Pearson New International Edition

Sociology: A Down-To-Earth Approach
James M. Henslin
Eleventh Edition

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achieved statuses positions that are earned, accomplished, or involve at least some effort or activity on the individual's part

acid rain rain containing sulfuric and nitric acids (burning fossil fuels release sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide that become sulfuric and nitric acids when they react with moisture in the air)

acting crowd an excited group of people who move toward a goal

activity theory the view that satisfaction during old age is related to a person's amount and quality of activity

age cohort people born at roughly the same time who pass through the life course together

ageism prejudice and discrimination directed against people because of their age; can be directed against any age group, including youth

agent provocateur someone who joins a group in order to spy on it or to sabotage it

agents of socialization people or groups that affect our self-concept, attitudes, behaviors, or other orientations toward life

aggregate individuals who temporarily share the same physical space but who do not see themselves as belonging together

agricultural revolution the second social revolution, based on the invention of the plow, which led to agricultural societies

agricultural society a society based on large-scale agriculture

alienation Marx's term for workers' lack of connection to the product of their labor; caused by workers being assigned repetitive tasks on a small part of a product—this leads to a sense of powerlessness and normlessness; others use the term in the general sense of not feeling a part of something

alterative social movement a social movement that seeks to alter only some specific aspects of people or institutions

alternative medicine medical treatment other than that of standard Western medicine; often refers to practices that originate in Asia, but may also refer to taking vitamins not prescribed by a doctor

anarchy a condition of lawlessness or political disorder caused by the absence or collapse of governmental authority

animism the belief that all objects in the world have spirits, some of which are dangerous and must be outwitted

anomie Durkheim's term for a condition of society in which people become detached from the usual norms that guide their behavior

anti-Semitism prejudice, discrimination, or persecution directed against Jews

anticipatory socialization the process of learning in advance an anticipated future role or status

apartheid the separation of racial–ethnic groups as was practiced in South Africa

applied sociology the use of sociology to solve problems—from the micro level of classroom interaction and family relationships to the macro level of crime and pollution

ascribed status a position an individual either inherits at birth or receives involuntarily later in life

assimilation the process of being absorbed into the mainstream culture

authoritarian leader an individual who leads by giving orders

authoritarian personality Theodor Adorno's term for people who are prejudiced and rank high on scales of conformity, intolerance, insecurity, respect for authority, and submissiveness to superiors

authority power that people consider legitimate, as rightly exercised over them; also called *legitimate power*

back stages places where people rest from their performances, discuss their presentations, and plan future performances

background assumption a deeply embedded, common understanding of how the world operates and of how people ought to act

barter the direct exchange of one item for another

basic demographic equation the growth rate equals births minus deaths plus net migration

basic or pure sociology sociological research for the purpose of making discoveries about life in human groups, not for making changes in those groups

bilineal system (of descent) a system of reckoning descent that counts both the mother's and the father's side

biotech society a society whose economy increasingly centers on modified genetics to produce food, medicine, and materials

blended family a family whose members were once part of other families

body language the ways in which people use their bodies to give messages to others

bonded labor (indentured service) a contractual system in which someone sells his or her body (services) for a specified period of time in an arrangement very close to slavery, except that it is entered into voluntarily

born again a term describing Christians who have undergone a religious experience so life-transforming that they feel they have become new persons

bourgeoisie Marx's term for capitalists, those who own the means of production

bureaucracy a formal organization with a hierarchy of authority and a clear division of labor; emphasis on impersonality of positions and written rules, communications, and records

capital punishment the death penalty

capitalism an economic system built around the private ownership of the means of production, the pursuit of profit, and market competition

cargo cult a social movement in which South Pacific islanders destroyed their possessions in the anticipation that their ancestors would ship them new goods

case study an intensive analysis of a single event, situation, or individual

caste system a form of social stratification in which people's statuses are lifelong and are determined by birth

category people, objects, and events that have similar characteristics and are classified together

centrist party a political party that represents the center of political opinion

charisma literally, an extraordinary gift from God; more commonly, an outstanding, "magnetic" personality

charismatic authority authority based on an individual's outstanding traits, which attract followers

charismatic leader literally, someone to whom God has given a gift; in its extended sense, someone who exerts extraordinary appeal to a group of followers

checks and balances the separation of powers among the three branches of U.S. government—legislative, executive, and judicial—so that each is able to nullify the actions of the other two, thus preventing any single branch from dominating the government

church according to Durkheim, one of the three essential elements of religion—a moral community of believers; also refers to a large, highly organized religious group that has formal, sedate worship services with little emphasis on evangelism, intense religious experience, or personal conversion

circular reaction Robert Park's term for a back-and-forth communication among the members of a crowd whereby a "collective impulse" is transmitted

citizenship the concept that birth (and residence or naturalization) in a country imparts basic rights

city a place in which a large number of people are permanently based and do not produce their own food

city-state an independent city whose power radiates outward, bringing the adjacent area under its rule

civil religion Robert Bellah's term for religion that is such an established feature of a country's life that its history and social institutions become sanctified by being associated with God

class conflict Marx's term for the struggle between capitalists and workers

class consciousness Marx's term for awareness of a common identity based on one's position in the means of production

class system a form of social stratification based primarily on the possession of money or material possessions

clique a cluster of people within a larger group who choose to interact with one another

closed-ended questions questions that are followed by a list of possible answers to be selected by the respondent

coalition the alignment of some members of a group against others

coalition government a government in which a country's largest party does not have enough votes to rule, and to do so aligns itself with one or more smaller parties

coercion power that people do not accept as rightly exercised over them; also called *illegitimate power*

cohabitation unmarried couples living together in a sexual relationship

collective behavior extraordinary activities carried out by groups of people; includes lynchings, rumors, panics, urban legends, fads, and fashions

collective mind Gustave LeBon's term for the tendency of people in a crowd to feel, think, and act in extraordinary ways

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colonialism the process by which one nation takes over another nation, usually for the purpose of exploiting its labor and natural resources

common sense those things that "everyone knows" are true

compartmentalize to separate acts from feelings or attitudes

conflict theory a theoretical framework in which society is viewed as composed of groups that are competing for scarce resources

conspicuous consumption Thorstein Veblen's term for a change from the thrift, savings, and investments of the Protestant ethic to showing off wealth through spending and the display of possessions

continuity theory a theory focusing on how people adjust to retirement by continuing aspects of their earlier lives

contradictory class locations Erik Wright's term for a position in the class structure that generates contradictory interests

control group the subjects in an experiment who are not exposed to the independent variable

control theory the idea that two control systems—inner controls and outer controls—work against our tendencies to deviate

convergence theory the view that as capitalist and socialist economic systems each adopt features of the other, a hybrid (or mixed) economic system will emerge

core values the values that are central to a group, those around which it builds a common identity

corporate capitalism the domination of an economic system by giant corporations

corporate crime crimes committed by executives in order to benefit their corporation

corporate welfare the financial incentives (tax breaks, subsidies, and even land and stadiums) given to corporations in order to attract them to an area or induce them to remain

corporation a business enterprise whose assets, liabilities, and obligations are separate from those of its owners; as a legal entity, it can enter into contracts, assume debt, and sue and be sued

correspondence principle the sociological principle that schools correspond to (or reflect) the social structure of their society

cosmology teachings or ideas that provide a unified picture of the world

counterculture a group whose values, beliefs, norms, and related behaviors place its members in opposition to the broader culture

credential society the use of diplomas and degrees to determine who is eligible for jobs, even though the diploma or degree may be irrelevant to the actual work

credit card a device that allows its owner to purchase goods and to be billed later

crime the violation of norms written into law

criminal justice system the system of police, courts, and prisons set up to deal with people who are accused of having committed a crime

crude birth rate the annual number of live births per 1,000 people

crude death rate the annual number of deaths per 1,000 people

cult a new religion with few followers, whose teachings and practices put it at odds with the dominant culture and religion

cultural diffusion the spread of cultural traits from one group to another; includes both material and nonmaterial cultural traits

cultural goals the objectives held out as legitimate or desirable for the members of a society to achieve

cultural lag Ogburn's term for human behavior lagging behind technological innovations

cultural leveling the process by which cultures become similar to one another; refers especially to the process by which Western culture is being exported and diffused into other nations

cultural relativism not judging a culture but trying to understand it on its own terms

cultural transmission of values the process of transmitting values from one group to another; often refers to how cultural traits are transmitted across generations; in education, the ways in which schools transmit a society's culture, especially its core values

cultural universal a value, norm, or other cultural trait that is found in every group

culture the language, beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and even material objects that characterize a group and are passed from one generation to the next

