

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION AND BASIC CONCEPTS OF SOCIOLOGY

I. What Is Sociology?

The American Sociological Association (2006) describes “sociology as the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior. The ASA contends that “sociologists investigate the structure of groups, organizations, and societies, and how people interact within these contexts.” Sociology is the scientific study of society and human behavior. This means, when sociologists apply their trade, they use a rigorous methodology.

The influence of society is the central question asked by sociologists when they attempt to explain human behavior. People are social beings more than they are individuals. Our thinking and motivation are largely shaped by our life experiences as we interact with one another. According to Barkan (1997:4), "society profoundly shapes their behavior and attitudes." We exist within social structure, which refers to patterns of social interaction and social relationships. Social structure, in turn, has great influence on who we are as individuals. It influences our behavior, our attitudes, and our life chances. Social structure is complex and often contradictory.

A. Topics of Study

Subject areas in Sociology are as varied as society itself.

- Sociologists can study very small social relationships involving only a few people (such as the family). They can also explore relationships in much larger social collectivities such as organizations and institutions.
- Sociology may be concerned with issues revolving around social class, poverty, gender, race and ethnicity, or religion as well as social mobility and education. Other topics may include culture, socialization, conflict, power, and deviance.
- Very large social relationships such as those between nation states are also the domain of sociology as are the characteristics of the economy and political system. In fact, the whole topic of globalization is relevant to sociologists.

B. The Relationship between People and Structure

Within the vast field of sociology, the common denominator is people. Sociology explores the “forces that influence people and help shape their lives ... Society shapes what we do, how we do it, and how we understand what others do” (Univ. of Limerick 2007). Options in life are determined in the past and are molded by currently existing structures that provide well-established guidelines for how individuals conduct their lives. To quote Macionis and Plummer, “In the game of life,

we may decide how to play our cards, but it is society that deals us the hand" (Univ. of Limerick 2007).

C. Critical Thinking

Sociology requires one to look at the world critically. Peter Berger argues that students of sociology should acquire a healthy skepticism regarding overly simplified (or commonly accepted) conceptions of human affairs. Critical thinking is a willingness to ask any question, no matter how difficult; to be open to any answer that is supported by reason and evidence; and to confront one's own biases and prejudices openly when they get in the way (Appelbaum and Chambliss, 1997:5).

Given that Sociology explores problems of pressing interest; its topics are often objects of major controversy and conflict in society itself (see Giddens, 1987:2). Rarely do sociologists "preach" revolt, but they do call attention to the fundamental social questions of our day. Sociology helps bring contentious issues into sharper focus. In doing so, however, feelings may get hurt and individuals may become insulted. I will probably step on everyone's toes at least once. In advance, I apologize. It's important in a class like this one that we agree to disagree. I hope that we can be as polite as possible. The general point of this class is to understand that alternate points of view exist. It is not designed to support one view over another.

Stepping on toes, after all, is nothing new for sociology. Sometimes sociologists step on toes on high ranking officials to the point where national governments advocate a policy of limiting the number of sociologists.

D. Multiple Perspectives

"Sociology provides many distinctive perspectives on the world, generating new ideas and critiquing the old" (ASA 2006). Sociology, as a matter of course, utilizes multiple perspectives when critiquing social phenomena. It, likewise, employs a wide range of methodological techniques to answer questions that have social relevance.

We should come to realize that there are a variety of points of view on any given subject. These points of view are perspectives. Perspectives are limited. Social facts, therefore, are understood in the context of many perspectives which are often complex and contradictory. Sociology is a method of organizing your thoughts about society and your place in society.

Those who danced were thought to be quite insane
by those who could not hear the music" -- A. Monet

II. Debunking and Being Skeptical

A. Debunking

According to Berger, it's the job of sociology to debunk commonly accepted notions about society. Debunking is a process of questioning actions and ideas that are usually taken for granted. It refers to looking behind the facade of everyday life. It refers to looking at the behind-the-scenes patterns and processes that shape the behavior observed in the social world (Andersen & Taylor, 2001:6).

