

Chapter 3: Social Structure

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Case Study: Six Degrees of Separation

Experiments can prove the truth of proposed hypotheses. In “small-world” experiments, researchers test the theory that all people are connected to each other through mutual acquaintances. In one example, random people are given the task of getting a letter to another random person using only personal contacts. These experiments lead researchers to believe that it takes five intermediaries to connect two perfect strangers.

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Social Structure



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Section 1 at a Glance

Building Blocks of Social Structure

- Social structure is the network of interrelated statuses and roles that guides human interaction.
- A status is a socially defined position in society, while a role is the behavior, or the rights and obligations, attached to a status.
- A social institution is a system of statuses and roles organized to satisfy one or more of society's basic needs.

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Juggling Roles

**Where do you fit in
society?**



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Status

A **social structure** is a network of interrelated statuses and roles that guide human behavior. A **status** is a socially defined position, while a **role** is the behavior associated with a status.

Ascribed and Achieved Statuses

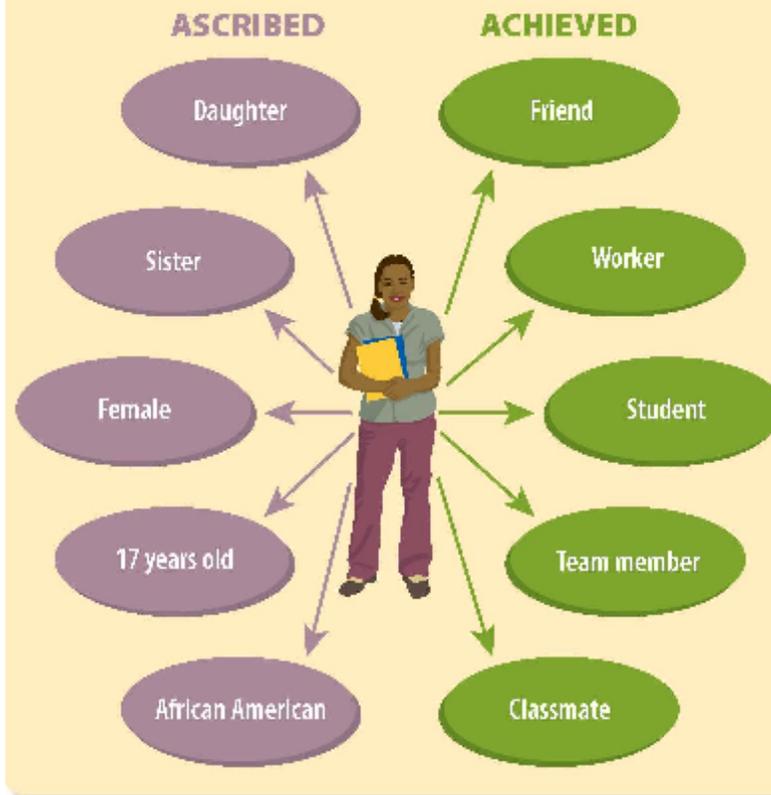
- **Ascribed status** is assigned according to qualities beyond a person's control, such as age.
- **Achieved status** is acquired through a person's direct efforts, such as education.

Master Status

- Most people have many statuses, but a **master status** is the one that plays the greatest role in a person's life.
- It can be either ascribed or achieved.

Social Statuses

Status describes an individual's position in a group or society. Since individuals belong to more than one group, they have many different statuses. Statuses can be ascribed—given to an individual regardless of his or her abilities—or achieved—gained through the individual's talent, effort, or accomplishments.



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Roles

Role Expectations and Role Performance

- Role expectations are the socially determined behaviors expected of a person with a particular status.
- Role performance is the actual behaviors of a person with a particular status. They may or may not be the expected behaviors.

Role Conflict, Role Strain, and Role Exit

- A **role set** is the different roles associated with a particular status.
- **Role conflict** occurs when fulfilling the role expectations of one status interferes with a second status.
- **Role strain** occurs when a person has difficulty fulfilling the role of one status.
- **Role exit** is the process people go through to detach from a role that was previously central to their social identity.