culture of poverty the assumption that the values and behaviors of the poor make them fundamentally different from other people, that these factors are largely responsible for their poverty, and that parents perpetuate poverty across generations by passing these characteristics to their children

culture shock the disorientation that people experience when they come in contact with a fundamentally different culture and can no longer depend on their taken-for-granted assumptions about life

currency paper money

debit card a device that electronically withdraws the cost of an item from the cardholder's bank account

defensive medicine medical practices done not for the patient's benefit but in order to protect physicians from malpractice suits

deferred gratification forgoing something in the present in the hope of achieving greater gains in the future

degradation ceremony a term coined by Harold Garfinkel to refer to a ritual whose goal is to remake someone's self by stripping away that individual's self-identity and stamping a new identity in its place

dehumanization the act or process of reducing people to objects that do not deserve the treatment accorded humans

deindustrialization the process of industries moving out of a country or region

democracy a government whose authority comes from the people; the term, based on two Greek words, translates literally as "power to the people"

democratic leader an individual who leads by trying to reach a consensus

democratic socialism a hybrid economic system in which the individual ownership of businesses is mixed with the state ownership of industries thought essential to the public welfare, such as the postal service, natural resources, the medical delivery system, and mass transportation

demographic transition a three-stage historical process of change in the size of populations: first, high birth rates and high death rates; second, high birth rates and low death rates; and third, low birth rates and low death rates; a fourth stage of *population shrinkage* in which deaths outnumber births

has made its appearance in the Most Industrialized Nations

demographic variables the three factors that change the size of a population: fertility, mortality, and net migration

demography the study of the size, composition, growth or shrinkage, and distribution of human populations

denomination a "brand name" within a major religion; for example, Methodist or Baptist

dependency ratio the number of workers who are required to support each dependent person—those 65 and older and those 15 and under

dependent variable a factor in an experiment that is changed by an independent variable

depersonalization dealing with people as though they were objects; in the case of medical care, as though patients were merely cases and diseases, not people

deposit receipt a receipt stating that a certain amount of goods is on deposit in a warehouse or bank; the receipt is used as a form of money

deviance the violation of norms (or rules or expectations)

dialectical process (of history) each arrangement of power (a *thesis*) contains contradictions (*antitheses*) which make the arrangement unstable and which must be resolved; the new arrangement of power (a *synthesis*) contains its own contradictions; this process of balancing and unbalancing continues throughout history as groups struggle for power and other resources

dictatorship a form of government in which an individual has seized power

differential association Edwin Sutherland's term to indicate that people who associate with some groups learn an "excess of definitions" of deviance, increasing the likelihood that they will become deviant

diffusion the spread of an invention or a discovery from one area to another; identified by William Ogburn as one of three processes of social change

direct democracy a form of democracy in which the eligible voters meet together to discuss issues and make their decisions

disabling environment an environment that is harmful to health

discovery a new way of seeing reality; identified by William Ogburn as one of three processes of social change

discrimination an act of unfair treatment directed against an individual or a group

disengagement theory the view that society is stabilized by having the elderly retire (disengage from) their positions of responsibility so the younger generation can step into their shoes

disinvestment the withdrawal of investments by financial institutions, which seals the fate of an urban area

divine right of kings the idea that the king's authority comes from God; in an interesting gender bender, also applies to queens

division of labor the splitting of a group's or a society's tasks into specialties

documents in its narrow sense, written sources that provide data; in its extended sense, archival material of any sort, including photographs, movies, CDs, DVDs, and so on

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domestication revolution the first social revolution, based on the domestication of plants and animals, which led to pastoral and horticultural societies

dominant group the group with the most power, greatest privileges, and highest social status

downward social mobility movement down the social class ladder

dramaturgy an approach, pioneered by Erving Goffman, in which social life is analyzed in terms of drama or the stage; also called *dramaturgical analysis*

dumping the practice of sending unprofitable patients to public hospitals

dyad the smallest possible group, consisting of two persons

e-cash digital money that is stored on computers

ecclesia a religious group so integrated into the dominant culture that it is difficult to tell where the one begins and the other leaves off; also called a *state religion*

economy a system of producing and distributing goods and services

ecosabotage actions taken to sabotage the efforts of people who are thought to be legally harming the environment

edge city a large clustering of service facilities and residential areas near highway intersections that provides a sense of place to people who live, shop, and work there

education a formal system of teaching knowledge, values, and skills

egalitarian authority more or less equally divided between individuals or groups (in heterosexual marriage, for example, between husband and wife)

ego Freud's term for a balancing force between the id and the demands of society

emergent norms Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian's term for the idea that people develop new norms to cope with a new situation; used to explain crowd behavior

endogamy the practice of marrying within one's own group

enterprise zone the use of economic incentives in a designated area to encourage investment

environmental injustice refers to how minorities and the poor are harmed the most by environmental pollution

environmental sociology a specialty within sociology whose focus is how humans affect the environment and how the environment affects humans

epidemiology the study of patterns of disease and disability in a population

estate stratification system the stratification system of medieval Europe, consisting of three groups or estates: the nobility, clergy, and commoners

ethnic cleansing a policy of eliminating a population; includes forcible expulsion and genocide

ethnic work activities designed to discover, enhance, or maintain ethnic or racial identity

ethnicity (and ethnic) having distinctive cultural characteristics

ethnocentrism the use of one's own culture as a yardstick for judging the ways of other individuals or groups, generally leading to a negative evaluation of their values, norms, and behaviors

ethnomethodology the study of how people use background assumptions to make sense out of life

euthanasia mercy killing

evangelism an attempt to win converts

exchange mobility about the same number of people moving up and down the social class ladder, such that, on balance, the social class system shows little change

exogamy the practice of marrying outside of one's group

experiment the use of control and experimental groups and dependent and independent variables to test causation

experimental group the group of subjects in an experiment who are exposed to the independent variable

exponential growth curve a pattern of growth in which numbers double during approximately equal intervals, showing a steep acceleration in the later stages

expressive leader an individual who increases harmony and minimizes conflict in a group; also known as a *socioemotional leader*

face-saving behavior techniques used to salvage a performance (interaction) that is going sour

fad a temporary pattern of behavior that catches people's attention

false class consciousness Marx's term to refer to workers identifying with the interests of capitalists

family two or more people who consider themselves related by blood, marriage, or adoption

family of orientation the family in which a person grows up

family of procreation the family formed when a couple's first child is born

fashion a pattern of behavior that catches people's attention and lasts longer than a fad

fecundity the number of children that women are capable of bearing

fee-for-service payment to a physician to diagnose and treat a patient's medical problems

feminism the philosophy that men and women should be politically, economically, and socially equal; organized activities on behalf of this principle

feminization of poverty a condition of U.S. poverty in which most poor families are headed by women

feral children children assumed to have been raised by animals, in the wilderness, isolated from humans

fertility rate the number of children that the average woman bears

fiat money currency issued by a government that is not backed by stored value

folkways norms that are not strictly enforced

formal organization a secondary group designed to achieve explicit objectives

front stage places where people give performances

functional analysis a theoretical framework in which society is viewed as composed of various parts, each with a function that, when fulfilled, contributes to society's equilibrium; also known as *functionalism* and *structural functionalism*

functional equivalent a substitute that serves the same functions (or meets the same needs) as something else; referring to religion, an example is psychotherapy

functional illiterate a high school graduate who has difficulty with basic reading and math

gatekeeping the process by which education opens and closes doors of opportunity; another term for the *social placement* function of education

Gemeinschaft a type of society in which life is intimate; a community in which everyone knows everyone else and people share a sense of togetherness

gender the behaviors and attitudes that a society considers proper for its males and females; masculinity or femininity

gender age the relative value placed on men's and women's ages

gender map the paths in life set out for us because we are male or female

gender socialization learning society's "gender map," the paths in life set out for us because we are male or female

gender stratification males' and females' unequal access to property, power, and prestige

generalizability the extent to which the findings from one group (or sample) can be generalized or applied to other groups (or populations)

generalization a statement that goes beyond the individual case and is applied to a broader group or situation

generalized other the norms, values, attitudes, and expectations of people "in general"; the child's ability to take the role of the generalized other is a significant step in the development of a self

genetic predisposition inborn tendencies (for example, a tendency to commit deviant acts)

genocide the systematic annihilation or attempted annihilation of a people because of their presumed race or ethnicity

gentrification middle-class people moving into a rundown area of a city, displacing the poor as they buy and restore homes

