

Emory University

SOC 101 - Introduction to General Sociology

Lecture Notes

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October 1, 2022

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1 The Sociological Perspective

1.1 What Is Sociology?

1.1.1 How Do We Define Sociology as Discipline?

1. Gladwell's "Food Fight":

(a) Main points and arguments:

- Budget allocation → tradeoffs
- Food at Bowdoin College is a moral problem
- Financial aid vs. other aspects of spending
- Vassar → What's more important?

(b) Things You Didn't know before: Universities do not need to pay taxes.

Why?

- i. Universities are non-profit organizations.
Some universities buy lots of expensive properties to increase their endorsement, such as NYU.
- ii. Universities are providing a public good, so they ought to receive some bonus from society. However, they also need to pay back society with high-quality and fair education. → **Privilege leads to responsibilities.**

(c) This podcast is NOT sociology. Instead, it provides some sociological perspectives. → This podcast is not objection:

- It adds a moral opinion.
- It lacks sufficient evidence: a) it only interviewed one student, and b) it only picks "food" as the topic.

2. Sociology as a discipline:

(a) Definition of Sociology:

Sociology

Sociology is the systematic study and explanations of

- social behavior,
- social groups, and
- society.

(b) Sociology is also interested in following contexts:

Sociology Definition - Extended

Sociology is also interested in how **social forces** influence or shape our **individual behavior**.

3. Sociology and other disciplines: Nature vs. Nurture debate

- (a) In Biology, we use Biology/genes to explain human behavior.
- (b) In Psychology, we use mental process to explain human behavior. It focuses on explanations WITHIN individuals.
- (c) In Sociology, we use social interactions and environment to explain human behavior. It focuses on explanations in the EXTERNAL social realm.

1.1.2 Connecting Society and the Individual: Fundamental Theorem of Sociology

1. Social context shapes human behavior.

Social context = Environment

2. Individual behavior is deeply shaped (*but not determined*) by social forces (social systems).

3. Thinking "sociologically":

- (a) See beyond merely the individual.
- (b) See behind assumptions of everyday life.
- (c) Begin to think about the way society is structured.

Example of a Question for Thinking Sociologically

"How are relationships organized? "

"How are relationships between professors and students organized? "

4. A summary of Sociology as a Discipline:

Summary: Sociology as a discipline

- Sociology recognizes the importance of individuals and the importance of biological and psychological factors.
- But, this is NOT ALL that is needed to explain human behavior.
- Social Context (Environment) is an inescapable factor in human life.
- Biology and Environment are inseparable.

1.1.3 Sociology is a Social Science

1. Social science or "common sense?"

(a) Common sense:

Common Sense

Common science is sound judgment not based on specialized knowledge.

(b) Science:

Science

Science is a **system of knowledge** covering the operation of general laws, obtained and tested through scientific method.

(c) Scientific method:

Scientific Method

Scientific method refers to **systematic** pursuit of knowledge involving the recognition and formulation of a problem, the collection of **data** through observation and experiment, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses.

Why do we need scientific methods?

We want to make sure that our study and research is replicable.

(d) Sociology:

Sociology - Refined Definition

Sociology is the **systematic study**, using the scientific method, to test hypotheses/questions about social institutions, social interactions, and social relationships.

Note on the Definition of Sociology

As indicated by the definition, sociology only focus on people as a group; sociology never studies individuals and individual behaviors.

2. Anecdote V.S. Empirical Evidence:

(a) Anecdote:

Anecdote

Anecdote is a usually short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident.

(b) Evidence:

Evidence

Evidence is something that furnishes proof.

(c) Empirical:

Empirical

The word "empirical" means "based on observation; capable of being verified or disproved by observation or experiment. "

3. Social science and generalizations:

(a) Category:

Category

Category means to distinguish one thing from another; how we make distinctions between things.

(b) Generalization:

Generalization

Generalization means the characteristic of objects within a category; defines similarities and differences with other categories.

(c) Stereotype:

Stereotype

Stereotype is an exaggerated description applied to every person in some category.

(d) The purpose of social science is to develop accurate categorizations and generalizations about humans.