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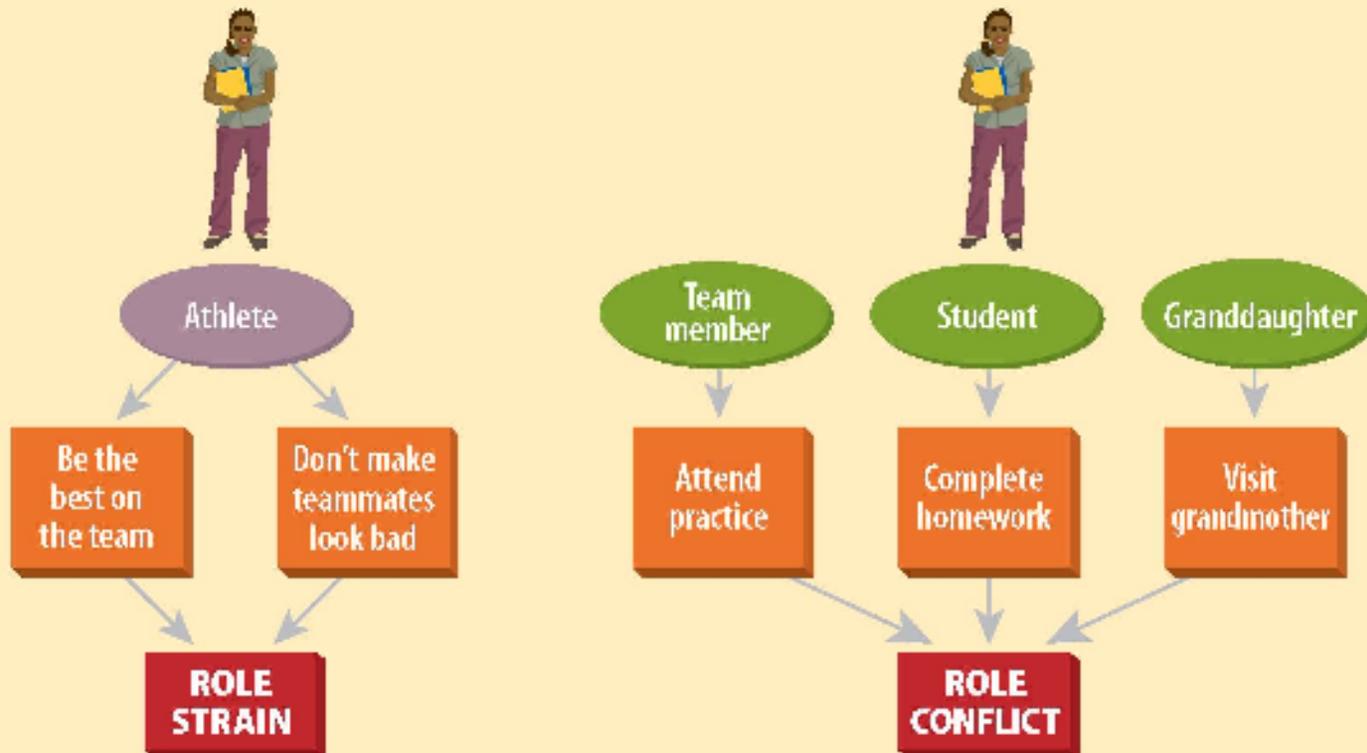
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Role Strain and Role Conflict

Role strain arises when conflicting expectations are built into a single status. Role conflict occurs when conflicting expectations arise from two or more statuses that an individual occupies.





Social Institutions

- A **social institution** is a group of statuses and roles that are organized to satisfy one or more of the basic needs of society.
 - The family, the most universal social institution, takes responsibility for raising the young and teaching them accepted norms and values.
 - The economic institution organizes the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.
 - The political institution is the system of norms that governs the exercise and distribution of power in society.
 - Education ensures the transmission of values, patterns of behavior, and certain skills and knowledge.
 - Religion provides a shared, collective explanation of the meaning of life.

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Section 2 at a Glance

Types of Social Interaction

- There are five common forms of social interaction—exchange, competition, conflict, cooperation, and accommodation.
- Exchange, cooperation, and accommodation tend to stabilize the social structure, while competition and conflict tend to encourage social change.

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WAR of WORDS

How do you interact
with other people?



In the argument culture, Deborah Tannen suggests, interaction can become a little like "a shoot-out between two gunslingers."

