health and welfare services. From this description, we can understand that social action is an active, conscious, well thought effort.

This means any concerned individual, group or the community itself may involve in the task and process of social action to help other individuals, and groups who

are facing a certain social problem or for whom a positive social change is necessary. A community can involve in social action to solve its own problems.

A more formal definition of social action is that it is the systematic, conscientious effort directed at influencing the basic social condition and policies, out of which arise the problems of social adjustment and mal-adjustment to which our services as social welfare are addressed ( Morales and Sheafor, 1997). Social action is part and parcel of social service. Both definitions make this fact clear: Social action is an effort. Whoever may make his effort, it should be systematic, programmed, and conscientious.

## **7.2. Methods of Social Work**

### **7.2.1 Main Concern of Social Work**

In the definition of social action, it has been pointed out that any social action effort should be carried out in the framework of social philosophy and social work. The concept of social work, here is worthy of definition.



Social work is a professional discipline (within the framework of social welfare programs and services) designed to assist people in enhancing the quality of their lives and their social relationships (Day 1996). The main concerns and objectives of social work are the following (Morales and Sheafor, *op cit*):

- Service to individual in the performance of their various roles and relationships;
- To give assistance to individuals, groups or communities when they face difficulties in making use of their capacities;
- Avoiding negative factors that affect development;
- To release potentialities in individuals, groups or communities and show the means to exploit those resources and potentialities; and
- Development of capacity to manage one's own life.

The justification for social work is that the complexity of modern life makes it difficult for the individual to develop his optimum potential, and social workers in their role as

mediators, are increasingly called on to help people to contend with society's manifold social problems (Suppes and Wells, 1996; Morales and Sheafor, *op cit*).

### 7.2.2. Basic Principles

The fundamental philosophy, which makes up the professional ethics of the field of social work involve the following principles:

- A belief in the value and dignity of humans;
- Respect to people;
- Self-direction;
- Accepting and appreciating the idea and belief system of people;
- To work in collaboration with people, not to work for them;
- Dedication to human dignity; and
- Respect for and understanding of uniqueness of every human being and the values of client system. The main value here is that, social work agencies do not work for, but work with their client system (Morales and Sheafor, *op cit*).

### 7.2.3 Types of Methods of Social Work

The methods of social work are meant to be the ways, the means and techniques through which social workers and social work agencies carry out their task (activity). It is the how of social work. The most effective and known methods of social work are:

- i) Working with individuals
- ii) Working with groups, and
- iii) Working with communities, or community-based work (Suppers and Wells, 1996).

#### ***Working with Individuals***

This method of social work is called **casework**. Here, the individual is taken as a case. The principle here is to work with not for individuals. The purpose is to address to someone who is in socially strainful situation thereby overcoming the problem (*Ibid*). Before engaging in casework, the following points must be considered:

- Knowledge of the science of human behavior and relations,
- Knowledge of theories of helping people,

- Types of problems individuals face,
- Why people are in socially strainful situations, and
- The role of social forces and the environment on the individual.

### **Group Work**

Working with groups is called group work. It is the method (technique) of sponsoring and working with voluntary social groups such as families, clubs and gangs in order to develop socially desirable goals (qualities). The emphasis is treatment of the individual. Unlike casework, group work focuses on the relation of the individual to the group and social growth of the group itself.

The aim is to give the individual satisfying experience through group relation and eventually enable him/her to make his/her own contributions to the life of the society. Here, consideration is not only on the economic needs of the individuals, but other aspects such as affection, security, acceptance and other emotional and psychosocial needs of the individual. Some of the principles of group-work include:

- A group worker has to be able to make the client system solve their problem;
- Use of scientific methods like observation, analysis and fact-finding are essential;
- Creating purposeful relationship between the group work agent and the group;
- Conscious use of self: including self-knowledge, self discipline, etc, in relation to client system; and
- Acceptance of people without necessarily accepting their behavior (Suppes and Wells, *op cit*).

### ***Working with Communities***

This method of social work is called community organization. It involves the process of creating and maintaining the progressive and more effective adjustment between community resources and community welfare needs. The aim is to make adjustment between the two, which is possible through the effort of professional workers on the one hand, and individuals and groups in the community on the other.

