

EDFA 5500 - SOCIOLOGY #1

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The Foundations of Education/Issues in
Education

Theme #1 for Week 1

“Becoming a Teacher”

■ The Foundations of Education

- *The Sociology of Education*
- *The Psychology of Education*
- *The Philosophy of Education*
 - *Language in Education*
 - *Health & Family Life Education*



Concepts/
Theories

■ Issues in Education

- *Equity: Access to Schooling, Gender & Schooling, Low and High Status Schools*
- *Education Reform: School Improvement, Teachers as Reformers (Change Agents)*
- *Underachievement: Parental Involvement, Organization of Schooling, Assessment*

Sociology

■ The Study of Society

- What is Society?

- Intangible
- A construct of the discipline 'Sociology'
 - The imagined milieu in which we all live – social milieu/social life
 - We inherit it and perpetuate it and change it (improve it/destroy it)
 - Established by the collective or group(s) we belong to ...
 - Our membership in groups: form our identity/identities
 - Transmitted through 'intangibles': values, norms, beliefs, perceptions, ideas
 - via the process of socialization
 - Primary, Secondary, Anticipatory
 - Salience of History and Culture

Sociology - **The Study of Society**

Why???

- In the beginning : A concern with the preservation of society as we know it:- **Social Order**. Social Stability. Social Continuity. Social Integration.
- A dominant perspective of society emerged known as **Functionalism**.
- Since then other perspectives have emerged and sub-perspectives
 - *alternative explanations of society - (**Conflict or Marxist perspective and the Interactionist**)*

Sociological Perspectives

Macro-Sociology

- Functionalism (Consensus)
- Conflict Theory (Marxism)

Explanations of Society (usually social institutions) at the level of the System

Micro-Sociology

- Interactionist

Explanations of Society in terms of human behaviour, interacting as social beings.

Society: Definition

“The community of people living in a particular country or region and having shared customs, laws, and organizations”.

- Note the idea of the **group** or **collective** (what of **the individual**?)
- Note relevance of space or **place**: global, national, regional, sub-regional, community, ...homelands, diaspora ‘high’ society
- Note emphasis on **shared** ideas, customs and arrangements about living
 - How do persons come to ‘share’ in norms, values, beliefs etc?
 - Socialization processes are unrelenting (and, uneven)
 - We are largely unaware of it(so we must study it)

Sociology: Definition

Sociology - the science of society, social institutions and social relationships; specifically: the systematic study of the development, structure, interaction, and collective behaviour of organized groups of human beings.