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Exchange

- **Exchange** occurs when people interact in an effort to receive a reward or a return for their actions.
 - Reward might be tangible or intangible
- **Reciprocity** is the idea that if you do something for someone, that person owes you something in return.
 - Basis of exchange interactions
- **Exchange theory** is the idea that people are motivated by self-interest in their interactions with other people.
 - Rewarded behavior is repeated



Competition and Conflict

Competition

- **Competition** occurs when two or more people or groups oppose each other to achieve a goal that only one can attain.
 - Common in Western societies
 - Sometimes considered basis of capitalism and democracy
 - Can lead to psychological stress, a lack of cooperation, and conflict

Conflict

- **Conflict** is the deliberate attempt to control a person by force, to oppose someone, or to harm another person.
 - Has few rules of accepted conduct
 - Can reinforce group boundaries and loyalty



Cooperation

- **Cooperation** occurs when two or more people or groups work together to achieve a goal that will benefit more than one person.
 - A social process that gets things done
 - May be used along with competition to motivate members to work harder for the group

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Accommodation

Accomodation is a state of balance between cooperation and conflict.

Compromise

Each party gives up something they want in order to come to an agreement ▼

Truce

Temporarily brings a halt to the competition or conflict until a compromise can be reached ▼

Mediation

Calling in a third party who guides the two parties toward an agreement ▼

Arbitration

A third party makes a decision that is binding on both parties

Social Interaction

Social interaction is the way people relate to one another and influence each other's behavior. The nature of social interaction changes according to the social setting in which it takes place. Sociologists have recognized five forms of social interaction: exchange, competition, conflict, cooperation, and accommodation. *How might cooperation work alongside another form of interaction such as competition?*

Exchange The most common form of interaction, exchange, takes place when people interact in the hope of receiving some reward. The rules of exchange tend to be informal. Wait staff provide good service to customers in the hope of receiving a "thank you" and a good tip.

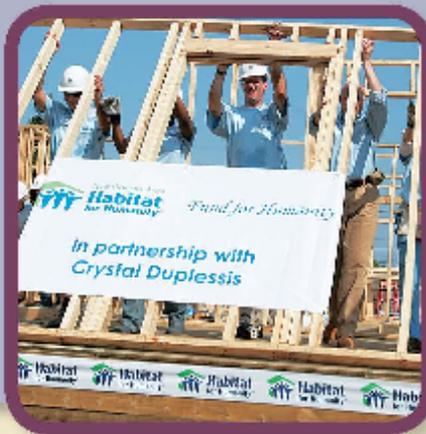


Competition When two or more people or groups oppose each other to achieve a goal that only one can attain, competition is taking place. This type of interaction is governed by mutually acceptable formal rules. Traders on the stock exchange floor compete to buy and sell shares at the most advantageous prices.

Social Structure



Conflict The aim of conflict is to oppose, control, or harm a person or group through the use of force. With conflict, rules do not exist or are ignored. Using military might to control dissent is an example of conflict over ideology.



Cooperation With cooperation, individuals join together to achieve a common goal—usually one that benefits the whole community. Rules, both formal and informal, may play a part in cooperative efforts. People coming together to build houses for the homeless is an example of cooperation.



Accommodation With accommodation, conflict and cooperation are balanced. The various forms of accommodation, such as compromise, truce, mediation, and arbitration, tend to be guided by formal rules. The United Nations uses accommodation to find solutions to international conflicts.

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Section 3 at a Glance

Types of Societies

- Sociologists classify societies according to subsistence strategies, or the ways societies use technology to meet the needs of their members.
- Sociologists recognize three broad categories of society—preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial.

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People on the Move

By dismantling a yurt, these Mongolian herders prepare to move their home to a new location.



What is life like in a preindustrial society today?

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Preindustrial Societies

The largest **groups** studied by sociologists are entire societies. Sociologists categorize societies according to **subsistence strategies**. In a **preindustrial society** food production is the main economic activity.