The most relevant method of social work is community organization in respect to the problem of developing countries. On the other hand, case group works are more applicable to the problems in developed societies. This is because most of the social pathologies in industrialized societies are at individual and group levels (Morales and Sheafor, *op cit*).

**Box 7.1. Three methods of social work**

- *Case work*: working with individuals in strainful situations
- *Group work*: Working with small social groups facing certain social problems
- *Community organization*: working wit the whole community

### 7.3. The Limitations and Challenges of Social Welfare Programs

Some of the limitations and challenges of social work and welfare programs need to be mentioned here; putting the ideal philosophies and principles of social work programs alone does not suffice. Some of such limitations include the following (*Personal communication, Dr Teketel Abebe, AAU, Dept of Sociology and Social Anthropology*):

- There is often the possibility of creating dependency syndrome on the part of the targets. The very term “client” may here imply some kind of dependence by affected people on service providers. Despite the main aim of social work is to help people help themselves, there may often be the risk of creating dependency syndrome.
- There is what may be called “charity mentality”, on the part of those who provide social services. Thus it may be often the case that the more underlying problems that might have caused the

problems are left unaddressed, while attention is given to the superficial issues, the “symptoms” of the problems. More structural issues such as the highly unbalanced distribution of power and resources are overlooked. Despite social work professionals often realize that the underlying socio-political structures are responsible for poverty and social problems, the attitude of blaming the victims often remained in the public mentality (Day, 1996).

- Bureaucratization and elitism: This refers to the problem of the risk of original ideals of social work being undermined, while more attention is given to procedures, professionalism, standards, etc. Professionals may turn out elites, looking down upon the needy people.



## 7.4. Planned Social Change, Change Agents and Client Systems

Despite the fact that human society seems to stick to its traditions, beliefs, customs and cultural patterns, there is always an undercurrent of change taking place from time to time. Change is inevitable and universal; it may take place at the expense of human social life and progress. Planned social change is essentially a social action to bring about positive social change in the community; it is a conscientious, deliberate and purposeful action to achieve a determined change in the part of a client system (Suppes and Wells, *op cit*; Indrani, 1998).

**Client systems** are also called **target groups**. These are people who are in need of the guidance and professional assistance of **change agents**. More specifically, by client system/ target group, we mean an individual, group or community or any larger or smaller system that are helped by the professionals.

**Change agents** are persons who are trained to give guidance and assistance to the community, in need of desired planned social change. They are different forms of agents who work with (in) the community, helping the community and introducing new useful ideas and innovation for diffusion.

### **7.5. The Role of Change Agents and Professional Behavior**

Change agents do not to impose their wish and decisions on the client system. The basic role is *to help the client system help themselves*. Change agents should play their roles as catalysts, assistants, coordinators, leaders, guides, etc Suppes and Wells, *op cit*; Let us see some roles of the change agents.

**The role of enabler:** change agents work with clients. They enable the people; supply the means and direction for the client to do something. They temporarily stay among the people to show them the means of doing things

**The role of a catalyst:** As catalysts, social workers stimulate the people. They act as enzymes, so to speak. When the people face lots of problems and fail to know which problem are the most serious ones, change agents may show them to select one or two problems which are easily handled by deploying community resources.

As regards professional behavior, change agents should not be guided by their own personal prejudices and beliefs, but by the professional ethics and standards. And health professionals are no exception to this. If they intend to bring effective, desired and positive change in the lives of the client system, they should be guided by professional behavior. The health worker as change agents should take into account the following points (Morales and Sheafor, *op cit*):

- Learn the way the people think; in other words, understanding the thoughts of the people in the community before asking a community to assume new health habits;

- Learn to break from ethnocentric ideas, assumptions, and views;
- Learn to work patiently with the target groups; and
- Know about the community's culture, health views and beliefs, social structure and institutional arrangements, groupings and organization.

## 7.6. Chapter Summary

Social action and social work are related concepts. They refer to any action or work that aims at bringing about positive, desirable change in the lives of people. Individuals, social groups or communities may find themselves in any kind of strainful, psychosocially difficult circumstances, and affected by forces beyond their capacity. They are called client systems. Those who make any kind of systematized and conscientious efforts to help the clients help themselves are called change agents.