Gesellschaft a type of society that is dominated by impersonal relationships, individual accomplishments, and self-interest

gestures the ways in which people use their bodies to communicate with one another

glass ceiling the mostly invisible barrier that keeps women from advancing to the top levels at work

global superclass the top members of the capitalist class, who, through their worldwide interconnections, make the major decisions that affect the world

global warming an increase in the earth's temperature due to the greenhouse effect

globalization the growing interconnections among nations due to the expansion of capitalism

globalization of capitalism capitalism (investing to make profits within a rational system) becoming the globe's dominant economic system

goal displacement an organization replacing old goals with new ones; also known as *goal replacement*

gold standard paper money backed by gold

grade inflation higher grades given for the same work; a general rise in student grades without a corresponding increase in learning

graying of America the growing percentage of older people in the U.S. population

gross domestic product (GDP) the amount of goods and services produced by a nation

group people who have something in common and who believe that what they have in common is significant; also called a *social group*

Glossary

group dynamics   the ways in which individuals affect groups and the ways in which groups influence individuals

groupthink   a narrowing of thought by a group of people, leading to the perception that there is only one correct answer and that to even suggest alternatives is a sign of disloyalty

growth rate   the net change in a population after adding births, subtracting deaths, and either adding or subtracting net migration; can result in a negative number

hate crime   a crime that is punished more severely because it is motivated by hatred (dislike, hostility, animosity) of someone's race–ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin

health   a human condition measured by four components: physical, mental, social, and spiritual

hidden corporate culture   stereotypes of the traits that make for high-performing and under-performing workers

hidden curriculum   the unwritten goals of schools, such as teaching obedience to authority and conformity to cultural norms

homogamy   the tendency of people with similar characteristics to marry one another

Horatio Alger myth   the belief that due to limitless possibilities anyone can get ahead if he or she tries hard enough

horticultural society   a society based on cultivating plants by the use of hand tools

hospice   a place (or services brought to someone's home) for the purpose of giving comfort and dignity to a dying person

household   people who occupy the same housing unit

human ecology   Robert Park's term for the relationship between people and their environment (such as land and structures); also known as *urban ecology*

humanizing a work setting   organizing a workplace in such a way that it develops rather than impedes human potential

hunting and gathering society   a human group that depends on hunting and gathering for its survival

hypothesis   a statement of how variables are expected to be related to one another, often according to predictions from a theory

id   Freud's term for our inborn basic drives

ideal culture   a people's ideal values and norms; the goals held out for them

ideology   beliefs about the way things ought to be that justify social arrangements

illegitimate opportunity structure   opportunities for crimes that are woven into the texture of life

impression management   people's efforts to control the impressions that others receive of them

in-groups   groups toward which one feels loyalty

incest   sexual relations between specified relatives, such as brothers and sisters or parents and children

incest taboo   the rule that prohibits sex and marriage among designated relatives

inclusion   helping people to become part of the mainstream of society; also called *mainstreaming*

income   money received, usually from a job, business, or assets

independent variable   a factor that causes a change in another variable, called the *dependent variable*

individual discrimination   person-to-person or face-to-face discrimination; the negative treatment of people by others

Industrial Revolution   the third social revolution, occurring when machines powered by fuels replaced most animal and human power

industrial society   a society based on the harnessing of machines powered by fuels

inflation   an increase in prices

institutional discrimination   negative treatment of a minority group that is built into a society's institutions; also called *systemic discrimination*

institutionalized means   approved ways of reaching cultural goals

instrumental leader   an individual who tries to keep the group moving toward its goals; also known as a *task-oriented leader*

intergenerational mobility   the change that family members make in social class from one generation to the next

interlocking directorates   the same people serving on the boards of directors of several companies

internal colonialism   the policy of exploiting minority groups for economic gain

interview   direct questioning of respondents

interviewer bias   effects of interviewers on respondents that lead to biased answers

invasion–succession cycle   the process of one group of people displacing a group whose racial–ethnic or social class characteristics differ from their own

invention   the combination of existing elements and materials to form new ones; identified by William Ogburn as one of three processes of social change

iron law of oligarchy   Robert Michels' term for the tendency of formal organizations to be dominated by a small, self-perpetuating elite

labeling theory   the view that the labels people are given affect their own and others' perceptions of them, thus channeling their behavior into either deviance or conformity

laissez-faire capitalism   literally "hands off" capitalism, meaning that the government doesn't interfere in the market

laissez-faire leader   an individual who leads by being highly permissive

language   a system of symbols that can be combined in an infinite number of ways and can represent not only objects but also abstract thought

latent functions   unintended beneficial consequences of people's actions

leader   someone who influences other people

leadership styles   ways in which people express their leadership

life course   the stages of our life as we go from birth to death

life expectancy   the number of years that an average person at any age, including newborns, can expect to live

life span   the maximum length of life of a species; for humans, the longest that a human has lived

lobbyists   people who influence legislation on behalf of their clients

looking-glass self   a term coined by Charles Horton Cooley to refer to the process by which our self develops through internalizing others' reactions to us

machismo   an emphasis on male strength and dominance

macro-level analysis   an examination of large-scale patterns of society

macropolitics   the exercise of large-scale power, the government being the most common example

macrosociology   analysis of social life that focuses on broad features of society, such as social class and the relationships of groups to one another; usually used by functionalists and conflict theorists

Malthus theorem   an observation by Thomas Malthus that although the food supply increases arithmetically (from 1 to 2 to 3 to 4 and so on), population grows geometrically (from 2 to 4 to 8 to 16 and so forth)

mandatory education laws   laws that require all children to attend school until a specified age or until they complete a minimum grade in school

manifest functions   the intended beneficial consequences of people's actions

market forces   the law of supply and demand

marriage   a group's approved mating arrangements, usually marked by a ritual of some sort

mass hysteria   an imagined threat that causes physical symptoms among a large number of people

mass media   forms of communication, such as radio, newspapers, and television that are directed to mass audiences

master status   a status that cuts across the other statuses that an individual occupies

material culture   the material objects that distinguish a group of people, such as their art, buildings, weapons, utensils, machines, hairstyles, clothing, and jewelry

matriarchy   a society in which women-as-a-group dominate men-as-a-group; authority is vested in females

matrilineal system   (of descent) a system of reckoning descent that counts only the mother's side

McDonaldization of society   the process by which ordinary aspects of life are rationalized and efficiency comes to rule them, including such things as food preparation

means of production   the tools, factories, land, and investment capital used to produce wealth

mechanical solidarity   Durkheim's term for the unity (a shared consciousness) that people feel as a result of performing the same or similar tasks

medicalization   the transformation of a human condition into a matter to be treated by physicians

medicalization of deviance   to make deviance a medical matter, a symptom of some underlying illness that needs to be treated by physicians

medicine   one of the social institutions that sociologists study; a society's organized ways of dealing with sickness and injury

medium of exchange   the means by which people place a value on goods and services in order to make an exchange—for example, currency, gold, and silver

megacity   a city of 10 million or more residents

megalopolis   an urban area consisting of at least two metropolises and their many suburbs

meritocracy   a form of social stratification in which all positions are awarded on the basis of merit

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metaformative social movement a social movement that has the goal to change the social order not just of a country or two, but of a civilization, or even of the entire world

metropolis a central city surrounded by smaller cities and their suburbs

metropolitan statistical area (MSA) a central city and the urbanized counties adjacent to it

micro-level analysis an examination of small-scale patterns of society; such as how the members of a group interact

micropolitics the exercise of power in everyday life, such as deciding who is going to do the housework or use the remote control

microsociology analysis of social life that focuses on social interaction; typically used by symbolic interactionists

millenarian social movement a social movement based on the prophecy of coming social upheaval

milling a crowd standing or walking around as they talk excitedly about some event

minimax strategy Richard Berk's term for the efforts people make to minimize their costs and maximize their rewards

minority group people who are singled out for unequal treatment and who regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination

modernization the transformation of traditional societies into industrial societies

monarchy a form of government headed by a king or queen

money any item (from sea shells to gold) that serves as a medium of exchange

monopoly the control of an entire industry by a single company

monotheism the belief that there is only one God

moral panic a fear gripping a large number of people that some evil threatens the well-being of society; followed by hostility, sometimes violence, toward those thought responsible

mores norms that are strictly enforced because they are thought essential to core values or the well-being of the group

multiculturalism a policy that permits or encourages ethnic differences; also called *pluralism*

multinational corporations companies that operate across national boundaries; also called *transnational corporations*

nationalism strongly identifying with one's people accompanied by desiring that nation to be dominant

natural sciences the intellectual and academic disciplines designed to comprehend, explain, and predict events in our natural environments

negative sanction an expression of disapproval for breaking a norm, ranging from a mild, informal reaction such as a frown to a formal reaction such as a prize or a prison sentence

neocolonialism the economic and political dominance of the Most Industrialized Nations over the Least Industrialized Nations

net migration rate the difference between the number of immigrants and emigrants per 1,000 population

new technology the emerging technologies of an era that have a significant impact on social life