Hunter-Gatherer Societies

- Collect wild plants daily
- Hunt for wild animals
- Move constantly
- Rarely exceed 100 members
- Family is main social unit

Pastoral Societies

- Rely on domesticated animals
- Lead a nomadic life
- Fewer people produce food
- Complex **division of labor**
- Produce some items for trade



Horticultural Societies

- Grow fruits and vegetables in garden plots
- Use slash-and-burn techniques
- Move to new plot when old becomes barren
- Build semipermanent or permanent villages
- Village size depends on amount of land for farming
- Division of labor creates specialized roles
- Economic and political systems more developed because of the settled life



Agricultural Societies

- Animals are used to plow fields
- Irrigation increases crop yields
- Many members are able to engage in specialized roles
- Cities are formed
- Leaders are often hereditary
- Marked by powerful armies and the construction of roads
- Abandon **bartering** in order to make trade easier
- Power often unequally distributed

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THE FIRST SOCIAL REVOLUTION

QUICK
FACTS

The domestication of plants and animals marked the first great social revolution, which completely transformed the way people lived.

Domestication of plants and animals



More reliable food supply



Larger populations can be supported



Division of labor



Production of goods encourages trade



**Through trade, some families
acquire great wealth**



**With wealth comes power;
new leadership systems develop**

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Click on the image to play the Interactive.

INTERACTIVE

The Transformation of Society

Society was transformed by four revolutions—the domestication of plants and animals, the development of agriculture, industrialization, and the information age.

Why do you think the rate of societal change is increasing?



The Domestication Revolution The earliest humans were nomadic hunter-gatherers who constantly moved in search of food. About 10,000 years ago, some hunter-gatherers learned how to domesticate plants and animals. This led to a more settled life.

The Agrarian Revolution The invention of the plow about 6,000 years ago ushered in the second great social revolution—the development of agriculture. Permanent settlements and larger food surpluses contributed to the growth of cities. In turn, cities brought new forms of leadership.

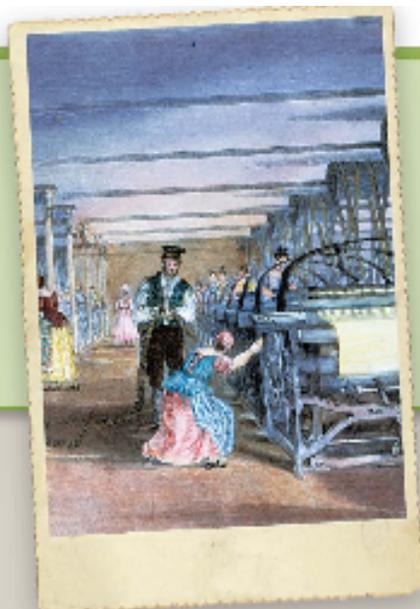


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Interactive Feature



thinkcentral.com

The Industrial Revolution With the Industrial Revolution in the late 1700s, the emphasis of society shifted from food production to the production of manufactured goods. Industrialization changed the location and nature of work. It also changed the social structure, since in industrial societies most statuses are achieved. ◀

The Information Revolution The development of the computer in the second half of the 1900s brought about postindustrial society. In this type of society, information is the chief commodity. Most people do not produce any concrete goods; rather, they use or apply information to provide services. ▶



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Industrial Societies

In an **industrial society**:

- Production of food shifts to production of manufactured goods
- Production moves from human and animal labor to machines
- Increases food production and population
- Numbers and kinds of jobs increase
- Location of work changes to cities, away from the home
- Social processes such as education take the place of family

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Postindustrial Societies

- Economic emphasis is on creation and exchange of information and services instead of manufacturing goods
- United States is a **postindustrial society**
- Standard of living improves
- Education and science are important
- Technological advances seen as key

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Contrasting Societies

Preindustrial Societies

- Held together by **mechanical solidarity**
- Societal relationships based on values
- **Gemeinschaft**
- Strong sense of group solidarity
- Traditional values are strong



Industrial Societies

- Held together by **organic solidarity**
- Societal relationships based on need
- **Gesellschaft**
- Relationships are impersonal and often temporary
- Traditional values are weak

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Sociology in Today's World

The New Barter

One major development of agricultural societies was the creation of a money system. This system replaced the idea of barter, but bartering has made a comeback.

- As many as 450,000 companies barter in America today.
- They trade goods and services through a “barter exchange.”
- Barter exchanges make money on barter transactions.
- Computer technology makes bartering easier.
- Barter allows companies to “buy” goods or services without using cash.
- Rapid growth of bartering is changing the economy of the United States.