(e) Sociology can predict:

- i. Which groups will be more likely to engage in certain types of behavior.
- ii. But, not which particular person in the group will conduct certain types of behavior.
- *Sociology only studies humans as a group not human as an individual.*
- iii. Sociology predicts categories (and generalizations about them), but not a precise individual's behavior.

1.2 How Do We Do Sociology? (Sociological Research Methods)

1.2.1 Sociology Research Model

1. Theory V.S. Research:

(a) Theory - Definition:

Theory

- i. A systematic **explanation** for the observed facts that relate to a particular aspect of life.
- ii. General propositions about the relationship between two or more concepts (variable).

$$A \xrightarrow{\text{impact}} B$$

(b) Empirical research:

i. Definition:

Empirical Research

Using **systematically gathered data** to prove a theory.

- ii. Sociologists conduct research - gather data about real people - to determine if theories are true depictions and predictions of reality.

(c) Method:

Method

The way we gather data for empirical research.

Note: Your theory and your method must connect to each other.

2. The Sociology Research Model:

(a) Develop a Research Question: Select topic & Define problem:

Research Question (RQ)

The relationship between two or more concepts or variables.
(How does A affect B?)

(b) Theory: Review theoretical literature:

- i. What theories have been used to address this research question in the past?
- ii. Choose specific theory (or theories) you want to test.

(c) Hypothesis:

Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a statement of what you expect to find based on the theory. A hypothesis predicts a relationship between two or more concepts.

(d) Empirical test: The heart of a sociological research

- i. Choose a Method (*will be discussed later*)
- ii. Collect the data

(e) Results: What did I find?

- i. Analyze results
- ii. Present your findings - summarizing key points, and illustrating the results with:
 - How do my findings tie into my hypotheses?
 - How do my findings fit with previous research?
 - What might be desirable further research?

1.2.2 Different Social Research Method

1.2.2.1 Survey Research

1. Survey - Definition

Survey

In survey research, sociologists collect data through asking people questions. They set questions, followed by a list of responses, in a survey. Most data from surveys are **quantitative** (numeric).

Example of a Likert Scale

"One a scale of 1 to 5, ..."

2. Importance things to consider when setting or conducting a survey research:

(a) Types of survey:

- i. Self-administered questionnaires (such as via email)
- ii. Phone surveys
- iii. In-person surveys (such as an interview)

(b) Population:

- i. Define the group you want to study
- ii. Often dependent on your research questions and past literatures.

(c) Sampling:

- i. How sample chosen is extremely important for results
- ii. Sample should **represent** the entire Population
- iii. Probability sampling:

Probability Sampling

In simplest form, each person in the population has an equal chance of being chosen for the study.

(d) Question wording:

- i. Form, wording, and context of questions are important for accurate results.
- ii. Complex issues need multiple questions.

3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Survey Research:

(a) Pros:

- i. Best way of learning about large populations.
- ii. Data can be representative of the large population (with good sampling and response rate)
- iii. Standardization of data
- iv. Economy - cost
- v. Time

(b) Cons:

- i. Poorly worded questions yield poor data.
- ii. Questions can be somewhat artificial (or superficial).
- iii. Data can be potentially superficial.
- iv. Difficult to gain a full sense of social processes in their natural settings.

1.2.2.2 Qualitative Research (Field Research)

1. Definition:

Qualitative Research

Systematic, often long-term (around 1 to 10 years), observation of social phenomena in natural settings.

2. Most often, we use qualitative research for topics that are complex and not easy to assess using surveys.

3. Data are qualitative - **Non-numerical**

- (a) Data collected in text form (not numerical scales)
- (b) The text from notes and interviews are **coded** and organized around themes.
- (c) Then they are systematically analyzed for patterns
- (d) Summaries are usually non-numerical (although one may count how many people mentioned particular themes).

4. Observation as a type of Qualitative Research:

(a) Definition:

Observation

Observe a group of people or a certain event.

(b) Data are collected through:

- i. Field journal
- ii. interviews

Different Types of Questions Asked

Interviews use open-ended questions, whereas surveys ask close-ended questions.

(c) Types of Observation:

- i. Direct observation:
 - A. Researcher observes a social group as an **outsider**.
 - B. Does not become part of the group in any way.
 - C. Usually no influence on group dynamics.

ii. Participant Observation

- A. Researcher goes beyond mere observation to participate in the group they are studying.
- B. Potential for influencing the group.