Change agents should be guided by the fundamental guiding principles of the methods of social action or social work. Whether the change agents work with an individual person, i.e., *casework*, a social group, i.e., *group work*, or community, i.e., *community organization*, they have to take into account the basic working principles and approaches. In any case change agents should play their roles as catalysts, leaders, organizers, researchers, guides, counselors and brokers; and they should carry out their duties in ethically and professionally appropriate ways. They should also be equipped with appropriate knowledge of relevant theories, and be sensitive to the client systems culture, social or community situations, institutional arrangements, ecology, and other dimensions.

## Review Questions

1. Explain the term social action?
2. Define the concept of social work and discuss its fundamental guiding philosophies. Discuss the relevance of these principles in your future professional practice as a health worker.
3. Mention the three methods of social work. Which of the methods of social work is more relevant to the conditions of developing countries? Why? Which one of them is more suited to the conditions of developed societies? Why?
4. Define the term *change agent*. What kind of changes are the health professionals expected to bring about in the lives of communities? Discuss.
5. Who are client groups?
6. Mention and discuss the key roles of health professionals as change agents.

7. Discuss the appropriate professional behavior of health workers.
8. Discuss the basic principles of casework as one of methods of social work.



## GLOSSARY

**Accommodation:** is a social process whereby people try to accept one another, avoiding the sources of conflict to live in peaceful coexistence

**Achieved statuses:** are those positions in society that to be attained by competitions, making efforts, commitments, choices, decisions, and other mechanisms.

**Actual role:** social role which a person accomplishes according to his or her level of understanding, capacity and personality

**Adult socialization:** (see *secondary socialization*)

**Aggregates:** A quasi-social groups which are characterized by physical proximity and lack any meaningful social interaction, norms and sense of belongingness.

**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.



**Alienation:** The phenomenon of being dehumanized and detached from the psychosocial support system due to system of domination, exploitation powerlessness and exploitation in the capitalist society.

**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

**Applied sociology:** the application of sociological knowledge, principles, methods, concepts and theories to provide the solutions to the contemporary social pathologies. Sociology plays practical roles to tackle social pathologies

**Ascribed social status:** are positions that are naturally given and they are acquired by birth

**Assimilation:** is a social process whereby a group of individuals learns and accepts the values, norms, etc., of another group and becomes sometimes virtually identical with the dominant groups.

**Avenues of Social Mobility:** are the doors through which a person moves upward in the social hierarchy.

**Case Study:** A method which involves investigating a certain issue as a case taking longer time and investigating the phenomenon in depth.

**Casework:** A method of social work in which individuals in problems are addressed

**Caste:** This is the form of social stratification whereby classification of people into different strata is made on the basis of usually religious and other very strong conventions/ traditions that are difficult to change.

**Category:** A quasi-social group which is characterized by dispersed collectivity, and members sharing common socioeconomic characteristics.

**Change agents:** Those who work to bring about desired, positive change in eh lies of target groups.

**Childhood socialization** (see *primary socialization*)

**Classical conditioning:** a type of conditioning in which the response remains constant while the stimuli vary.

**Client systems:** (also called **target groups**), are people who are in need of the guidance and professional assistance of **change agents**.

**Community organization:** A method of social work in which the whole community is addressed as a target.

**Competition:** is the process where by individuals, groups, societies, and countries make active efforts to win towards getting their share of the limited resources.

**Conditioning:** refers to the response pattern that is built into an organism as a result of stimuli in the environment, as in Pavlovian experiment. In contrast, in

**Conformists:** Those members of a society or a group who abide by the rules and norms of the society (or the group).

**Control theory:** A sociological theory of crime and deviance which states that every person is naturally prone to make deviance, but most of us conform to norms because of effective system of inner and outer control

**Cooperation:** is a social process whereby people join hands towards achieving common goals.

**Cross sectional survey:** A survey technique 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.

**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.

**Cultural relativism:** The view that each society's culture should be understood in its won context; one's cultural lens should not be applied in judging other cultural values

**Cultural universals:** those culture traits, norms, values, rules etc which are shared by more or less all people in a given group or which are found universally among all societies

**Cultural variability:** refers to the diversity of cultures across societies and places

**Culture:** A complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society

**Culture lag:** A phenomenon whereby non-material culture changes slowly, while material culture change fast.

**Culture lead:** The phenomenon whereby in some less developed societies, the change of non-material culture may outpace the material culture.