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Social Structure

The new barter enables some interesting exchanges—a fruit-juice company paying for an advertising campaign with cases of guava jelly, for example.



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Thinking Critically

- Why has the new barter grown, and how does it differ from barter in the past?
- What effect do you think the expansion of commercial barter will have on society in the United States? Explain your answer.

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Section 4 at a Glance

Groups Within Society

- Groups are the foundation of social life. They differ in terms of size, life, organization, and purpose.
- Groups perform important functions, such as setting membership boundaries, choosing leaders, fulfilling goals, and controlling members' behavior.

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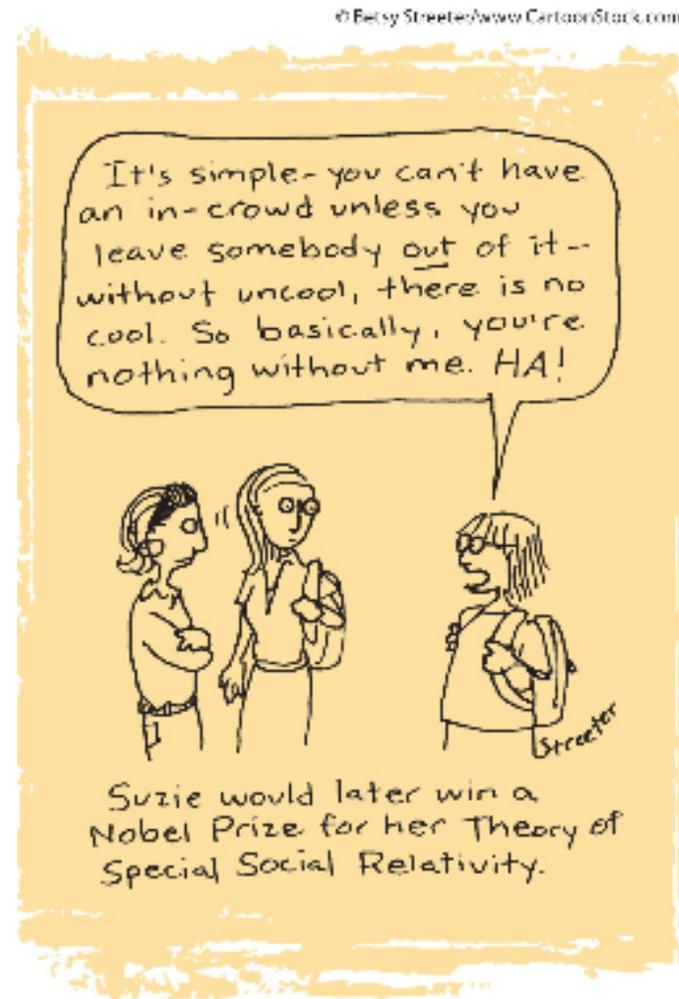
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SOCIOLOGY CLOSE UP

In with the “In” Crowd

In which group do you belong?



Sociologists would agree with this cartoon—you cannot have an in-group without setting boundaries to show who does not belong.

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Defining Groups

- **Size**
 - Small or large
- **Quality**
 - Intimate or formal
- **Four features:**
 - Two or more people
 - Interaction occurs between members
 - Shared expectations
 - Must possess a sense of common identity
- **Aggregate**
 - A gathering of people without lasting organization
- **Social categories**
 - People with a shared trait or status who do not interact with each other

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• Size

- A **dyad** is two people.
- A **triad** is three people.
- Fifteen is the largest number that works well as a group.

• Time

- A group can be a one-time meeting or a lifetime.
- Interaction is not continuous; there are breaks.

• Organization

- A **formal group** has clearly defined structure, goals, and activities.
- An **informal group** has no official structure or rules of conduct.