noncentrist party a political party that represents less popular ideas

nonmaterial culture a group's ways of thinking (including its beliefs, values, and other assumptions about the world) and doing (its common patterns of behavior, including language and other forms of interaction); also called *symbolic culture*

nonverbal interaction communication without words through gestures, use of space, silence, and so on

norms expectations of "right" behavior

nuclear family a family consisting of a husband, wife, and child(ren)

objectivity value neutrality in research

oligarchy a form of government in which a small group of individuals holds power; the rule of the many by the few

open-ended questions questions that respondents answer in their own words

operational definition the way in which a researcher measures a variable

organic solidarity Durkheim's term for the interdependence that results from the division of labor; as part of the same unit, we all depend on others to fulfill their jobs

out-groups groups toward which one feels antagonism

pan-Indianism an attempt to develop an identity that goes beyond the tribe by emphasizing the common elements that run through Native American cultures

panic the condition of being so fearful that one cannot function normally and may even flee

participant observation or fieldwork research in which the researcher participates in a research setting while observing what is happening in that setting

pastoral society a society based on the pasturing of animals

patriarchy a group in which men-as-a-group dominate women-as-a-group; authority is vested in males

patrilineal system (of descent) a system of reckoning descent that counts only the father's side

peer group a group of individuals, often of roughly the same age, who are linked by common interests and orientations

personality disorders the view that a personality disturbance of some sort causes an individual to violate social norms

Peter principle a tongue-in-cheek observation that the members of an organization are promoted for their accomplishments until they reach their level of incompetence; there they cease to be promoted, remaining at the level at which they can no longer do good work

pluralism the diffusion of power among many interest groups that prevents any single group from gaining control of the government

pluralistic society a society made up of many different groups

police discretion the practice of the police, in the normal course of their duties, to either arrest or ticket someone for an offense or to overlook the matter

political action committee (PAC) an organization formed by one or more special-interest groups to solicit and spend funds for the purpose of influencing legislation

politics the exercise of power and attempts to maintain or to change power relations

polyandry a form of marriage in which women have more than one husband

polygyny a form of marriage in which men have more than one wife

polytheism the belief that there are many gods

population people; in research, a target group to be studied

population pyramid a graph that represents the age and sex of a population (see Figure 20.7)

population shrinkage the process by which a country's population becomes smaller because its birth rate and immigration are too low to replace those who die and emigrate

population transfer the forced movement of a minority group

positive sanction a reward or positive reaction for following norms, ranging from a smile to a material reward

positivism the application of the scientific approach to the social world

postindustrial (information) society a society based on information, services, and high technology, rather than on raw materials and manufacturing

postmodern society another term for postindustrial society; a chief characteristic is the use of tools that extend human abilities to gather and analyze information, to communicate, and to travel

poverty line the official measure of poverty; calculated to include incomes that are less than three times a low-cost food budget

power the ability to carry out one's will, even over the resistance of others

power elite C. Wright Mills' term for the top people in U.S. corporations, military, and politics who make the nation's major decisions

prejudice an attitude or prejudging, usually in a negative way

prestige respect or regard

primary group a small group characterized by intimate, long-term, face-to-face association and cooperation

proactive social movement a social movement that promotes some social change

profane Durkheim's term for common elements of everyday life

professionalization of medicine the development of medicine into a specialty that requires physicians to (1) obtain a rigorous education, (2) regulate themselves and (3) take authority over clients while (4) claiming a theoretical understanding of illness and (5) presenting themselves as doing a service to society (rather than just following self-interest)

proletariat Marx's term for the exploited class, the mass of workers who do not own the means of production

propaganda in its broad sense, the presentation of information in an attempt to influence people; in its narrow sense, one-sided information used to try to influence people

property material possessions: animals, bank accounts, bonds, buildings, businesses, cars, cash, commodities, copyrights, furniture, jewelry, land, and stocks

proportional representation an electoral system in which seats in a legislature are divided according to the proportion of votes that each political party receives

Protestant ethic Weber's term to describe the ideal of a self-denying, highly moral life accompanied by thrift and hard work

Glossary

public   in the context of a social movement, a dispersed group of people relevant to a social movement; the sympathetic and hostile publics have an interest in the issues on which a social movement focuses; there is also an unaware or indifferent public

public opinion   how people think about some issue

public sociology   applying sociology for the public good; especially the use of the sociological perspective (how things are related to one another) to guide politicians and policy makers

questionnaires   a list of questions to be asked of respondents

quiet revolution   the fundamental changes in society that follow when vast numbers of women enter the workforce

race   a group whose inherited physical characteristics distinguish it from other groups

racism   prejudice and discrimination on the basis of race

random sample   a sample in which everyone in the target population has the same chance of being included in the study

rapport   (ruh-POUR) a feeling of trust between researchers and the people they are studying

rational–legal authority   authority based on law or written rules and regulations; also called *bureaucratic authority*

rationality   using rules, efficiency, and practical results to determine human affairs

rationalization of society   a widespread acceptance of rationality and social organizations that are built largely around this idea

reactive social movement   a social movement that resists some social change

real culture   the norms and values that people actually follow; as opposed to *ideal culture*

recidivism rate   the percentage of released convicts who are rearrested

redemptive social movement   a social movement that seeks to change people and institutions totally, to redeem them

redlining   a decision by the officers of a financial institution not to make loans in a particular area

reference group   a group whose standards we refer to as we evaluate ourselves

reformative social movement   a social movement that seeks to reform some specific aspects of society

reincarnation   in Hinduism and Buddhism, the return of the soul (or self) after death in a different form

relative deprivation theory   in this context, the belief that people join social movements based on their evaluations of what they think they should have compared with what others have

reliability   the extent to which research produces consistent or dependable results

religion   according to Durkheim, beliefs and practices that separate the profane from the sacred and unite its adherents into a moral community

religious experience   a sudden awareness of the supernatural or a feeling of coming in contact with God

replication   the repetition of a study in order to test its findings

representative democracy   a form of democracy in which voters elect representatives to meet together to discuss issues and make decisions on their behalf

research method (or research design)   one of seven procedures that sociologists use to collect data: surveys, participant observation, case studies, secondary analysis, analysis of documents, experiments, and unobtrusive measures

reserve labor force   the unemployed; unemployed workers are thought of as being "in reserve"—capitalists take them "out of reserve" (put them back to work) during times of high production and then put them "back in reserve" (lay them off) when they are no longer needed

resocialization   the process of learning new norms, values, attitudes, and behaviors

resource mobilization   a theory that social movements succeed or fail based on their ability to mobilize resources such as time, money, and people's skills

respondents   people who respond to a survey, either in interviews or by self-administered questionnaires

revolution   armed resistance designed to overthrow and replace a government

riot   violent crowd behavior directed at people or property

rising expectations   the sense that better conditions are soon to follow, which, if unfulfilled, increases frustration

rituals   ceremonies or repetitive practices; in religion, observances or rites often intended to evoke a sense of awe of the sacred

role   the behaviors, obligations, and privileges attached to a status

role conflict   conflicts that someone feels *between* statuses because the expectations attached to one status are incompatible with the expectations of another status

role extension   a role being stretched to include activities that were not originally part of that role

role performance   the ways in which someone performs a role; showing a particular "style" or "personality"

role strain   conflicts that someone feels within a status

romantic love   feelings of erotic attraction accompanied by an idealization of the other

routinization of charisma   the transfer of authority from a charismatic figure to either a traditional or a rational–legal form of authority

ruling class   another term for the power elite

rumor   unfounded information spread among people

sacred   Durkheim's term for things set apart or forbidden that inspire fear, awe, reverence, or deep respect

sample   the individuals intended to represent the population to be studied

sanctions   either expressions of approval given to people for upholding norms or expressions of disapproval for violating them