**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

**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

**Deductive approach:** An approach in which the researcher attempts to derive specific assertions and claims from a general theoretical principle; an approach which goes from general theory to particular claims

**De-socialization:** refers to stripping individuals of their former life styles, beliefs, values and attitudes so that they may take up other partially or totally new life styles, attitudes and values.

**Differential association theory:** A sociological theory of deviance and crime maintains that people learn deviant acts through socialization;

**Dramaturgy:** A symbolic interactionist term referring to the way individuals present themselves in everyday life

**Enlightenment:** is the eighteenth century social philosophical movement that emphasized human progress and the power of reason, and based on Darwinian theory of evolution.

**Ethnocentrism:** the attitude that one's own culture and one's own way of life is the center of the world and the best of all. This arises from ignorance about other ethnic groups and their ways of lives.

**Ethno-methodology:** literally meaning *the study of people's methods* is the study of how people make sense of life; involving uncovering people's basic assumptions as they interpret their everyday world.

**Experimentation:** A type of quantitative research technique used 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?

**Extended family:** A form of family mainly in traditional, agrarian and rural societies which consists of husband, wife/ wives, their children, and other relatives

**Family:** is a minimal social unit that cooperated economically and assumes responsibilities for rearing children.

**Fashion:** Is a form of behavior, type of folkways that is socially approved at a given time but subject to periodic change.

**Feminism:** The theory that 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

**Focus group discussion:** 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

**Folkways:** Are the ways of life developed by a group of people.



**Formal laws:** are written and codified social norms

**Group work:** A method of social work in which small sized social groups facing certain social problems are addressed.

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

**Horizontal social mobility:** is movement within a social class or a social position where the individual slightly improves and/or declines in his social position within his/ her class level.

**Hunting and gathering societies:** 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.

**Hypothesis:** A tentative statement waiting to be tested or proved by empirical data

**Ideal role:** that which a person is expected to perform theoretically.

**In-depth interview:** A method of qualitative data collection in which the researcher asks informants on certain issues taking long time and going deeply into the issue.

**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**

**Industrial Society:** An industrial society is one in which goods are produced by machines powered by fuels instead of by animal and human energy

**Inter-generational Social Mobility:** This type of social mobility involves the movement up or down, between the social class of one or two generations of a family, or a social group

**Inter-role conflict:** role conflicts occurring between two or more roles.

**Intra-generational mobility:** a type of social mobility referring to individual changes in positions during one's lifetime. It may also refer to the change that occurs in social groups or a country's socioeconomic position over a specified period of time.

**Intra-role conflicts:** role conflict occurring when a person feels strains and inadequacies in accomplishing a certain role, or when there is a gap between what a person does and what a group expects of him or her.

**Key informant interview:** An anthropological method in which very knowledgeable individuals in the community are identified and the researcher learns lots of issues about the community life.

**Labeling theory:** A sociological theory of crime and deviance which states that behaviors are deviant when and only because people label them as such

**Language:** 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.

**Liberal feminism:** A variant of feminist sociology which recognizes inequalities but believes that reform can take place without a fundamental restructuring of the social system **Operant** (see also **instrumental conditioning**): A type of conditioning in which response is controlled.

**Longitudinal survey:** is conducted on the same type of people over long period of time, as long as sometimes

**Macro- sociology:** A level of sociological analysis that studies the large-scale aspects of society.

**Material culture:** The tangible things created by people, such as tools, technological products, etc

**Meso-level analysis:** A level of sociological analysis that takes into account human social phenomena in between the micro- and macro-levels

**Micro-sociology:** A level of sociological analysis that is interested in small-scale level of the structure and functioning of human social groups

**Mores:** Are important and stronger social norms for existence, safety, well-being and continuity of the society or the group or society

**Negative social control:** A type of social control which *involves* punishment or regulating behavior of deviants

**Network conception of society:** An approach which views society as overlapping, dynamic and fluid network of economic, political, cultural and other relations at various levels.