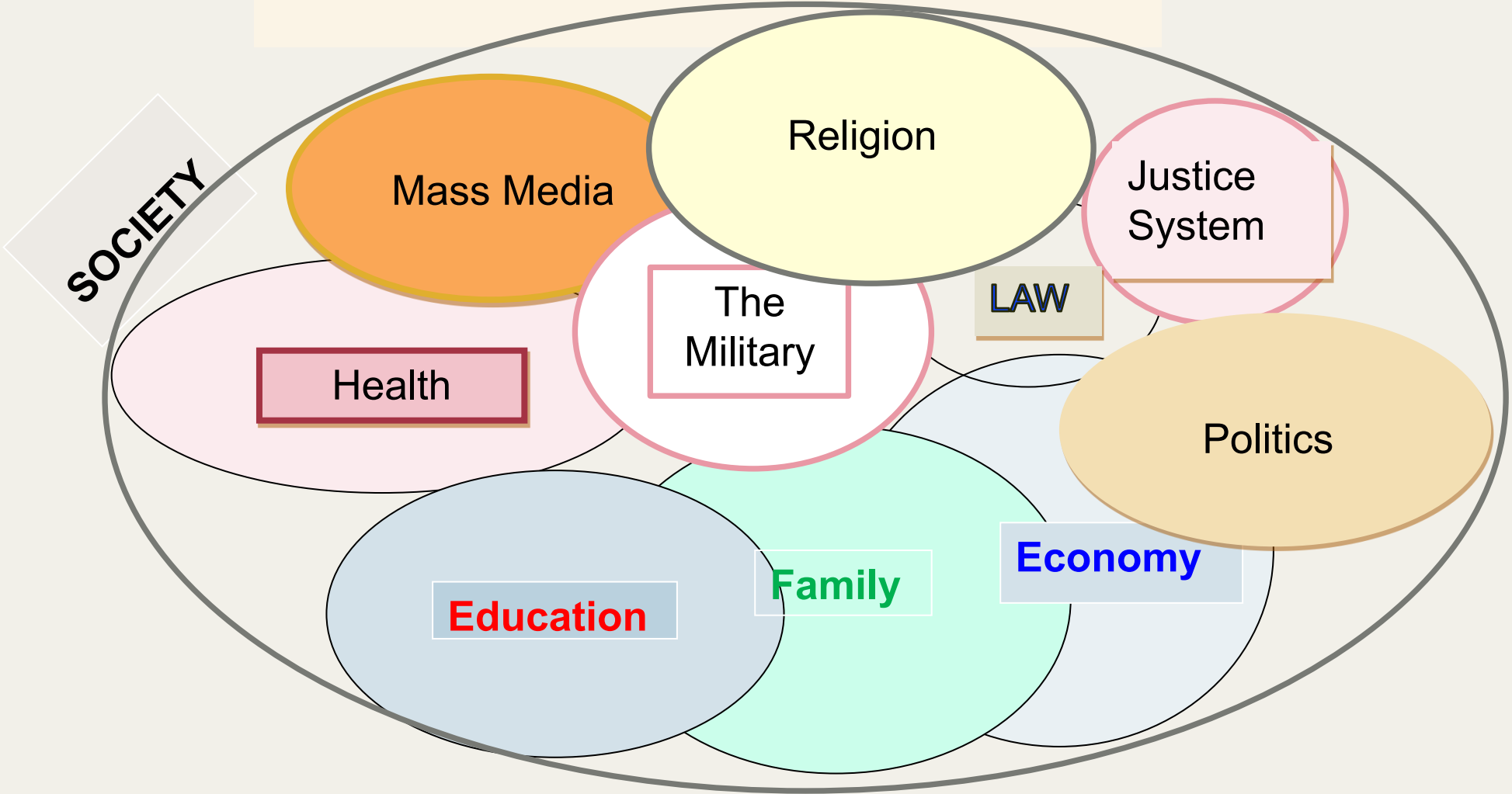
Social Institutions -

A social institution is defined as a collection of individuals banded together in pursuit of a common purpose.

A social institution is a complex, integrated set of social norms organized around the preservation of a basic societal value.

Education is a
social
institution

Social Institutions



The Social Institution of Education

- Intangible. An artefact developed by sociologists for studying society.
- Houses or accommodates all the ideas, beliefs, values of all the social groups about education
- Since some groups are more **dominant** than others, their ideas are dominant in the society (education) and have **legitimacy**
- The dominant ideas, values and beliefs about education (social institution) become concrete as **social organizations** – schools, different types, Ministry of Education (centralized body), the curriculum, PTAs, assessment, CXC, extra-curricular bodies, principals' associations, subject associations, trade union, credit union...

A social institution is defined as a collection of individuals banded together in pursuit of a common purpose. (???)

A social institution is a complex, integrated set of social norms organized around **the preservation of a basic societal value. (???)**

The Sociology of Education

A foundation course for teachers and administrators because

- The focus is on society and **schools** - students, parents, teachers, administrators are all enmeshed in a common aim (different groups, highly differentiated)

- Important Questions that Sociology asks:
 - (i) ***How does the society seek to perpetuate/improve itself through the social institution of education?***
.... by transmitting the **skills and knowledge** it deems valuable or necessary

 - (ii) ***How does education as a social institution act as a mechanism for social order or social stability ?***
....by maintaining a shared view of schooling - through its attention to perpetuating **norms, values, practices, customs, culture, standard operating procedures....**

The Sociology of Education

THEME 1: Becoming a Teacher

As a foundation course for teachers and administrators, the Sociology of Education

- Alerts us to practices/values, which in the normal course of daily life and interactions are largely invisible to us (*“to make the familiar strange”*)
- And so, we may become aware of uncomfortable questions such as
 - *Which groups excel in our school system? What may be the reasons for that?*
 - *Are such ideas of ‘excellence’ aligned with ‘educating the whole child’ or ‘inclusive education’?*
 - *Which groups fail? Are failing students a priority in our education system?*
- Such questions may make us uncomfortable –
 - *necessary to explore our own educational biographies to see how we have been positioned*
 - *we may feel helpless at the extent to which teachers can change the system for the better*
 - *we may begin to think of our own practice as possibly our contribution... ?*

Becoming a Teacher: How is Sociology relevant?

- Challenges our familiar understanding of the world.
- Involves the ability to detach one's self from pre-conceived ideas about social life.
- Reveals to us the vast range of human diversity (it could be said that the major problem of the world is the inability to deal with human difference...).
- **Differentiation**. How does a society (or, an education system) maintain stability amongst all this diversity? Social Stratification.
- Shows the connections and relationships between our personal lives and experiences and the larger social contexts shaped by history, politics, religion, the economy [biography and society]