B. Being Skeptical

Barkan (1997:5) contends that sociology, given the emphasis on the structural basis for individual behavior, often challenges conventional wisdom. He cites Max Weber in arguing that one of sociology's most important goals is to uncover what Weber called "inconvenient facts." Peter Berger (in Barkan, 1997:6) contends "sociology refuses to accept official interpretations of society." Often official interpretations are filled with propaganda. According to Berger, it's the job of sociology to debunk this motif. With this in mind, students of sociology should acquire a healthy skepticism regarding overly simplified (or commonly accepted) conceptions of human affairs. It is tempting to look for simple answers or what Ross Perot (1992) calls "sound bites" to explain complex social phenomena.

Example: Hitler blamed Germany's post-World War One problems on the Jews.

Example: Few realize the benefits associated with undocumented immigration.

Example: Are drugs bad? Many don't consider that the United States exports dangerous drugs (e.g., tobacco).

III. The Myth of Objectivity

Many often claim to strive for objectivity. Objectivity is sought both in the subject under study and as a strategy for teaching students. At some level, however, the concept of objectivity is a myth. What appears objective may simply be a political event. The positions defined and accepted as objective may, in fact, represent the positions of people, organizations, or governments who happen to hold power.

While objectivity in the strictest sense is a myth, it is at least possible, and desirable, to strive for a common understanding. Often, social concepts and even vocabulary is vague. For example, many may state a desire to reduce levels of inequality in the U.S. What, exactly, does 'reducing inequality' mean? Do we mean 'equal opportunity' as inferred by affirmative action? Do we mean reducing the income-gap or wealth-gap between the wealthiest and poorest in our society? Or, do we mean 'radical leveling' as practiced by the Khmer Rouge in the Killing Fields of Cambodia? How can we recognize whether we have achieved our goal? Arguably, Cambodia had

greater 'equality' between citizens in 1978 than the United States now has. I doubt, however, that many would consider their means or ends desirable.

A. What is an Operational Definition?

In order to explore important social issues a common ground and a common language is necessary. An operational definition is a precise way used to measure variables (Henslin 2008:20-21).

For example: Regarding inequality, we might devise a poverty threshold. Poverty rates are something most people understand. Poverty rates are by no means perfect, but at least when we talk about a 'poverty rate' we all tend to understand what we mean when we discuss poverty.

B. Should Sociologists be Value-Free or Activists?

How much should a sociologist get involved in the subject under investigation? Some, like Max Weber, argue that, in order to truly understand a social phenomenon, the researcher should be value-free or neutral. Personal values should have no influence on research. The proponents of this view argue that once a researcher becomes personally involved he or she loses their perspective. They become biased. Those biases influence their study of society.

Others would argue that it is useless to study something like social problems unless one intends to fix those problems. The point, according to Marx, is to change things. The goals of the sociologist should be to empower people so that they can change their lives.

Which point of view is correct? Currently, this issued remains unresolved.

C. The Debate between C. Wright Mills and Talcott Parsons.

Henslin (2004:1) offers a synopsis of this debate.

Essentially, Parsons was an abstract theoretician who created abstract models on how society functioned as a harmonious unit. He might argue that sociologists should focus on analyzing some aspect of society and then publish those findings in journals. Parsons did nothing for social activism.

Mills, on the other hand, sought to direct the efforts of sociologists back toward social reform and activism. The goal of people like C. Wright Mills would be to transform society according to some ideological prerequisite. Mills provided some of the theoretical foundations for the 1960s student rebellion.

Social versus Sociological Problem

- Social: What people are concerned about. What they define as a problem.
- Sociological- Not why a "thing" goes wrong, BUT:
 1. Why and how, and who defines the "thing" as wrong.
 2. How the "system" (institutional structure) works- so:
 3. Not Crime, but the Law.
 4. Not Divorce, but Marriage and the Family.
 5. Not Poverty, but Economic Stratification.
 6. Not drug use, but the "Social Construction of Drug Abuse"

Sociology, due to the logic of the discipline and its method contains an inherent "Debunking Motif." Sociology seeks to expose myths, and "taken-for-granted" assumptions in order to reveal the level of reality that lies behind our behavior.