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis   Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf's hypothesis that language creates ways of thinking and perceiving

scapegoat   an individual or group unfairly blamed for someone else's troubles

science   the application of systematic methods to obtain knowledge and the knowledge obtained by those methods

scientific method   the use of objective, systematic observations to test theories

secondary analysis   the analysis of data that have been collected by other researchers

secondary group   compared with a primary group, a larger, relatively temporary, more anonymous, formal, and impersonal group based on some interest or activity

sect   a religious group larger than a cult that still feels substantial hostility from and toward society

secular   belonging to the world and its affairs

secularization of culture   the process by which a culture becomes less influenced by religion

secularization of religion   the replacement of a religion's spiritual or "other worldly" concerns with concerns about "this world"

segregation   the policy of keeping racial–ethnic groups apart

selective perception   seeing certain features of an object or situation, but remaining blind to others

self   the unique human capacity of being able to see ourselves "from the outside"; the views we internalize of how others see us

self-administered questionnaires   questionnaires that respondents fill out

self-fulfilling prophecy   Robert Merton's term for an originally false assertion that becomes true simply because it was predicted

self-fulfilling stereotype   preconceived ideas of what someone is like that lead to the person's behaving in ways that match the stereotype

serial murder   the killing of several victims in three or more separate events

sex   biological characteristics that distinguish females and males, consisting of primary and secondary sex characteristics

sexual harassment   the abuse of one's position of authority to force unwanted sexual demands on someone

shaman   the healing specialist of a tribe who attempts to control the spirits thought to cause a disease or injury; commonly called a witch doctor

sign-vehicle   the term used by Goffman to refer to how people use social setting, appearance, and manner to communicate information about the self

significant other   an individual who significantly influences someone else

slavery   a form of social stratification in which some people own other people

small group   a group small enough for everyone to interact directly with all the other members

social capital   privileges accompanying a social location that help someone in life; included are more highly educated parents, from grade school through high school being pushed to bring home high grades, and enjoying cultural experiences that translate into higher test scores, better jobs, and higher earnings

social change   the alteration of culture and societies over time

social class   according to Weber, a large group of people who rank close to one another in property, power, and prestige; according to Marx, one of two groups: capitalists who own the means of production or workers who sell their labor

social construction of reality   the use of background assumptions and life experiences to define what is real

social control   a group's formal and informal means of enforcing its norms

Glossary

social environment   the entire human environment, including interaction with others

social facts   Durkheim's term for a group's patterns of behavior

social institution   the organized, usual, or standard ways by which society meets its basic needs

social integration   the degree to which members of a group or a society feel united by shared values and other social bonds; also known as *social cohesion*

social interaction   one person's actions influencing someone else; usually refers to what people do when they are in one another's presence, but also includes communications at a distance

social location   the group memberships that people have because of their location in history and society

social mobility   movement up or down the social class ladder

social movement   a large group of people who are organized to promote or resist some social change

social movement organization   an organization to promote the goals of a social movement

social network   the social ties radiating outward from the self that link people together

social order   a group's usual and customary social arrangements, on which its members depend and on which they base their lives

social placement   a function of education—funneling people into a society's various positions

social promotion   passing students on to the next level even though they have not mastered basic materials

social sciences   the intellectual and academic disciplines designed to understand the social world objectively by means of controlled and repeated observations

social stratification   the division of large numbers of people into layers according to their relative property, power, and prestige; applies to both nations and to people within a nation, society, or other group

social structure   the framework of society that surrounds us; consists of the ways that people and groups are related to one another; this framework gives direction to and sets limits on our behavior

socialism   an economic system built around the public ownership of the means of production, central planning, and the distribution of goods without a profit motive

society   people who share a culture and a territory

sociobiology   a framework of thought that views human behavior as the result of natural selection and considers biological factors to be a fundamental cause of human behavior

sociological perspective   understanding human behavior by placing it within its broader social contexts

sociology   the scientific study of society and human behavior

special-interest group   a group of people who support a particular issue and who can be mobilized for political action

spirit of capitalism   Weber's term for the desire to accumulate capital—not to spend it, but as an end in itself—and to constantly reinvest it

split labor market   workers split along racial–ethnic, gender, age, or any other lines; this split is exploited by owners to weaken the bargaining power of workers

state   a political entity that claims monopoly on the use of violence in some particular territory; commonly known as a country

state religion   a government-sponsored religion; also called *ecclesia*

status consistency   ranking high or low on all three dimensions of social class

status inconsistency   ranking high on some dimensions of social class and low on others; also called *status discrepancy*

status   the position that someone occupies in a social group

status set   all the statuses or positions that an individual occupies

stereotype   assumptions of what people are like, whether true or false

stigma   "blemishes" that discredit a person's claim to a "normal" identity

stockholders' revolt   refusal by stockholders at their annual meetings to approve management's recommendations

stored value   the goods that are stored and held in reserve that back up (or provide the value for) a deposit receipt or a currency

strain theory   Robert Merton's term for the strain engendered when a society socializes large numbers of people to desire a cultural goal (such as success), but withholds from some the approved means of reaching that goal; one adaptation to the strain is crime, the choice of an innovative means (one outside the approved system) to attain the cultural goal

stratified random sample   a sample from selected subgroups of the target population in which everyone in those subgroups has an equal chance of being included in the research

street crime   crimes such as mugging, rape, and burglary

structural mobility   movement up or down the social class ladder that is due more to changes in the structure of society than to the actions of individuals

structured interviews   interviews that use closed-ended questions

subculture   the values and related behaviors of a group that distinguish its members from the larger culture; a world within a world

subjective meanings   the meanings that people give their own behavior

subsistence economy   a type of economy in which human groups live off the land and have little or no surplus

suburb   a community adjacent to a city

suburbanization   the migration of people from the city to the suburbs

superego   Freud's term for the conscience; the internalized norms and values of our social groups

survey   the collection of data by having people answer a series of questions

sustainable environment   a world system that takes into account the limits of the environment, produces enough material goods for everyone's needs, and leaves a heritage of a sound environment for the next generation

symbol   something to which people attach meaning and then use to communicate with others

symbolic culture   another term for nonmaterial culture

symbolic interactionism   a theoretical perspective in which society is viewed as composed of symbols that people use to establish meaning, develop their views of the world, and communicate with one another

system of descent   how kinship is traced over the generations

taboo   a norm so strong that it often brings revulsion if violated

taking the role of the other   putting yourself in someone else's shoes; understanding how someone else feels and thinks, so you anticipate how that person will act

teamwork   the collaboration of two or more people to manage impressions jointly

techniques of neutralization   ways of thinking or rationalizing that help people deflect (or neutralize) society's norms

technology   in its narrow sense, tools; its broader sense includes the skills or procedures necessary to make and use those tools

terrorism   the use of violence or the threat of violence to produce fear in order to attain political objectives

theory   a general statement about how some parts of the world fit together and how they work; an explanation of how two or more facts are related to one another

Thomas theorem   William I. and Dorothy S. Thomas' classic formulation of the definition of the situation: "If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences"

total institution   a place that is almost totally controlled by those who run it, in which people are cut off from the rest of society and the society is mostly cut off from them

totalitarianism   a form of government that exerts almost total control over people

tracking   in education, the sorting of students into different programs on the basis of real or perceived abilities

traditional authority   authority based on custom

traditional society   a society in which the past is thought to be the best guide for the present; tribal, peasant, and feudal societies

transformative social movement   a social movement that seeks to change society totally, to transform it

transitional adulthood   a term that refers to a period following high school when young adults have not yet taken on the responsibilities ordinarily associated with adulthood; also called *adultolescence*

transitional older years   an emerging stage of the life course between retirement and when people are considered old; approximately age 65 to 75

transnational social movements   social movements whose emphasis is on some condition around the world, instead of on a condition in a specific country; also known as *new social movements*

triad   a group of three people

two-tier system of medical care   a system of medical care in which the wealthy receive superior medical care and the poor inferior medical care

underclass   a group of people for whom poverty persists year after year and across generations

underground economy   exchanges of goods and services that escape taxes because they are not reported to the government

Glossary

universal citizenship the idea that everyone has the same basic rights by virtue of being born in a country (or by immigrating and becoming a naturalized citizen)

unobtrusive measures ways of observing people so they do not know they are being studied

unstructured interviews interviews that use open-ended questions

upward social mobility movement up the social class ladder

urban legend a story with an ironic twist that sounds realistic but is false

urban renewal the rehabilitation of a rundown area, which usually results in the displacement of the poor who are living in that area

urbanization the process by which an increasing proportion of a population lives in cities and has a growing influence on the culture

validity the extent to which an operational definition measures what it is intended to measure

value cluster values that together form a larger whole

value contradiction values that contradict one another; to follow the one means to come into conflict with the other

value free the view that a sociologist's personal values or beliefs should not influence social research

values the standards by which people define what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad, beautiful or ugly

variable a factor thought to be significant for human behavior, which can vary (or change) from one case to another

Verstehen a German word used by Weber that is perhaps best understood as "to have insight into someone's situation"

voluntary associations groups made up of people who voluntarily organize on the basis of some mutual interest; also known as *voluntary memberships* and *voluntary organizations*

voter apathy indifference and inaction on the part of individuals or groups with respect to the political process

war armed conflict between nations or politically distinct groups

WASP white anglo saxon protestant

wealth the total value of everything someone owns, minus the debts

white ethnics white immigrants to the United States whose cultures differ from WASP culture

white-collar crime Edwin Sutherland's term for crimes committed by people of respectable and high social status in the course of their occupations; for example, bribery of public officials, securities violations, embezzlement, false advertising, and price fixing

world system theory how economic and political connections developed and now tie the world's countries together

zero population growth women bearing only enough children to reproduce the population

The Sociological Perspective

The Sociological Perspective

Even from the glow of the faded red-and-white exit sign, its faint light barely illuminating the upper bunk, I could see that the sheet was filthy. Resigned to another night of fitful sleep, I reluctantly crawled into bed.