**Non-conformists:** those who don't abide by the norms of a society.

**Non-material culture:** The non-tangible, ideational phenomena such as values, language, beliefs, norms, ways of acting and doing things, etc

**Non-participant observation:** collecting data without participating in what the informants or the subjects do

**Norms:** are implicit principles for social life, relationship and interaction. Norms are detailed and specific rules for specific situations

**Nuclear family** is a dominant form of family organization in modern, industrialized and urban societies, which consists of husband wife and dependent children

**Obtrusive measures:** meaning the data are gathered while the study subjects' behaviors actions are directly observed, and they know that they are being researched.

**Panel surveys:** are alternative versions of longitudinal surveys. It usually lasts shorter period of time and asks questions of panel members on a frequent basis.

**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

**Participatory socialization:** is a form of socialization which is oriented towards gaining the participation of the child

**Pastoral societies:** are those whose livelihood is based on pasturing of animals, such as cattle, camels, sheep and goats

**Planned social change:** a conscientious, deliberate and purposeful action to achieve a determined change in the part of a client system

**Positive Social Control:** the mechanisms which involve rewarding and encouraging those who abide by the norms

**Post-industrial society:** This is a society based on information, services and high technology, rather than on raw materials and manufacturing

**Post-modernism:** is 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.

**Post-structuralism:** the theory which focuses on the power of language in constructing knowledge and identity.

**Primary data:** Is that which is collected by the sociology themselves during their own research using research tools such as experiment, survey, questionnaire, interviews and observation

**Primary functions:** are the manifest, explicit, or direct functions of social institutions.

**Primary groups:** The forms of social groups which are relatively small in size and characterized by personal, informal and face-to-face social interaction.

**Primary socialization:** The most basic stage of socialization whereby basic personality characters are forged during childhood. It is also called basic or **early** socialization

**Public choice theory:** The theory which states that collective organizations such as political parties act rationally to maximize their own benefits

**Qualitative data:** those which are expressed in terms of descriptive statements, about the depth, details and sensitive dimensions of information which are difficult to express in terms of numbers.



**Quantitative data:** those which are mainly expressed in terms of numbers, percentages, rates to measure size, magnitude, etc.

**Quasi-groups:** Collectivity of people which lack some of the essential features of a social group.

**Questionnaires:** highly structured questions, used in collecting usually quantitative information.

**Radical feminism:** A variant of feminist sociology that advocates the fundamental need for societal change.

**Random sample:** A technique wherein all members of a population have equal chances of being included in the study population.

**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

**Repressive socialization:** A type of mode of socialization which is oriented towards gaining obedience.

**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.

**Respondents:** people who provide information in survey research.

**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

**Role performance:** The actions and roles played on the stage of everyday life by individual actors

**Role set:** The different roles associated with a single status.

**Salient status:** a dominant social status, that which defines a person's position in most cases at most occasions.

**Scientific method:** is, as the source for scientific knowledge, a logical system used to evaluate data derived from systematic observation.

**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 boards, etc.)

**Secondary functions:** are the indirect, hidden, or latent functions of social institutions.

**Secondary groups:** More formal social groups which are characterized by impersonal, bureaucratic social relationships.

**Secondary socialization:** A stage of socialization which takes after childhood, during adult life, when individuals are taking new roles.

**Social action:** refers to any action oriented to influence 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

**Social change:** the alteration or transformation at large scale level in the social structure, social institutions, social organization and patterns of social behavior in a given society or social system.

**Social class:** A group of individuals who share similar socio-economic backgrounds

**Social conflict:** Conflict involving clash of interest between individuals in a social group like in a family or between groups or societies. It results due to power imbalance, due to unfair distribution of resources.

**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

**Social construction of reality:** the process by which we take the various elements available in our society and put them together to form a particular view of reality.

**Social control:** is thus simply defined as all the mechanisms and processes employed by a society to ensure conformity

**Social Darwinism:** Spencer's ideas of the evolution of human society from the lowest ("barbarism") to highest form ("civilized") according to fixed laws, which is analogous to the biological evolutionary model.