<http://www.umsi.edu/~keelr/010/berger.html>

D. Social Darwinism

Henslin (2004:4-5) describes Social Darwinism as distinctly non-reformist. Spencer, the father of Social Darwinism, argued that societies evolve from lower to higher forms. As generations pass, the most capable survives while the least fit dies out.

Spencer argued that if one helps the lower classes, it interferes with the natural process. Programs designed to help the poor will ultimately weaken the social order, according to Social Darwinism. He argued that society would advance if "do-gooders" did not help the unfit survive.

<http://library.thinkquest.org/C004367/eh4.shtml>

Social Darwinism

Social Darwinism is a belief, popular in the late Victorian era in England, America, and elsewhere, which states that the strongest or fittest should survive and flourish in society, while the weak and unfit should be allowed to die. The theory was chiefly expounded by Herbert Spencer, whose ethical philosophies always held an elitist view and received a boost from the application of Darwinian ideas such as adaptation and natural selection.

Spencer and Social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer, the father of Social Darwinism as an ethical theory, was thinking in terms of elitist, "might makes right" sorts of views long before Darwin published his theory. However, Spencer quickly adapted Darwinian ideas to his own ethical theories. The concept of adaptation allowed him to claim that the rich and powerful were better adapted to the social and economic climate of the time,

and the concept of natural selection allowed him to argue that it was natural, normal, and proper for the strong to thrive at the expense of the weak. After all, he claimed, that is exactly what goes on in nature every day.

However, Spencer did not just present his theories as placing humans on a parallel with nature. Not only was survival of the fittest natural, but it was also morally correct. Indeed, some extreme Social Darwinists argued that it was morally incorrect to assist those weaker than oneself, since that would be promoting the survival and possible reproduction of someone who was fundamentally unfit.

Applications of Social Darwinism

Social Darwinism was used to justify numerous exploits which we classify as of dubious moral value today. Colonialism was seen as natural and inevitable, and given justification through Social Darwinian ethics - people saw natives as being weaker and more unfit to survive, and therefore felt justified in seizing land and resources. Social Darwinism applied to military action as well; the argument went that the strongest military would win, and would therefore be the most fit. Casualties on the losing side, of course, were written off as the natural result of their unfit status. Finally, it gave the ethical nod to brutal colonial governments who used oppressive tactics against their subjects.

Social Darwinism applied to a social context too, of course. It provided a justification for the more exploitative forms of capitalism in which workers were paid sometimes pennies a day for long hours of backbreaking labor. Social Darwinism also justified big business' refusal to acknowledge labor unions and similar organizations, and implied that the rich need not donate money to the poor or less fortunate, since such people were less fit anyway.

In its most extreme forms, Social Darwinism has been used to justify eugenics programs aimed at weeding "undesirable" genes from the population; such programs were sometimes accompanied by sterilization laws directed against "unfit" individuals. The American eugenics movement was relatively popular between about 1910-1930, during which 24 states passed sterilization laws and Congress passed a law restricting immigration from certain areas deemed to be unfit. Social Darwinist ideas, though in different forms, were also applied by the Nazi party in Germany to justify their eugenics programs.

<http://www.delmar.edu/socsci/rlong/intro/goals.htm>

Positive Results of Social Darwinism

Not all Social Darwinists were quite so extreme, and Social Darwinism was not the only justification of colonialism, imperialism, and other intrusive exploits (the "white man's burden" was another, almost completely opposite, justification). In fact, the early Social Darwinists, who regarded the theory as a logical extension of laissez-faire capitalism, would have been appalled at the use of the concept to promote state-run eugenics programs.

Though its moral basis is now generally opposed, Social Darwinism did have some favorable effects. Belief in Social Darwinism tended to discourage wanton handouts to the poor, favoring instead providing resources for the fittest of all walks of life to use, or choosing specific, genuinely deserving people as recipients of help and support. Some major capitalists, such as Andrew Carnegie, combined philanthropy with Social Darwinism; he used his vast fortune to set up hundreds of libraries and other public institutions, including a university, for the benefit of those who would choose to avail themselves of such resources. He opposed direct and indiscriminate handouts to the poor because he felt that this favored the undeserving and the deserving person equally.