5. In-Depth Interviews as a type of Qualitative Research:

- (a) Usually a part of observation studies.
- (b) Can also be done as a separate method.
- (c) Explore a topic at a more complex level.
- (d) Use when you want **depth** and **diversity** of views.
- (e) Interviewer has very general questions and has the respondent talk at length.
- (f) Potential for interviewer bias.

6. Advantages of Qualitative Research:

- (a) Able to study nuances of attitudes and behaviors.
- (b) Able to study whole group - defining social structure of group.
- (c) More **depth** and better understanding of what is studied.
- (d) Can be inexpensive.

7. Disadvantages of Qualitative Research:

- (a) Time-intensive
- (b) Potential for subjectivity and bias.
- (c) Conclusions are regarded as **suggestive** rather than **definitive**.
- (d) Smaller sample - *less generalizability* to larger populations.

1.2.2.3 Experiment

1. This is the most rigorous controllable of the methods.
2. You define a situation you want to test and then create that situation in a lab.

Groups in Experiments

Experimental group: exposed to test factor.

Control group: identical in terms of types of individuals, but not exposed to test factor.

3. Advantages of Experiments:

- (a) Control over variables.
- (b) Can test specific influences over a specific situation.

4. Disadvantages of Experiments:

- (a) Artificial environment: how do you know lab settings will be the same as in real life?
- (b) Limited in scope
- (c) Ethical concerns - Moral concerns of human subject experiments (*This has been addressed, by and large, through Institutional Review Boards (IRBs)*)

Milgram's Experiment

- (a) Introduction
 - i. Psychological experiment in early 1960s.
 - ii. Conducted variations with different groups/samples.
 - iii. Slightly different from most experiments today - no control group.
- (b) Purpose:
 - i. Involved observing people's willingness to harm others when following orders.
 - ii. Wanted to see threshold for when people would take personal responsibility and disobey superior.
- (c) Why do people obey authority figures?
 - i. Assume their authority figures.
 - ii. Fear reprimand/anticipate reward.
 - iii. Pass responsibility on to someone else ("just following orders")
 - iv. etc. (look at social context for answers...)
- (d) Effect on participants:
 - i. Through a later survey, 83% said they were glad they had participated.
 - ii. Yet, many personally experienced problems during the experiment.
 - iii. Some felt shame; others justified their behavior.
- (e) Critiques of method:
 - i. Its psychological effects on the participants.
 - ii. Deception of the participants.

1.2.3 Ethics in Research

1. These studies like Milgram's experiment has led to
 - (a) Codes of ethics to protect human subjects
 - (b) Institutional Review Boards

2. A note on peer review

1.2.4 Causation vs. Correlation

1. Definitions:

Causation and Correlation

Correlation: A relationship between two variables.

Causation: One variable causes another.

2. Element of time - which came first
3. Intervening - or third - variable

Case Study: *Bad Feminist* by Roxane Gay

1. Why read this article (as it is not sociological research)?
 - (a) Gay emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness and developing cross-cultural knowledge and skills.
 - (b) She wants us to pay attention - critically and carefully - to the world around us.
 - (c) She also articulates the importance of grace - wherein people are allowed to make mistakes, learn, and evolve.
 - (d) It is an educational approach to life.
 - (e) it is not an approach wherein we imagine we know everything already and attack other who "don't get it."
 - (f) To a certain degree, she is also exploring "imperfection."
2. What is this essay about?
 - (a) Gay confronts the reductive nature of feminism and the stereotypes it produces.
 - (b) She also addresses her own reservations towards embracing feminism itself.
 - (c) One thing not in the essay (but she does take up elsewhere) is that feminism is also a social movement.
3. Exercise:
 - (a) She points to Judith Butler to articulate the ways in which we all "perform" our gender.
 - (b) Judith Butler: American Philosopher and gender theorist.
 - (c) Is there a "right" way to be a woman? Or a "right" way to be a man?
4. What is sociological about feminism?
 - (a) Sociology often explores the unequal distribution of power and resources, feminist sociology studies power in its relation to gender.