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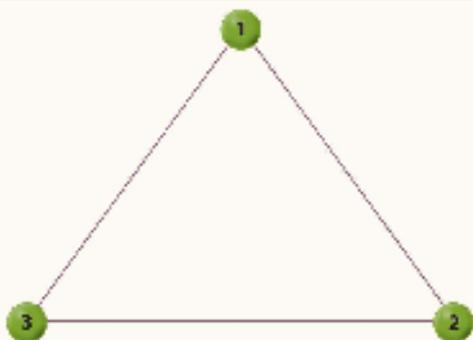
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QUICK
FACTS

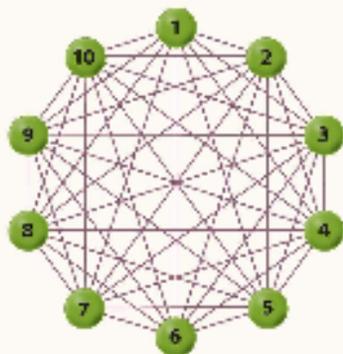
GROUP SIZE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Group size has a huge impact on social interaction among group members. Adding one or two members can dramatically alter group dynamics.



Group of 3

There are just three possible face-to-face relationships in a group with three members. Interaction tends to be personal and intimate.



Group of 10

With a 10-member group, there are 45 possible face-to-face relationships. As a result, interaction is often less intense and intimate.

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Types of Groups

There are many kinds of groups. Most people belong to several.

Primary Groups

- The most intimate type
- Fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual
- Small group that interacts over a long period of time on a personal basis
- Involves entire self of a member

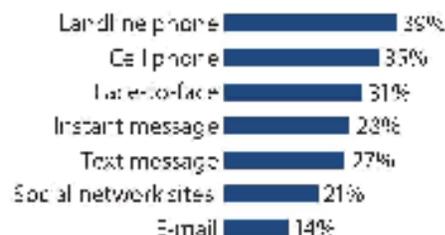
Secondary Groups

- Interaction is impersonal and temporary
- Involve only part of a member's self
- Casual and limited
- Importance of person linked to his or her function
- Members can be replaced

Statistically Speaking...



METHODS OF KEEPING IN TOUCH



Social Networking Web sites such as MySpace and Facebook provide a virtual community where people can “gather.” Members create their own online profile and “meet” using a host of communication methods, including voice, chat, instant message, and video. This mode of group interaction is growing in popularity among young Americans.

55% Percentage of online teens who use social networking sites.

48% Percentage of online teens who visit social networking sites one or more times a day.

91% Percentage of social networking teens who say they use the sites to stay in touch with friends they see frequently.

72% Percentage of social networking teens who say they use the sites to make plans with friends.

49% Percentage of social networking teens who say they use the sites to make new friends.

Skills Focus INTERPRETING GRAPHS What in the graph suggests that virtual communication encourages rather than discourages traditional forms of communication?

Sources: Pew Internet & American Life Project

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Types of Groups (cont.)

Reference Groups

- A group with whom an individual identifies and whose attitudes and values are adopted
- Can have both positive and negative effect on behavior



In-Groups and Out-Groups

- **In-group:** any group that a person belongs to and identifies with
- **Out-group:** any group that the person does not belong to or identify with



Electronic Communities

- Have arisen with arrival of internet
- Some reflect primary-group dynamics



Social Networks

- The web of relationships across groups that occurs because of the many groups people belong to
- No clear boundaries

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Tracking Groups

To which primary and secondary groups, in-groups and out-groups, and electronic communities do you belong? Find out by keeping track of your group activity.

PROCEDURE

- 1 Review the content on primary and secondary groups, in-groups and out-groups, and electronic communities.
- 2 Discuss the information with classmates and identify examples of the various group types at your school.
- 3 Track your group activity through the day, both at home and at school. Record your observations on a chart like the one to the right.

Quick Lab

Group	Group Type	Formal/Informal

ANALYSIS

1. Review your results. Then based on their various features, place the groups on a continuum from formal to informal.
2. Compare your continuum with those of your classmates. Which groups most often appear at the formal end of the continuum? Which groups appear most often at the informal end of the continuum? Explain why this is so.

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Group Functions

- **Define boundaries**
 - Use of uniforms, gestures, handshakes, or language
- **Select leaders**
 - **Leaders** influence the attitudes and opinions of others
 - *Instrumental leaders* help find specific means that will help the group reach its goals
 - *Expressive leaders* find ways to keep the group together and to maintain morale
- **Define purpose**
 - Set goals
 - Assign tasks
 - Make decisions
- **Control members' behavior**

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Section 5 at a Glance

The Structure of Formal Organizations

- Formal organizations are complex secondary groups created to achieve specific goals. Most are structured as bureaucracies.
- Max Weber noted that all bureaucracies, regardless of their goals or purposes, have common characteristics.
- Formal and informal structures can affect the efficiency of bureaucracies.