The Problem with Social Darwinism

Social Darwinism's philosophical problems are rather daunting, and fatal to it as a basic theory (though some have applied similar ideas). First, it makes the faulty assumption that what is natural is equivalent to what is morally correct. In other words, it falls prey to the belief that just because something takes place in nature, it must be a moral paradigm for humans to follow.

This problem in Social Darwinist thinking stems from the fact that the theory falls into the "naturalistic fallacy", which consists of trying to derive an *ought* statement from an *is* statement. For example, the fact that you stubbed your toe this morning does not logically imply that you ought to have stubbed your toe! The same argument applies to the Social Darwinists' attempt to extend natural processes into human social structures. This is a common problem in philosophy, and it is commonly stated that it is absolutely impossible to derive *ought* from *is* (though this is still sometimes disputed); at the very least, it is impossible to do it so simply and directly as the Social Darwinists did. (See also [Evolution and Ethics](#).)

IV. A Sociological Imagination:

Personal Troubles and Public Issues

The sociological imagination refers to the ability to grasp the relationship between our lives as individuals and the large social forces that help shape them. Human behavior must be understood in a broader social context.

Perhaps, as is often the case, the solutions to problems experienced by individuals do not have simple solutions.

According to Marx (1978:595): Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past.

To paraphrase C. Wright Mills (1959):

People do not usually define their personal problems in terms of historical change and institutional contradictions. People do not usually think of the connection between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history. People live out biographies in the context of world events that are in turn determined by

historically specified conditions. Both the lives of individuals and the course of world history are understood simultaneously.

One of the challenges of sociology is to break away from the idea that western modes of life are somehow superior and therefore sets standards for those cultures found elsewhere. "Such a belief is encouraged by the very spread of western capitalism itself, which has set in motion a train of events that has corroded or destroyed most other cultures with which it has come into contact" (Giddens, 1987:19).

If social evolution is seen as the capacity of a culture to master its environment, then western style capitalism seems to have done this. Undeniably, it has "unleashed material productivity vastly greater than that of any other societies which have preceded it in history" (Giddens, 1987:19).

Evolutionary schemes, however, express an ethnocentrism that takes the position that one's own culture is somehow to be used as a measure to judge other societies. The "conviction of superiority has been in some part an expression, and a justification, of the greedy engulfing other modes of life by industrial capitalism" (Giddens, 1987:19-20).

A. What is meant by the term diversity and why is diversity desirable?

Diversity refers to the social relations and interaction of many different kinds of people (Appelbaum and Chambliss, 1997:6).

Why is diversity desirable and important for a society?

- Diversity enriches an individual's experiences as well as the society.
- Diversity helps us to be more accepting of other people.
- Diversity provides greater perspectives in problem solving.

V. Why Study Sociology?

A. Careers in Sociology

1. Within Academia

Most employment specifically in sociology occurs in the context of academia. Colleges and universities often hire sociologists where they teach or engage in social research.

2. Outside Academia - Applied Sociology

Henslin (2006:8) contends that applied sociology lies between the two positions articulated by C. Wright Mills and Talcott Parsons. Applied sociology is one area when sociologists might find employment outside academia. These efforts do not fall in the realm of social reform. Applied sociology does not, for example, advocate rebuilding society. Rather, it tackles specific problems.

Example: An applied sociologist might be employed at a computer company developing user-centered software.

Outside the university, applied sociologists use sociology to solve specific social problems. Applied sociologists may focus on problems in the work place or “virtually any aspect of social life such as street crime and delinquency, corporate downsizing, how people express emotions, social welfare, education reform, how families differ and flourish, or problems of peace and war” (ASA 2006). Many sociologists find employment in governmental agencies, such as the Census Bureau, that are concerned with the distribution of people.

B. Beyond Sociology: Benefits of Studying Sociology

There are numerous reasons why one might want to study sociology even if they do not work in sociology directly. World Wide Learn (2007) points out that a background in sociology:

- assists one in recognizing trends and patterns in society.
- allows the development of critical thinking skills.
- encourages good research skills in data collection
- instructs in creating concise reports and essays.
- develops planning and organizational skills.
- augments oral presentation skills and interpersonal communications.
- enhances management skills and grant writing ability.

Sociology is useful in “social and marketing research, sport development, psychology, law, human resources management, information science, journalism, and corporate communications, geography and environmental management, and development studies” (University of Johannesburg 2007).