- (b) Feminist scholars study a range of topics, including sexual orientation, race, economic status, and nationality.
- (c) At the core of feminist sociology is the idea that, in most societies, women have been systematically oppressed and that **men have been historically dominant**. (This is referred to as **patriarchy**.)
- (d) All of these categories - including 'feminist' - are being controlled by stereotypes and judgments.

5. Gay on Categories:

- (a) "We are categorized and labeled from the moment we come into this world by gender, race, size, hair color, eye color, and so forth."
- (b) "Again, we see this fear of categorization, this fear of being forced into a box that cannot quite accommodate a woman properly." [and, a man ... and other gender categories ...]

6. *Gay's critique of many white feminists*

- (a) Not interested in the issues unique to women of color - having to work against a different set of stereotypes ("angry black woman", etc.); are oftentimes dismissive.
- (b) Worried that a recognition of differences among feminists will lead to divisiveness.
- (c) Their argument that black women need to do the work of making feminist organizations more inclusive.
- (d) Appropriation of material (ideas, etc.)
- (e) Gay notes that there are problems with feminism - it is not perfect: There are problems with all social movements, and as they expand, they are often characterized by divisiveness.

1.3 Basic Sociological Concepts - Social Structure: Statuses, Roles, and Norms

1.3.1 How Do We Understand Social Context?

1. Social order:

- (a) Why does social context matter? Because it provides **order** in our world.
- (b) Sociologists often study the processes that enable social order; the formal and informal rules that allow society to function.
- (c) Social order is created and maintained through:
 - i. Laws and formal rules
 - ii. Informal social processes/factors

2. Social context defined:

(a) Definition:

Social Context (Social Environment)

External reality formed by interactions between individuals.

(b) Notes on the definition:

- i. Can range from **micro (family)** to **macro (nation)**.
 - ii. Individuals live in multiple contexts at the same time (e.g., family, religious group, city, nation).
 - iii. Individuals experience the **primacy** of one context over others at particular times.
- (c) Sociologists seek to uncover, understand, and explain different social contexts, as well as their influence over individual behavior.

3. Social Structure and Culture:

(a) The way sociologists study social context is by analyzing two major aspects of it:

- i. Social structure
- ii. Culture

(b) Social Structure:

Social Structure

The predictable rules or patterns of interaction between people and groups.

- i. How relations among people are structured.
- ii. How parts of society are related.

(c) Culture:

Culture

What the structures/interactions mean.

- i. Shared system of meaning that exists in any society/social context.
- ii. Shared way of life - shared way of doing things/practices that undergird structure.

(d) Social Structure and culture enable social order → allows us to know how to behave.

(e) Social Structure and culture co-exist in social contexts.

1.3.2 Social Structure: Status and Role

1. Status

(a) Definition:

Status

Social **positions** people occupy.

Any social position that has rights, obligations, and expectations that go along with that position.

(b) Ascribed status:

Ascribed Status

A position **given** at birth or assigned at different stages of life.

(c) Achieved status:

Achieved Status

A position **acquired** through personal effort.

(d) Status-set: combination of various statuses. It is the sum of positions that we occupy in society.

(e) Master status: when one status assumes a certain priority and appears to override other statuses that you hold.

2. Role

(a) Definition:

Role

The **expressions and behavior** of a person who occupies a particular status.

(b) Roles involve expressions and behaviors that are appropriate to the status.

(c) Roles define our interactions with occupants of other statuses.

(d) Roles involve not just actions, but also expressions of feeling and emotion.

(e) Statuses vs. Roles

3. Status and Role in Interaction: Goffman

(a) Goffman: People in their everyday interactions are like **actors performing on a stage**

(b) Social interaction = theatrical performance

Status = Character in a play

Role = Script; the dialogue and action of the character.

Our "performance" includes

- i. The way we dress (costume)
- ii. The objects we carry (props)
- iii. Our tone of voice and gestures (manner)

iv. Performances vary according to where we are (context/set)

(c) "**Presentation of Self**" = each individuals' performance.

- i. Individuals can influence the performance.
- ii. As we present ourselves in everyday situations, we reveal information to others.
- iii. We try to create specific impressions about ourselves.
- iv. This is also called "**impression management**"
- v. It has several distinct elements:
 - A. **Defining** the situation (set) a certain way
 - B. **Presenting** a certain **status**
 - C. **Managing** how we **play our role**
 - D. **Working consensus** - overall agreement on definition of the situation.