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Passing the Test



To get a job with the Chinese government, applicants had to take a state exam. Many exam questions focused on the ideas of the philosopher Confucius.

How did people get jobs in the Chinese bureaucracy?

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Formal Organizations

- **Formal organizations** are large, complex secondary groups that have been established to achieve specific goals.
 - Schools, businesses, religious organizations, and labor unions are examples.
- A **bureaucracy** is a ranked authority structure that operates according to specific rules and procedures.
 - Bureaucracies existed in ancient Egypt and China, but rose to prominence during the Industrial Revolution.
- **Rationality** involves subjecting every feature of human behavior to calculation, measurement, and control.
 - Industrialization has increased the degree of rationalism in our society.

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Weber's Model of Bureaucracies

- **Division of labor**
 - Work is divided among specialists.
- **Ranking of authority**
 - There are clear-cut lines of responsibility.
- **Employment based on formal qualifications**
 - Individuals are hired on the basis of tests, education, or experience.
 - Workers are replaceable.

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Weber's Model of Bureaucracies (cont'd.)

- **Written rules and regulations**
 - There are objective rules that identify each person's responsibilities.
- **Specific lines of promotion and advancement**
 - Lines of promotion reward loyalty with job security and seniority.
- **Organizations fit this ideal type to varying degrees**
 - Some, like **voluntary associations**, may vary with the abilities of volunteers.

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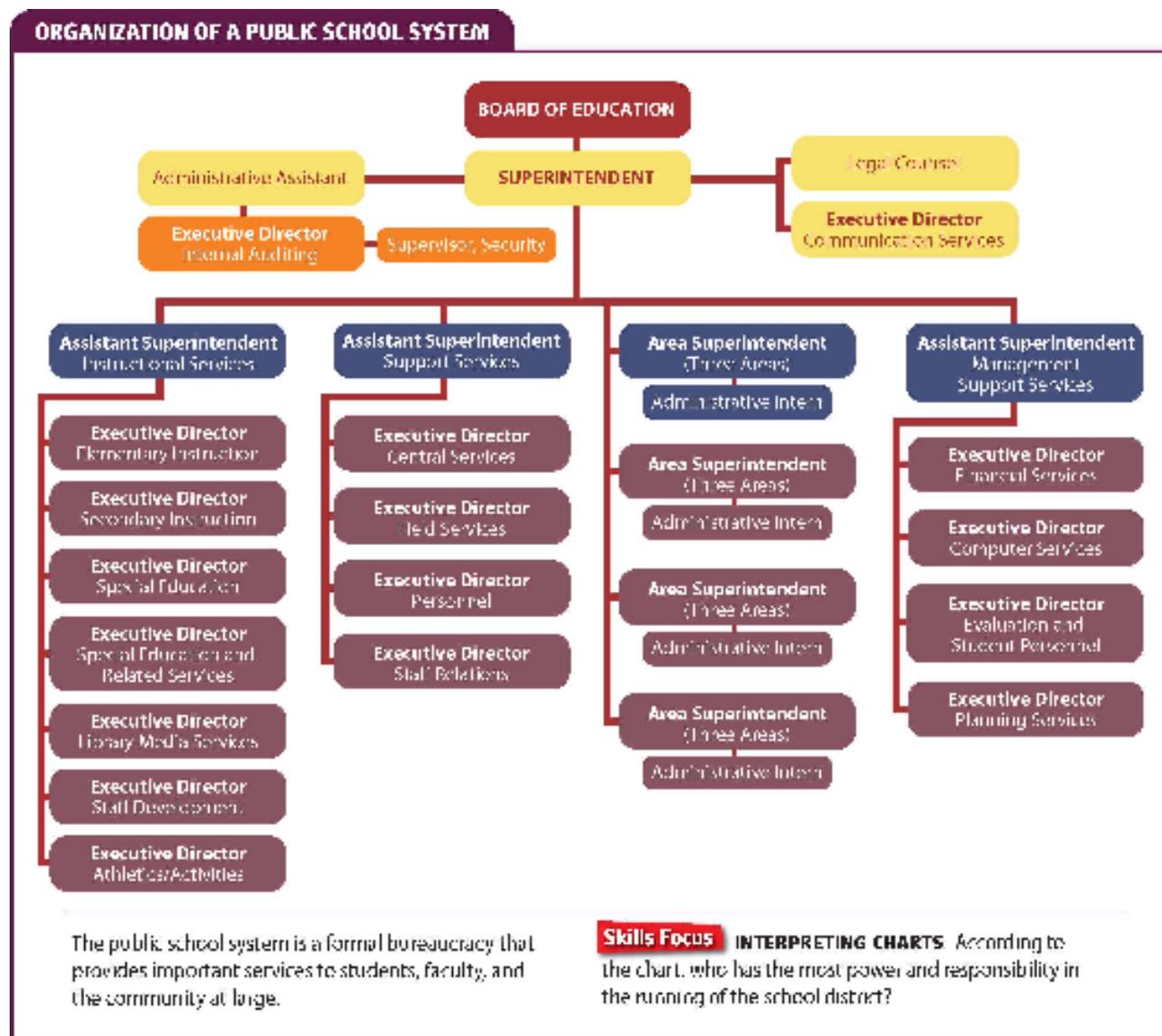