**Social deviance:** movement away from the accepted social standards.

**Social dynamic:** A Comtean concept, which signifies the changing, progressing and developmental dimensions of society,

**Social exchange theory:** The theory that 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.

**Social facts:** A Durkhemian concept that, refer to meant the patterns of behavior that characterize a social group in a given society; they are distinct from biological and psychological facts.

**Social function:** are consequences for the operations of society.

**Social groups:** is the collectivity or set of people who involve in more or less permanent or enduring social interactions and relationships

**Social institution:** is an interrelated system of social roles and social norms, organized around the satisfaction of an important social need or social function.

**Social interaction:** Any action, event of phenomenon whereby two or more people are involved, saying or doing, or behaving in any manner

**Social mobility:** is movement in the social space, the shifting or changing of statuses or class positions. Social mobility is a social process that takes place among individual members or groups in a society, as they interact with each other.

**Social organization:** the pattern of individual and group relations. The term "organization" signifies technical arrangement of parts in a whole, and the term "social", indicates the fact that individual and group relations are the outcomes of social processes

**Social pathology:** generally refers to the *pathos of society*, i.e., the "social diseases" that affect society.

**Social problem:** may mean any problem that has social origins, affecting at least two persons, that goes beyond mere psychological and physiological levels

**Social processes:** are certain repetitive, continuous forms of patterns in the social systems that occur as individuals, groups, societies, or countries interact with each other

**Social relationship:** refers to any routinized, enduring patterns of social interactions between individuals in society under the limits and influences of the social structure

**Social roles:** are the expectations, duties, responsibilities, obligations, etc, which are associated with a given social status

**Social stratification:** is the segmentation of society into different hierarchical arrangement or strata. It refers to the differences and inequalities in the socioeconomic life of people in a given society

**Social structure:** is relatively stable pattern of social behavior

**Social static:** A Comtean concept, which signifies the social order and those elements of society, and social phenomena that tend to persist and relatively permanent, defying change.

**Social status:** is the position or rank a person or a group of persons occupy in the social system

**Social work (*social action*):** is described as an individual's, group's, or community's effort within the framework of social philosophy and practices that aim at achieving social progress to modify social policies to improve social legislation, health and welfare services.



**Socialization:** 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.

**Society:** A group people occupying a particular territory and sharing common culture

**Sociological imagination:** is a particular way of looking at the world around us through sociological lenses. It is "a way of looking at our experiences in light of what is going on in the social world around us."

**Sociology:** The scientific study human society.

**Stereotypes:** are the assumptions we have about people; they determine and shape our reactions and behaviors towards people

**Street children:** are those who are born to homeless people or those who come from various parts of the country to urban centers and live in the streets.

**Structural functionalist theory:** The theory that 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).

**Structural strain theory:** A sociological theory of crime and deviance which maintains that deviance occurs when conformity to widely accepted norms of behavior fails to satisfy legitimate, culturally approved desires.

**Structuralism:** the theory that 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.

**Subculture:** denotes the variability of culture within a certain society. Sub culture is a distinctive culture that is shared by a group within a society

**Subjective meanings:** the ways in which people interpret their own behavior or the meanings people attach their own behavior.

**Survey method:** a quantitative method of research which involves sampling, impersonal data collections, and sophisticated statistical analysis.

**Symbols:** are words, objects, gestures, sounds or images that represent something else rather than themselves

**Symbolic interactionist perspective:** The theory that 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

**Total institutions:** are an all-encompassing and often isolated from the community, which demand a thorough de-socialization of the new entrants before they assume full-fledged membership.

**Unobtrusive Measures:** Observing people's behavior while they are not aware of it. Here, this method involves techniques that do not interfere with the objects or events studied.

**Values:** are essential elements of non-material culture.

They may be defined as general, abstract guidelines for our lives, decisions, goals, choices, and actions

**Vertical social mobility:** is a type of social mobility that individuals experience when they move from their social status to other higher or lower social status

**Vulnerability:** is a sociological concept which refers to the characteristics of individuals and social groups [along the lines of gender, age, ethnicity, occupation etc;] that determine [their capacity] to protect themselves, withstand and recover from disasters, including health hazards based on their access to material and non-material resources.

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