(d) Stage 1 - "Definition of the Situation": This is like the stage/set

- i. We know something about the play simply by seeing the set or setting.
- ii. We "define" interactions with other people based on information we initially perceive about the setting:
 - A. Physical surroundings
 - B. Props
- iii. We also "define" the situation based on people's **statuses**.
- iv. When we interact, we are constantly searching for **cues to their statuses**.

(e) Stage 2 - "Presentation of Self": Here is where the play begins: the action or interaction begins

- i. **We play the role connected to our status** (or the status we would like to have):
 - A. The techniques that people use to get others to see them in a certain light.
 - B. How we give information to others that we interact with - express ourselves.
 - C. Expressiveness of the individual:
Expressions **given** = verbal communication
Expressions **given off** = non-verbal communication - gestures; facial expressions

(f) Stage 3 - "Managing the Situation": Here, individuals can "manage" aspects of the performance in order to get people to see them a certain way - Going beyond the mere script (role)

- i. Individual who is presenting self can manage the situation to some extent
- ii. To control conduct of others, especially their treatment of you. → **Must get others to define the situation the way you do.**
- iii. Can do this by managing your expressions.

(g) Stage 4 - "Working Consensus":

- i. For interactions to be successful, people must agree about the definition of the situation.
- ii. Must agree on statuses and roles for particular context.
- iii. Definition:

Working Consensus

Together the participants contribute to a single overall-definition of the situation, which involves:

- A. Not so much real agreement as to what exists.
- B. But rather real agreement as to whose "definition" will be honored in that situation.

(h) Summary of Goffman:

Summary of Goffman - Interaction is like play

We can present ourselves in a certain way, manage impressions of ourselves, and define situation:

- i. Because of our shared understanding of statuses.
- ii. Because those statuses have roles and expectations attached to them.
- iii. And expectations associated with roles are norms.

1.3.3 Social Structure: Norms and Social Control

1. Norms:

(a) Definition:

Norms

The shared **rules and expectations** that govern our behavior.

- i. Norms vary depending on context or situation.
- ii. Norms are most often tied to **statuses**, and govern **roles**.

Status → Role → Norms

(b) Norms inform us how we are to act, toward whom, where, and when.

(c) And, not only how we are to act, but to anticipate in others.

2. Social Control:

(a) Norms make our interactions orderly and predictable.

(b) Thus, society has mechanisms to ensure that people conform to norms.

(c) Definition:

Social Control

The ways that society (people or institutions) attempts to keep people in line with social norms.

(d) Types of social control:

Positive sanction

Rewards for approved behavior.

Negative sanction

Punishment for disapproved behaviors.

(e) Mechanisms of social control:

- i. Vary in severity
- ii. Vary informality

3. Further characteristics of norms:

(a) Norms are comprehensive

- i. Norms shape all our behavior.
- ii. Even our perceptions - how we perceive things have predictable patterns.

(b) Norms vary in intensity: Norms vary in the intensity of their moral significance.

- i. "Mores": Norms that have great moral significance; very important to a society.
- ii. "Folkways": Norms for routine or casual interaction in a society.

(c) Limits to Norms:

- i. Norms can be manipulated:
 - A. As Goffman shows, we can regulate our "presentation of self" in society.
 - B. We can also engage in "role distance"
 - C. Show we aren't really occupier of a particular status.
- ii. Norms are not always clearly defined.
 - A. Case of unclear script
 - B. Very often with new statuses in society
- iii. Status conflict:

In some cases, roles are incompatible because statuses are in conflict.

(d) Norms in Interaction: Goffman

Example: Cahill's article on "Front Stage/Back Stage" of bathrooms

- i. Front stage is public place where we expect to "perform".
- ii. Back stage is area where we get ready for our front stage performances.
- iii. Different "norms" govern these spaces.

iv. Questions to consider:

- A. What is the purpose of the public bathroom?
- B. What are the two performance regions and how are they regarded?
- C. How do people interact in public bathrooms - what are the bathroom "interpersonal rituals"?
- D. What are the norms that govern interaction in this particular social context, with its distinct performance regions?
- E. Why do we have these norms?
- F. What is a secondary purpose of the public bathroom?

v. In summary, why do we do certain things in a bathroom?