I kept my clothes on.

The next morning, I joined the long line of disheveled men leaning against the chain-link fence. Their faces were as downcast as their clothes were dirty. Not a glimmer of hope among them.

No one spoke as the line slowly inched forward.

When my turn came, I was handed a cup of coffee, a white plastic spoon, and a bowl of semiliquid that I couldn't identify. It didn't look like any food I had seen before. Nor did it taste like anything I had ever eaten.

My stomach fought the foul taste, every spoonful a battle. But I was determined. "I will experience what they experience," I kept telling myself. My stomach reluctantly gave in and accepted its morning nourishment.

> I was determined. "I will experience what they experience," I kept telling myself.

The room was strangely silent. Hundreds of men were eating, each one immersed in his own private hell, his mind awash with disappointment, remorse, bitterness.

As I stared at the Styrofoam cup that held my coffee, grateful for at least this small pleasure, I noticed what looked like teeth marks. I shrugged off the thought, telling myself that my long weeks as a sociological observer of the homeless were finally getting to me. "It must be some sort of crease from handling," I concluded.

I joined the silent ranks of men turning in their bowls and cups. When I saw the man behind the counter swishing out Styrofoam cups in a washtub of murky water, I began to feel sick to my stomach. I knew then that the jagged marks on my cup really had come from another person's mouth.

How much longer did this research have to last? I felt a deep longing to return to my family—to a welcome world of clean sheets, healthy food, and "normal" conversations.

Australia

The Sociological Perspective

Why were these men so silent? Why did they receive such despicable treatment? What was I doing in that homeless shelter? After all, I hold a respectable, professional position, and I have a home and family.

You are in for an exciting and eye-opening experience. Sociology offers a fascinating view of social life. The *sociological perspective* (or imagination) opens a window onto unfamiliar worlds—and offers a fresh look at familiar ones. In this text, you will find yourself in the midst of Nazis in Germany and warriors in South America. Sociology is broad, and your journey will even take you to a group that lives in a city dump. You will also find yourself looking at your own world in a different light. As you view other worlds—or your own—the sociological perspective enables you to gain a new perception of social life. In fact, this is what many find appealing about sociology.

The sociological perspective has been a motivating force in my own life. Ever since I took my introductory course in sociology as a freshman in college, I have been enchanted by the perspective that sociology offers. I have enjoyed both observing other groups and questioning my own assumptions about life. I sincerely hope the same happens to you.

Seeing the Broader Social Context

The **sociological perspective** stresses the social contexts in which people live. It examines how these contexts influence people's lives. At the center of the sociological perspective is the question of how groups influence people, especially how people are influenced by their **society**—a group of people who share a culture and a territory.

To find out why people do what they do, sociologists look at **social location,** the corners in life that people occupy because of their place in a society. Sociologists look at how jobs, income, education, gender, race–ethnicity, and age affect people's ideas and behavior. Consider, for example, how being identified with a group called *females* or with a group called *males* when you were growing up has shaped *your* ideas of who you are. Growing up as a female or a male has influenced not only how you feel about yourself but also your ideas of what you should attain in life and how you relate to others.

Sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) put it this way: "The sociological imagination [perspective] enables us to grasp the connection between history and biography." By history, Mills meant that each society is located in a broad stream of events. This gives each society specific characteristics—such as its ideas about what roles are proper for men and women. By *biography,* Mills referred to our experiences within these historical settings, which give us our orientations to life. In short, people don't do what they do because they inherited some internal mechanism, such as instincts. Rather, *external* influences—our experiences—become part of our thinking and motivation. In short, the society in which we grow up, and our particular location in that society, lie at the center of what we do and how we think.

Consider a newborn baby. As you know, if we were to take the baby away from its U.S. parents and place it with the Yanomamö Indians in the jungles of South America, his or her first words would not be in English. You also know that the child would not think like an American. The child would not grow up wanting credit cards, for example, or designer clothes, a car, a cell phone, an iPod, and the latest video game. He or she would take his or her place in Yanomamö society—perhaps as a food gatherer, a hunter, or a warrior—and would not even know about the world left behind at birth. And, whether male or female, the child would grow up assuming that it is natural to want many children, not debating whether to have one, two, or three children.

People around the globe take their own views of the world for granted. Something inside us Americans tells us that hamburgers are delicious, small families desirable,

sociological perspective understanding human behavior by placing it within its broader social context

society people who share a culture and a territory

social location the group memberships that people have because of their location in history and society

Can you explain how history and biography are both essential elements of the *sociological perspective?*

and designer clothing attractive. Yet something inside some of the Sinai desert Arab tribes tells them that warm, fresh camel's blood makes a fine drink and that everyone should have a large family and wear flowing robes (Murray 1935; McCabe and Ellis 1990). That "something" certainly isn't an instinct. As sociologist Peter Berger (1963/2012) phrased it, that something is *society within us.*

Although obvious, this point frequently eludes us. We often think and talk about people as though their behavior were caused by their sex ("men are like that"), their race ("they are like that"), or some other factor transmitted by their genes. The sociological perspective helps us escape from this cramped, personal view by exposing the broader social context that underlies human behavior. It helps us see the links between what people do and the social settings that shape their behavior.

If you have been thinking along with me—and I hope you have—you should be thinking about how *your* social groups have shaped *your* ideas and desires. Over and over in this text, you will see that the way you look at the world is the result of your exposure to specific human groups. I think you will enjoy the process of self-discovery that sociology offers.

The Global Context—and the Local

As is evident to all of us—from the labels on our clothing that say Hong Kong, Brunei, or Macau, to the many other imported products that have become part of our daily lives—our world has become a global village. How life has changed! Our predecessors lived on isolated farms and in small towns. They grew their own food and made their own clothing, buying only sugar, coffee, and a few other items that they couldn't produce. Beyond the borders of their communities lay a world they perceived only dimly.

And how slow communications used to be! In December 1814, the United States and Great Britain signed a peace treaty to end the War of 1812. Yet two weeks *later* their armies fought a major battle at New Orleans. Neither the American nor the British forces there had heard that the war was over (Volti 1995).

Now we can pick up a telephone or use the Internet to communicate instantly with people anywhere on the planet. Yet we also continue to occupy our own little corners of life. Like those of our predecessors, our worlds, too, are marked by differences in family background, religion, job, gender, race–ethnicity, and social class. In these corners, we continue to learn distinctive ways of viewing the world.

One of the beautiful—and fascinating—aspects of sociology is that it enables us to analyze both parts of our current reality: that we are part of a global network *and* that we have unique experiences in our smaller corners of life. In this text, we shall examine both of these vital aspects of our lives.

Sociology and the Other Sciences

Just as humans today have an intense desire to unravel the mysteries around them, so did people in ancient times. Their explanations were not based on observations alone, however, but were also mixed with magic and superstition.

To satisfy their basic curiosity about the world, humans gradually developed **science,** systematic methods to study the social and natural worlds and the knowledge obtained by those methods. *Sociology*, the study of society and human behavior, is one of these sciences.

A useful way of comparing these sciences—and of gaining a better understanding of sociology's place—is to divide them into the natural and the social sciences.

The Natural Sciences

The **natural sciences** are the intellectual and academic disciplines that are designed to explain and predict the events in our natural environment. The natural sciences are divided into specialized fields of research according to subject matter, such as biology,

science the application of systematic methods to obtain knowledge and the knowledge obtained by those methods

natural sciences the intellectual and academic disciplines designed to comprehend, explain, and predict events in our natural environments

Try to apply the sociological perspective to your own life.

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geology, chemistry, and physics. These are further subdivided into even more highly specialized areas. Biology is divided into botany and zoology; geology into mineralogy and geomorphology; chemistry into its organic and inorganic branches; and physics into biophysics and quantum mechanics. Each area of investigation examines a particular "slice" of nature.

The Social Sciences

People have also developed the **social sciences,** which examine human relationships. Just as the natural sciences attempt to objectively understand the world of nature, the social sciences attempt to objectively understand the social world. Just as the world of nature contains ordered (or lawful) relationships that are not obvious but must be discovered through controlled observations, so the ordered relationships of the human or social world are not obvious and must be revealed by means of repeated observations.