Sociology prepares one for a lifetime of change, developing one's appreciation of diversity, love of learning, writing and study skills, as well as a knowledge base about human behavior, social organization, and culture. If you are the type who doesn't necessarily follow the crowd (but are fascinated by their behavior), the type who is

truly interested in what is going on in the world, then the world of sociology and the subjects found therein should interest if not fascinate you.

Secondly and most seriously, the field helps us look more objectively at the society in which we live. It directs attention to how the parts of society fit together as well as the causes and consequences of social change. In modern industrial-bureaucratic societies we are faced with an increasingly complex and rapidly changing social milieu.

If not a crisis, some conditions identified and noted by sociologists are cause for concern. Many of these topics will be addressed in future postings and questions.

A study of sociology provides the conceptual tools and methodologies for understanding the contemporary scene. By focusing on the external constraints to social action it helps us better understand ourselves and the motivations of others around us. While we are all creatures of our society, we are also all co-creators-- sociology provides the tools so that we can take a more active role in that creation, a role that is essential if we hope to achieve a more just world and egalitarian society.

. Culture and Society

A. What is Culture?

Culture is the totality of learned, socially transmitted behavior.

- Culture is all the values, norms, and customs that people share with one another.
- Culture includes language and beliefs
- Culture is all of the material objects such as monuments, three-piece suits, the lottery, fur coats, and fine automobiles.
- Culture is ideas (like the belief in democracy and freedom) found within a society.
- Culture is what individuals think is right and important as they interact (Schaefer, 1992:67).

Culture is a way of life. When people talk about "the way of life" of people with a distinctive life style, whether they live in Appalachia or Norway, they are talking about culture. It defines what is important and unimportant. Culture refers to everything that people create. Values, norms, goals, and culture in general, develop as people interact with one another over time.

Culture accounts, in part, for the unprecedented success of the human species. It allows us to adapt to extreme environments. We could not survive without our culture. In a sense, we create our culture, but our culture, in turn, recreates us (See Robertson, 1989:38-42).

Culture provides the context (back ground) that we use to interact with each other. It defines boundaries that we use to distinguish us from them.

B. Language

Henslin (2006:38-40) notes that language is the primary way people communicate with one another.

- It's a system of symbols which allow us to communicate abstract thought (Henslin, 2004:40).
- It's a perspective which allows culture to exist.
- Language is universal in that all cultures have it, but it is not universal in that people attach different meanings to particular sounds.

1. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis argues that language provides categories through which social reality is defined and constructed. It argues that thinking and perception are not only expressed through language but also shaped by language.

C. Perspectives

We need to keep in mind the notion of perspective when talking about culture. A culture is a "shared perspective." It is not absolute truth. Perspectives are limited by their nature. They allow us to see life from only a certain angle. As we interact, we come to share ideas about the way the world is. Perspectives filter what we see (Charon, 1986:199-203).

Example: "The Allegory of the Cave"

D. Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism, according to Farley (1988:16-17), refers to the tendency to view one's own culture as the norm. There is a tendency to assume one's culture is superior to others. "Our" truths and values are so central to whom "we" are that it is difficult to accept the possibility that our culture represents only one of many. A particular culture does not represent universal "TRUTH." This is not to say that to be proud of one's heritage is inappropriate. On the contrary, a little ethnocentrism is beneficial because of its bonding effect. Ethnocentrism becomes a problem when we expect others to become like us.

Example

An American who thinks citizens of another country are barbarian because they like to attend bull fights is an example of ethnocentrism.

E. Cultural Relativism and Verstehen

To accurately study unfamiliar cultures, sociologists have to be aware of culturally-based biases. Max Weber advocates the use of "value-free" Sociology, which means that one should eliminate, as much as possible, bias and prejudice.

Weber calls attention to the German idea of *verstehen* to describe the practice of understanding unique culture from the standpoint of others. Cultural relativism refers to the understanding of a culture on its own terms. In essence "you have to be able to stand in the other persons shoes." When you can "see" from the perspective of another, then you can understand that culture.