The norms in this private yet public setting:

- A. Show that we are loyal to the "behavioral guidelines" of our society (norms/values about privacy and bodily functions)
- B. Contribute to social order

1.4 Basic Sociological Concepts - Culture

1.4.1 Understanding Culture

1. Working definitions:

Culture

Shared system of meaning: what social structures/interactions mean.

- (a) Shared system of meaning that exists in any society; undergirds social structure.
- (b) The way we make distinctions between good and bad; important or not.
- (c) Classifications; distinctions; values.

2. Links between culture and social structure.

- (a) Social structure and culture are intertwined, but they focus on different aspects of a social life:

(Social Structure) Statuses → (Roles) → Norms
(Culture) prestige ↔ Values

- (b) Values: Values often accompany **norms**

- i. They justify norms and **provide believable reasons as to why we should conform.**
- ii. Values define what is worthwhile or important.

iii. They are shared beliefs of what is good or normal.

(c) Prestige: Prestige often accompanies **status**

Based on values, prestige concerns **specific activities** or statuses that **the group defines as important and good**.

3. Different levels of culture:

(a) Explicit:

- i. Culture operates in an explicit fashion.
- ii. Areas that explicitly/obviously deal with meaning.
- iii. Material culture
- iv. Values/Beliefs:
 - Beliefs that people share regarding what is good, beautiful.
 - Values define what is worthwhile, important.

(b) Implicit:

- i. It also operates in an implicit fashion.
- ii. Parts of life that have meaning, but that we "take-or-granted"
- iii. Sometimes, we hold values and beliefs that are implicit: we do NOT recognize them as values/cultures.

1.4.2 Culture shock and Ethnocentrism

1. Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism

Tendency to regard our way of life as the **right** way.

2. Cultural relativity:

- (a) Stance taken by social scientists (opposite of ethnocentrism)
- (b) Different societies create different values and different systems of meaning.
- (c) Difference does not equal "right" or "wrong"

3. Culture Shock:

Culture Shock

A feeling of confusion, doubt, or nervousness (or disorientation) caused by being in a place (such as a foreign country) that is different from what people are used to.

4. Example: Nacirema

1.4.3 Social Construction of Reality

Our world is "socially constructed"

1. "Construction" aspect:

- (a) Nothing contains meaning in-and-of-itself
- (b) Humans "construct" or create meaning; including categories/distinctions that are important (e.g. gender/race)

2. "Social aspect:

- (a) Humans create meaning together.
- (b) Meaning is created through social interaction/social processes.
- (c) People decide together on meanings to assign categories/distinctions, events, objects.

3. Example: How to Become a Batman Podcast

How is blindness a "social construction"?

- (a) our expectations of blind people from one another (The social world)
- (b) What does the meaning of blindness? Can blind people "see"? Or does a blind people need help from non-blind people?
- (c) The meaning we give to "blindness" effects both the blind and the non-blind. It impacts our interactions.
- (d) In fact, the non-blind constrain the behaviors of the blind as a consequence.
- (e) We change our expectations of human beings because of meanings we "take-for-granted".
- (f) Meaning - what something means - can change our behavior.

Questions to think about:

- (a) Where did your thoughts/beliefs about blind people come from?
- (b) How do you, personally, respond when you see someone who might be blind? Why do you respond the way you do?
- (c) Daniel and Adam got "lumped together" in their school. People would mix them up, thinking one was the other.
- (d) Has this ever happened to you? Why were you "lumped together" with someone else? How did you respond? Why do you think you responded the way you did?
- (e) Do you live in a world that believes you can't do certain things? (Think of the man who worked in a paint factory)

- (f) What would happen if we changed our expectations of what blind people can do? Do you think we should?
- (g) Have you ever been the subject of someone else's lower expectations of you? How did you respond?

4. Example: The 7 Day Week

- (a) Reality of the 7-Day Week:
 - i. The week is ubiquitous, but taken-for-granted → Implicit culture
 - ii. The week gives us a "temporal map" to organize our lives
- (b) The week is a social construction of reality:
 - i. It does not correspond to any naturally occurring phenomenon.
 - ii. It is made by people, together (part of culture):
 - A. Origins of the 7-day week:
 - Judaism
 - Astrology
 - B. Attempts to change the 7-day week: Soviet Union
These attempts did not work: Because culture was so embedded in people's lives that it seemed "inevitable."