Like the natural sciences, the social sciences are divided into specialized fields based on their subject matter. These divisions—anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology—are, like the natural sciences, subdivided further into specialized fields. Anthropology includes cultural and physical anthropology; economics has macro (large-scale) and micro (small-scale) specialties; political science has theoretical and applied branches; psychology may be clinical or experimental; and sociology has its quantitative and qualitative branches. Since our focus is sociology, let's contrast sociology with each of the other social sciences.

Anthropology. Anthropology, which traditionally focuses on tribal peoples, is closely related to sociology. The chief concern of anthropologists is to understand *culture,* a people's total way of life. Culture includes a group's (1) *artifacts,* such as its tools, art, and weapons; (2) *structure,* the patterns that determine how its members interact with one another (such as positions of leadership); (3) *ideas and values,* the ways the group's beliefs affect its members' lives; and (4) *forms of communication,* especially language.

Students working on their doctorates in anthropology used to spend a period of time living with a tribal group. In their reports, they emphasized the group's family (kin) relationships. As there are no "undiscovered" groups left in the world, this focus on tribal groups has given way to the study of groups in agricultural settings and, increasingly, in industrialized society. When they study the same groups that sociologists do, anthropologists place more emphasis on artifacts, authority (hierarchy), and language, especially kinship terms.

Economics. Economics concentrates on a single social institution. Economists study the production and distribution of the material goods and services of a society. They want to know what goods are being produced, what they cost, and how those goods are distributed. Economists also are interested in the choices that determine production and consumption; for example, they study what motivates people to buy a certain item instead of another.

Political Science. Political science focuses on politics and government. Political scientists examine how governments are formed, how they operate, and how they are related to other institutions of society. Political scientists are especially interested in how people attain ruling positions in their society, how they maintain those positions, and the consequences of their actions for the people they govern.

Psychology. The focus of psychology is on processes that occur *within* the individual, inside what they call the "skin-bound organism." Experimental psychologists do research on intelligence, emotions, perception, memory, even sleep and dreams. Some study how personality is formed and the causes of mental illness. Clinical psychologists work as therapists, helping people resolve personal problems, such as recovering from abuse or

social sciences the intellectual and academic disciplines designed to understand the social world objectively by means of controlled and repeated observations

Can you explain the focus of each social science?

addiction to drugs. Others work as counselors in school and work settings, where they give personality tests, intelligence tests, and vocational aptitude tests.

Sociology. Sociology overlaps these other social sciences. Like anthropologists, sociologists also study culture; they, too, do research on group structure and belief systems, as well as on how people communicate with one another. Like economists, sociologists do research on how a society's goods and services are distributed, especially how that distribution results in inequality. Like political scientists, sociologists study how people govern one another, especially how those in power affect people's lives. And like psychologists, sociologists also study how people adjust to the difficulties of life.

With such similarities, what distinguishes sociology from the other social sciences? Unlike anthropologists, sociologists focus primarily on industrialized and postindustrialized societies. Unlike economists and political scientists, sociologists do not concentrate on a single social institution. And unlike psychologists, sociologists stress factors *external* to the individual to determine what influences people and how they adjust to life. These differences might not be entirely clear, so let's go to the Down-to-Earth Sociology box below and, in an updated ancient tale, consider how members of different disciplines might perceive the same subject matter.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

An Updated Version of the Old Elephant Story

It is said that in the recent past, five wise men and women, all blindfolded, were led to an elephant and asked to explain what they "saw." The first, an anthropologist, tenderly touching the trunk and the tusks, broke into a grin and said, "This is really primitive. I feel very comfortable here. Concentrate on these."

The second, an economist, feeling the mouth, said, "This is what counts. What goes in here is distributed throughout the body. Concentrate your research on what goes in and how it is distributed."

The third, a political scientist, feeling the gigantic ears, announced, "This is the power center. What goes in here controls the entire beast. Concentrate your studies here."

The fourth, a psychologist, stroking the top of the elephant's head, smiled contentedly and said, "This is the only thing that counts. All feeling and thinking take place inside here. To understand this beast, we'll study this part."

Then came the sociologist (of course!), who, after feeling the entire body, said, "You can't understand the beast by concentrating on only one part. Each is but part of the whole. The trunk and tusks, the mouth,

the ears, the head—all are important. But so are the parts of the beast that you haven't mentioned. We must remove our blindfolds so we can see the larger picture. We have to see how everything works together to form the entire animal."

Pausing for emphasis, the sociologist added, "And we also need to understand how this creature interacts with similar creatures. How does its life in groups influence its behavior?"

I wish I could conclude this tale by saying that the anthropologist, the economist, the political scientist, and the psychologist were dazzled on hearing the wisdom of the sociologist, and, amidst gasps of wonderment, they tore off their blindfolds, joined together, and began to examine the entire animal.

But, alas and alack! On hearing this sage advice, the specialists stubbornly bound their blindfolds even tighter so they could concentrate all the more on their particular part. And if you listened very, very carefully, you could even hear them mutter, "Don't touch the tusks." "Stay away from the mouth—that's my area." "Take your hand off the ears." "The top of the head is mine—stay away from it."
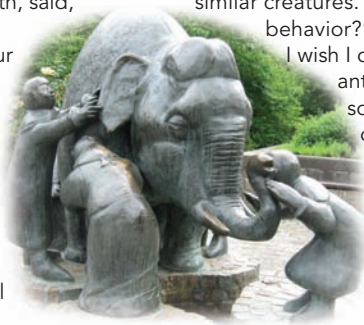
The traditional version of the blind men and the elephant does not include social scientists. This sculpture is in the Garden for the Blind in Bonn, Germany.
Hilary Bown, lessthanashoestring.com

How does sociology differ from the other social sciences?

17

The Goals of Science

The first goal of each science is to *explain* why something happens. The second goal is to make **generalizations,** that is, to go beyond the individual case and make statements that apply to a broader group or situation. For example, a sociologist wants to explain not only why Mary went to college or became an armed robber but also why people with her characteristics are more likely than others to go to college or to become armed robbers. To achieve generalizations, sociologists look for *patterns,* recurring characteristics or events. The third scientific goal is to *predict,* to specify in the light of current knowledge what will happen in the future.

To attain these goals, scientists do not rely on magic, superstition, or common beliefs, but, instead, they do systematic research. They explain exactly how they did their research so it can be reviewed by others. Secrecy, biases, and "trying to prove the way you want something to be" go against the grain of science.

Sociologists and other scientists also move beyond **common sense**—the prevailing ideas in a society, the things that "everyone knows" are true. "Everyone" can be as misguided today as everyone was when common sense dictated that the world was flat or that no human could ever walk on the moon. As sociologists do their research, their findings may confirm or contradict commonsense notions about social life. To test your own common sense, take the "fun quiz" on the next page.

The Risks of Being a Sociologist

Sometimes the explorations of sociologists take them into nooks and crannies that people would prefer remain unexplored. For example, a sociologist might study how people make decisions to commit a crime or to cheat on their spouses. Since sociologists are intrigued with understanding social life, they don't stop doing research because people feel uncomfortable. Sociologists consider all realms of human life legitimate avenues to explore, and they do just this, researching both the respectable and the downright disreputable.

As sociologists do their research, they sometimes face pressure to keep things secret. Every group, it seems, nourishes some ideal image that it presents to others. Because sociologists are interested in knowing what is *really* going on, they peer behind the scenes to get past those sugar-coated images (Berger 1963, 2012). An objective report can threaten a group's image, leading to pressure and conflict—all part of the adventure, and risk, of being a sociologist.

Origins of Sociology

Tradition Versus Science

So when did sociology begin? Even ancient peoples tried to figure out how social life works. They, too, asked questions about why war exists, why some people become more powerful than others, and why some are rich but others are poor. However, they often based their answers on superstition, myth, even the positions of the stars. They did not *test* their assumptions.

Science, in contrast, requires theories that can be tested by research. Measured by this standard, sociology emerged about the middle of the 1800s, when social observers began to use scientific methods to test their ideas. Three main events set the stage for the challenge to tradition and the emergence of sociology.

The first was the social upheaval of the Industrial Revolution. As agriculture gave way to factory production, masses of people moved to cities in search of work. The city's greeting was harsh: miserable pay, long hours, and dangerous work. To help their family survive, even children worked in these miserable conditions, some of them chained to machines to keep them from running away. With their ties to the land broken and their world turned upside down, no longer could people count on tradition to provide the answers to the difficult questions of life.

generalization a statement that goes beyond the individual case and is applied to a broader group or situation

common sense those things that "everyone knows" are true

scientific method the use of objective, systematic observations to test theories

positivism the application of the scientific approach to the social world

What is the origin of sociology?

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Enjoying a Sociology Quiz—Testing Your Common Sense

Some findings of sociology support commonsense understandings of social life, and others contradict them. Can you tell the difference? To enjoy this quiz, complete *all* the questions before turning the page to check your answers.