Relationships in Formal Organizations

Informal structures based on strong primary relationships may exist within the most rigid of bureaucracies.

- Called “bureaucracy’s other face”
- First noted in study of Western Electric Company
- Conformity to the norm enforced through negative sanctions

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TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

The Impact of Telecommuting



The development of the computer and the Internet has transformed the way people work. Many have become telecommuters, doing office work in a location other than the traditional office. Sociologists have begun to study the impact of this development on bureaucracies. Some see it as having a positive effect. Freed from the structure of office rules and regulations, they suggest, workers feel less alienated and more connected to their work. Others disagree, arguing that telecommuting increases worker isolation and severs the primary relationships that make office life bearable. Further, they charge, many telecommuters fear that their absence from the office will adversely affect their chances for promotion.

Thinking Critically

Support a Position Is telecommuting a positive development or a negative development for bureaucracies? Why?

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Problems of Bureaucracies

Weber's Bureaucracy

- Views bureaucracy in a positive light
 - Best way to organize large numbers of people to attain a large goal
 - Create order by clearly defining tasks
 - Provide stability

Flaws of Bureaucracy

- Several significant weaknesses
 - No longer fulfill original goals
 - New goal might be self-continuation
 - Encourage bureaucratic personality
 - Create **alienation** among employees
 - Result in oligarchy—a tendency labeled the **iron law of oligarchy**

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Current Research in Sociology

The McDonaldization of Society

Max Weber suggested that as society progressed it would become increasingly guided by rules, regulations, and formal structures. George Ritzer called this tendency *McDonaldization*.

- Four aspects to McDonaldization: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control
- Operations are performed to specific guidelines that maximize efficiency
- Uniformity across production lines results in uniform products
- Pros: convenient, familiar
- Cons: removal of human aspect, no room for innovation, reduction of face-to-face interactions

Social Structure



Social life, George Ritzer suggests, has begun to resemble drive-through food service—predictable and efficient but impersonal.

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Thinking Critically

- What are the costs and benefits of McDonaldization?
- How is a large suburban shopping mall an example of McDonaldization?

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Simulation: Applying What You've Learned

Are You In or Are You Out?

What makes a group an in-group or an out-group?

1. Introduction

- In this simulation, you will explore the relationship between in-groups and out-groups.
- As a class, find examples of in-group/out-group pairs.

2. Setting Group Boundaries

- Each group will set its own boundaries and determine the characteristics of each group.
- Select people from each group to perform specific tasks.

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Simulation (cont.)

3. Simulation and Presentation

- Pairs of groups should perform their simulations.
- Demonstrate group boundaries in an appropriate way.
- Discuss the meanings of a group's boundaries and characterizations.



4. Discussion and Evaluation

- Conduct a class discussion about what was learned during this exercise.
- How did silence play a part in this exercise?
- Are in-groups and out-groups avoidable?
- How might technology change in-groups and out-groups?

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SETTING GROUP BOUNDARIES

Greetings/Good-byes	Clothing/Hairstyles	Other Symbols	Language	Personal Space	Location

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