5. Social Construction of Reality

- (a) Our world is "socially constructed."
- (b) People create meaning together.
- (c) Because meaning are created by people, **people can change them.** (This usually only happens in extraordinary circumstances.)

6. Meaning, Behavior, and Norms

- (a) New meanings (new social construction of reality) will produce new behaviors.
- (b) All groups must have norms or rules that govern these new behaviors.
- (c) Without norms or rules (without structure), people do not know how to relate to each other, and we have chaos.

7. Example: Henslin, Survivors of F-227

How is the "social construction of reality" illustrated with the crash survivors in the Andes?

(a) Social Construction of Reality

- What deeply held cultural meaning is at the heart of this situation?
- How do their normal circumstances change - what is their new social context?
Why does this new social context challenge their deeply held values?
- How does cultural meaning change because of new social context?

(b) Meaning, Behavior, and Norms

- After meaning changes, how does group behavior change?
- How do norms develop to guide this new behavior?
- What norms did the group put into place?

1.5 The Case of Love: Culture, Social Structures, and Sentiment

We look at how social factors shape two aspects of romantic love in the US: Love and Marriage & Sex without Love

1.5.1 Who do you love?

1. Isn't it very individual and personal?

- (a) All societies have **distinct social patterns** associated with love.
- (b) Our practices and beliefs about love are **socially constructed**.

2. The Social Construction of Love

(a) Eva Illouz's *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*

- Helps illustrate the **social construction** of courtship/dating.
- The changing space of courtship.
 - Moved from the private sphere to the public sphere
 - Dating involves negotiating public spaces; knowing how to conduct oneself: Manners, culturally constrained behaviors

C

ountry club, proper attire, adhering to the social norms of a particular group or subculture.

- The economization of social relationships: now **consumption** played a huge role in dating: How much money do we spend? Where do we spend it?

(b) Viviana Zelizer's *The Purchase of Intimacy*

- i. Love is also a system that has its equivalence in goods, services, and entitlements.

How do you know when you're on a date?

- A. What was the meaning of the consumption we now saw in dating?
- B. What constitutes a gift and what constitutes payment? How do you know?

- ii. We have cultural templates that allow us to understand:

- the intimacy level between two people
- the behavioral boundaries of a relationship
- the economic boundaries of a relationship between two people

- iii. These boundaries are regulated by institutions, emotions, time, and the law.

3. Social Factors and Mate Selection: Choice of mate is linked to social structure

- (a) Patterns of mate selection:

- i. Definitions:

Endogamy

Endogamy refers to marriage within a social group

Exogamy

Exogamy refers to marriage outside a social group

- ii. Definition:

Social Stratification

A group's system of ranking.

Note: Society's ranking of different statuses (large groups of people) according to a hierarchy, often based on prestige/values.

- (b) The US patterns:

- i. Social class: Most people marry within their own social class.
- ii. Education: People marry others with similar education.
- iii. Age: Usually, 2-3 years difference. Societies also define the right age to get married.
- iv. Religion: Most marry within the same religious group, but less endogamous than other categories.
- v. Race: This is one of the most endogamous categories, but the proportion varies by race.

- (c) Explanations for endogamous patterns:

- i. Preferences play a role:

- Individuals have preference for certain characteristics in a spouse.
- Our preferences are shaped by our social groups and statuses

- ii. Indirect regulation of mate selection
 - "Formally Free" mate selection, but **indirect regulation** through **restriction of social interaction**
 - A. Influence of third parties (parents)
 - B. Propinquity (proximity: e.g., residential segregation; school; workplace)
 - C. Sanctions (e.g., religious)
 - Those indirect regulations are ways to assure you "marry the right person."
- iii. Regulation of mate selection ensures social control
 - Without controls over mate selection - would have social chaos
 - Different interpretations of social control over love.

William Goode's *The Theoretical Importance of Love*

- A. Free love threatens class system
- B. Marriage between different class groups would disrupt social status of group
- C. Mate selection is most important for those with power and property. So, they place more restrictions on children and their social interactions.
- D. These mate selection patterns serve to reinforce and reproduce your **position in social structure**.