II. Components of Culture

A. Cultural Universals

Cultural universal refers to a cultural item that exists in all cultures past and present. Items like religion and language are found in every culture. They are examples of cultural universals

B. Innovation

Innovation is the process of introducing an idea or object that is new to culture. There are two forms of innovation: discovery and invention.

C. Diffusion

Sociologists use the term diffusion to refer to the process by which a cultural item is spread from group to group or society to society. Cultures learn from one another.

Diffusion can occur through a variety of means, among them exploration, military conquest, missionary work, etc. (Schaefer & Lamm, 1992: 70).

Henslin (2004:51) contends that when groups make contact with one another, they most often exchange nonmaterial culture.

D. Cultural Leveling

Henslin (2004:51) uses cultural leveling to describe a situation in which cultures become similar to one another as a result of travel and communication. The fact that one can find a McDonalds or a Coke nearly every where in the world is an example of cultural leveling.

E. Material Vs. Nonmaterial

1. Material

Culture is easily divided into material or nonmaterial concepts (See Robertson, 1989:29). Material culture includes:

- weapons
- machines
- eating utensils
- jewelry
- art
- hair styles
- clothing

Anthropologists study material artifacts when exploring cultures which have been extinct for hundreds or thousands of years. All which remains from ancient cultures are artifacts of their material culture.

2. Nonmaterial

Often Sociologists will investigate nonmaterial aspects. Nonmaterial culture refers to abstract human creations. Included in this category are:

- language
- gestures
- values
- beliefs
- rules (norms)
- philosophies
- customs
- governments
- institutions

F. Ideal Culture and Real Culture?

Appelbaum and Chambliss (1997:42) contend that ideal culture refers to the norms and values that a society professes to hold. Henslin (2004:49-50) ideal culture describes models to emulate and which are worth aspiring to.

Real culture refers to norms and values that are followed in practice.

Example: Henslin (2004:49-50) notes that Americans glorify academic achievement and material success. However, most students do not graduate with honors and most citizens are not wealthy. Thus there is a gap between ideal culture and real culture.

G. Culture Lag

Culture lag refers to the tendency for culture to be slow to adapt to changes in technology. Technological change can happen overnight while sometimes it takes culture a few generations to adapt to changes in technology (Henslin, 2004: 50).

Example: When Napster provided free music exchange, the record producers argued that the practice was unfair, but yet no laws existed which made music sharing illegal. This example highlights the lag between technology and social adaptation.

Henslin (2004:50) calls this the distinction between material and non material culture. Material culture runs ahead of non material culture.

H. Culture Shock

As people grow, they develop a sense of what to expect in their familiar surroundings. "Culture becomes the lens through which we perceive and evaluate what is going on around us" (Henslin, 1999:36). We don't generally question these assumptions. When one travels into a completely different culture, for example, a rural village in Africa, one encounters different assumptions that might violate what we come to expect as normal. An individual suddenly immersed in a unique and unfamiliar setting experiences disorientation. This is known as culture shock (see Henslin, 2004:35).

Example

A rural individual who is suddenly taken to a large city

III. Norms and Values

Norms are rules that govern our lives and values are the goal of our lives. Norms are the expectations, or rules of behavior, that develop out of values. Norms are guidelines for our behavior.

Norms may be informal or they may be formalized into laws.

Values are principles, standards, or qualities considered worthwhile or desirable.

Norms are rather specific while values are abstract and general in nature.

A. Norms

Norms are the shared rules or guidelines that govern our actions in society. Norms can be laws, but they also can be procedures, morals, customs or expectations. Many times, One's position within the social structure determines the definitions of norms. Often norms are outward expressions of a society's deeply held and shared values.

Norms are important for defining boundaries. The text uses gangs as an example again. In order to belong to a gang, a potential gang member has to learn the "norms" of the gang. Norms define us and them.

1. Folkways

Folkways are norms that ordinary people follow in everyday life. Conformity is expected, but not absolutely insisted on. Folkways are not strictly enforced.

Example: "No shirt, no shoes, no service"

2. Mores

Mores are norms are taken more seriously and are strictly enforced. Henslin (1999:44) considers them as "essential to our core values." Henslin suggests that we insist on conformity.