1.5.2 What is Love? Definitions and meaning of Love

1. Love and Marriage

Swidler: Talk of Love (*The link between love and marriage and how we use culture to socially construct those concepts*)

- (a) Background of book (Introduction)
 - i. Interviewed 88 middle-class men and women from suburban areas San Jose, CA.
 - ii. Not typical, but "Proto-typical" Americans
 - iii. "Middle-class" culture tends to be the dominant culture in our country - or "mainstream" culture
 - iv. Most of the participants were in their 30's and 40's and were or had been married.
- (b) Culture nations of love: what is the cultural meaning of "romantic love" in the US? Two different views of love emerge in respondents' interviews.
 - i. Love Myths - Mythic Love

- A. Historical origins: Courtly Love Tradition
- B. Bourgeois tradition reshapes courtly love
 - A decisive choice (love at first sight)
 - A unique other (one true love)
 - Overcoming obstacles (marrying for love, not money)
 - Love lasts forever ("happily ever after")
- ii. Real Love - Prosaic Realism
 - A. Participants often de-bunk the notion of mythic love.
 - B. Offer an alternative cultural view of "real love":
 - Love grows slowly; is often ambivalent and confused
 - One can love many people in a variety of ways
 - Love should be based on compatibility and practical traits that make good partners.
 - Love does not necessarily last forever.
 - C. Love involves emotional sharing, communication, often equality, respect.
 - D. Working at the relationship day-to-day
- iii. People talk about both these views of love when talking about what love means to them

2. Sex without Love

(a) US in the 19th and 20th century

Sex = Love (from Judeo-Christian culture)

- i. Norm: Sex is part of committed loving relationship
- ii. Values: Sex is sacred part of love relationship between monogamous couple
- iii. So, sex without love is deviant
- iv. In 1950's, Kinsey survey showed that more people engaged in casual sex than was expected.
- v. More recent patterns of sexual behavior
- vi. Still, the US norm is against sex without loving commitment.

(b) 21st century

Case Study: Lambert et. al. *Pluralistic Ignorance and Hooking UP*

i. Background

- In the past, research has assumed that sex without love is a problem (goes against norms).
- Today, on college campuses, this kind of behavior ("hooking up") has become normative.

Hooking up

Hooking up occurs when two people who are casual acquaintances engage in some forms of sexual behavior with the expectation of no future commitment.

ii. Background studies on "hooking up"

- Prevalence: What is the prevalence of hooking up?
- Bad experiences: What "bad experiences" do students describe? Gender differences in bad experiences?

iii. Theory: Pluralistic Ignorance

- Perceptions of other's attitudes: Group members believe that **others** in their group (especially leaders or popular people) **endorse a particular norm**).
- Own attitudes: yet, they believe their **own personal attitudes** are different from the norm.
- Actual behavior: however, they go along with the norm because:
 - Desire to fit in with the group.
 - Each person thinks that they are **the only one who has conflict** between their **personal attitudes** and their **actual behavior**

iv. Methods:

- Survey
- Sample of 175 female and 152 male undergrads at mid-sized southeastern public university.
- Convenience sample (library; residence halls)

v. Results:

- 77.7% of women said they had hooked up
- 84.2% of men said they had hooked up
- The results with regard to comfort level with hooking up?
- Same-sex peers: How did men and women rate their comfort levels (self-ratings) as compared to others of same sex (peer-ratings)?
- Opposite-sex peers: How did men and women rate the comfort levels of the opposite sex? Did they over- or under-estimate comfort levels?
- Gender differences: What were the overall gender differences?

vi. Conclusions:

- Findings support the theory of pluralistic ignorance:
 - Hooking up has become a norm on college campuses
 - Most students think other people are comfortable with it - more comfortable than they are themselves.
- Potential consequences of gender differences:
 - Potential for sexual assault of women
 - Why?

vii. Critiques of the study?

1.6 The Case of Death: Culture, Social Structure, and Fear

2 Individuals and Social Interaction

2.1 Socialization: Development of the Self

2.2 Deviance

3 Groups and Society

3.1 Social Class

3.2 Race and Ethnicity

3.3 Organizations

3.4 The sociology of Work