Example: Flag burning, murder

3. Taboo

Taboos approximate super mores. Henslin (1999:44) argues that taboos are so "strongly ingrained that even the thought of its violation is greeted with revulsion."

Examples are Incest and cannibalism.

4. Laws

A law is a norm that is formally enacted by a political authority. The power of the state backs laws.

5. Social Control

Society always establishes a way of ensuring that people "behave in expected and approved ways"

6. Sanctions

Henslin (1999:43) contends that sanctions are positive or negative reactions to the ways in which people follow norms. They can be either positive or negative. Rewards accrue for conformity and punishment for nonconformity. They can be material, such as a fine for not adhering to a norm, but they can also be gestures, "such as frowns, stares, harsh words, or raised fists" (Henslin, 1999:43).

B. Values

- Each culture has a general consensus of what is worth working for (ends).
- Values refer to that which we consider important or unimportant, desirable or undesirable, good or bad, and beautiful or ugly.
- They guide most of our actions.
- Values are long range commitments to ends that people share culturally.
- Values are abstract and general.
- Essentially, values describe our "moral" goals in society.
- Values indicate the standards by which people define their ideas about what is desirable in life.

IV. Variations Within Cultures:

Sub-Cultures and Counter Cultures

Some cultures in the U.S. have remained relatively isolated from the dominant culture. These are subcultures. Charon (1986:199) points out that subcultures have goals, values, and norms that are different from those of the dominant culture. Although their culture differs from the dominant culture, they do not openly oppose the dominant culture. Members of subcultures are usually content to avoid the dominant culture.

Countercultures, on the other hand, like the SDS, Hippies, and the Black Panthers are examples of subcultures that openly oppose the dominant culture.

Countercultures actively seek to change the dominant culture.

The following are two examples of subcultures. They are not counter cultures. Neither group seeks to change the status quo.

A. The Amish

The Amish represents a subculture. Hostetler (1980 in Charon, 1986:218) describes the Amish as governed by the teachings of the Bible. There is a strong desire among the Amish to separate themselves from the outside world. They have a dualistic view of the world. They see good and evil, light and darkness, truth and falsehood. The Amish have little interest in improving the material world. Instead they seek salvation.

The goal of the Amish to separate themselves (as much as possible) from the "negative." They define negative as urban and distant from god. They see the city as the "center of leisure," of nonproductivity, and wickedness. To avoid evil, the Amish forbid all intimate contact with outsiders. Contamination by the outside world tempts one away from the kingdom of god. Part of the separation from the outside includes not using electricity, telephones, or automobiles. Married men grow beards, but are not allowed to grow mustaches. They do not encourage formal education past elementary school. The Amish use horses and other nonmechanical equipment for farming.

B. The Vice Lords

The Vice Lords is another subculture. In a book called Vice Lords R. Lincoln Keiser (in Charon, 1987:221-4) discussed four aspects [which Keiser calls ideological sets] that the Vice Lords use to define their world and guide their actions. Keiser defines four ideological sets which he calls Heart ideology, Soul ideology, brotherhood ideology, and game ideology.

1. Heart Ideology:

Heart ideology refers to the displays of courage and daring which are important for the Vice Lords. A member has to show that he's willing to put his personal safety on the line. An individual who talks a lot about fighting, but who doesn't back up his rhetoric is a "punk."

2. Soul Ideology:

Soul for the Vice Lords has the same general connotation as it does for the Black community. Soul refers to ways of conducting ones self that strips away the superficial surface and gets down to the nitty-gritty. Soul is the essence of the Black community. The Vice Lords judge one another in terms of soul.

3. Brotherhood Ideology:

The spirit of brotherhood is also important. Drinking wine is an important shared social experience for the group. Each person contributes what money he has for a "bottle." Each then gets an equal amount regardless of how much money he puts in. Drinking wine reinforces the brotherhood.

4. Game Ideology:

In "game ideology" the gang member attempts to manipulate other gang members by playing games. Manipulating others through games is a significant part of the Vice Lords life. Such games may include hustling money from strangers. A "light weight" game player may simply ask for money. More than likely he gets turned down. A "heavy" on the other hand may concoct a story that another street gang is going to jump the stranger. There for the stranger should pay protection money to the "lords."

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