1. **True/False** More U.S. students are killed in school shootings now than ten or fifteen years ago.
2. **True/False** The earnings of U.S. women have just about caught up with those of U.S. men.
3. **True/False** With life so rushed and more women working for wages, today's parents spend less time with their children than parents of previous generations did.
4. **True/False** It is more dangerous to walk near topless bars than fast-food restaurants.
5. **True/False** Most rapists are mentally ill.
6. **True/False** A large percentage of terrorists are mentally ill.
7. **True/False** Most people on welfare are lazy and looking for a handout. They could work if they wanted to.
8. **True/False** Compared with women, men make more eye contact in face-to-face conversations.
9. **True/False** Couples who lived together before marriage are usually more satisfied with their marriage than couples who did not live together before marriage.
10. **True/False** Because bicyclists are more likely to wear helmets now than a few years ago, their rate of head injuries has dropped.

The second was the social upheaval of revolution. The American and French revolutions swept away the existing social orders—and with them the answers they had provided. Before this period, tradition had ruled. The reply to questions of "why" was "We do this because it has always been done this way." A new social order challenges traditional answers, stimulates original thinking, and brings new ideas. The ideas that emerged during this period challenged tradition even further. Especially powerful was the idea that each person possesses inalienable rights. This idea caught fire to such an extent that people were willing to die for it, forcing many traditional Western monarchies to give way to more democratic forms of government.

The third was the imperialism (empire building) of the time. The Europeans had conquered so many parts of the world that their new colonies stretched from Asia and Africa to North and South America. This exposed them to radically different ways of life, and they began to ask why cultures differ.

The industrial revolution, political revolution, and imperialism, then, led to a questioning of traditional answers. At this same time, **the scientific method**—using objective, systematic observations to test theories—was being tried out in chemistry and physics. The result was the uncovering of many secrets that had been concealed in nature. With traditional answers failing, the next step was to apply the scientific method to questions about social life. The result was the birth of sociology.

Let's take a quick overview of some of the main figures in this development.

Auguste Comte and Positivism

Applying the scientific method to the social world, a process called **positivism,** apparently was first proposed by Auguste Comte (1798–1857). Reflecting on the upheavals of the French Revolution and on the changes he experienced when he moved to Paris from the small town in which he had grown up, Comte began to wonder what holds society together. What, he asked, creates social order, instead of anarchy or chaos? And once society does become set on a particular course, why does it change?

The way to answer such questions, Comte decided, was to apply the scientific method. Just as the scientific method had revealed the law of gravity, so,

Paul Emile Boutigny/The Bridgeman Art Library/Getty Images

Upsetting the entire social order, the French Revolution removed the past as a sure guide to the present. This stimulated Auguste Comte to analyze how societies change. Shown here is the 1793 Battle of Cholet.
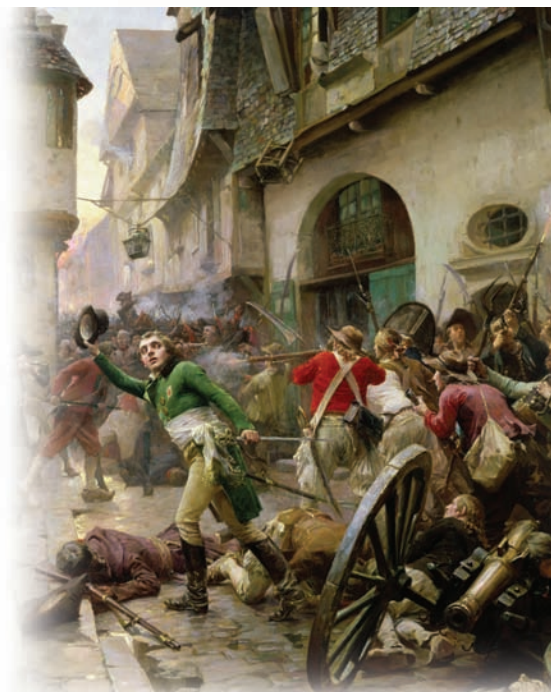
How does sociology differ from common sense?

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Testing Your Common Sense—Answers to the Sociology Quiz

1. **False.** More students were shot to death at U.S. schools in the early 1990s than now (National School Safety Center 2011).
2. **False.** Over the years, the wage gap has narrowed, but only slightly. On average, full-time working women earn about 70 percent of what full-time working men earn. This low figure is actually an improvement over earlier years.
3. **False.** Today's parents actually spend more time with their children (Bianchi et al. 2006).
4. **False.** The crime rate outside fast-food restaurants is considerably higher. The likely reason is that topless bars hire private security and parking lot attendants (Linz et al. 2004).
5. **False.** Sociologists compared the psychological profiles of prisoners convicted of rape and prisoners convicted of other crimes. Their profiles were similar. Like robbery, rape is a learned behavior.

6. **False.** Extensive testing of Islamic terrorists shows that they actually tend to score more "normal" on psychological tests than most "normal" people do. As a group, they are in better mental health than the rest of the population (Sageman 2008b:64).
7. **False.** Most people on welfare are children, young mothers with few skills, or are elderly, sick, mentally challenged, or physically handicapped,. Less than 2 percent fit the stereotype of an able-bodied man.
8. **False.** Women make considerably more eye contact (Henley et al. 1985).
9. **False.** The opposite is true. Among other reasons, couples who cohabit before marriage are usually less committed to one another—and a key to marital success is a strong commitment (Dush et al. 2003; Osborne et al. 2007).
10. **False.** Bicyclists today are more likely to wear helmets, but their rate of head injuries is higher. Apparently, they take more risks because the helmets make them feel safer (Barnes 2001).

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sociology the scientific study of society and human behavior

too, it would uncover the laws that underlie society. Comte called this new science **sociology**—"the study of society" (from the Greek *logos,* "study of," and the Latin *socius,* "companion," or "being with others"). The purpose of this new science, he said, would not only be to discover social principles but also to apply them to social reform. Comte developed a grandiose view: Sociologists would reform society, making it a better place to live.

How to apply the scientific method to social life meant something quite different to Comte than it does to sociologists today. To Comte, it meant a kind of "armchair philosophy"—drawing conclusions from informal observations of social life. Comte did not do what we today call research, and his conclusions have been abandoned. But because he proposed that we observe and classify human activities to uncover society's fundamental laws and coined the term *sociology* to describe this process, Comte often is credited with being the founder of sociology.

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Auguste Comte (1798–1857), who is credited as the founder of sociology, began to analyze the bases of the social order. Although he stressed that the scientific method should be applied to the study of society, he did not apply it himself.
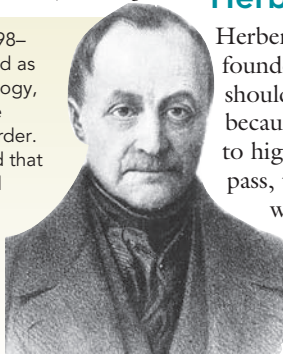
Herbert Spencer and Social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), who grew up in England, is sometimes called the second founder of sociology. Spencer disagreed sharply with Comte's idea that sociologists should guide social reform. He said that sociologists should keep their hands off society because societies go through a natural evolution. They evolve from lower ("barbarian") to higher ("civilized") forms, a natural process that improves societies. As generations pass, the most capable and intelligent members ("the fittest") of a society survive, while the less capable die out. The fittest members will produce a more advanced society—unless misguided do-gooders get in the way and help the less fit (the lower classes) survive.

Spencer called this principle *the survival of the fittest*. Although Spencer coined this phrase, it usually is attributed to his contemporary, Charles

Why is Comte called the founder of sociology?

Darwin, who proposed that organisms evolve over time as they adapt to their environment. Where Darwin refers to the evolution of organisms, Spencer refers to the evolution of societies. Because Darwin is better known, Spencer's idea is called *social Darwinism.* (If fame had gone the other way, we might be speaking of "biological Spencerism.")
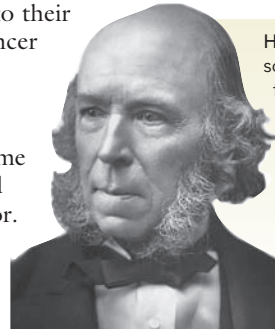
Spencer's idea that it was wrong to help the poor offended many. Some wealthy businessmen of the time, however, liked the concept of the survival of the fittest: They saw themselves as "the fittest"—and therefore superior. I'm sure that Spencer's views also helped some of them avoid feeling guilty for living like royalty while people around them went hungry.

Like Comte, Spencer did armchair philosophy instead of conducting scientific studies. His ideas about society became popular, and he was sought after as a speaker in both England and the United States. Eventually social Darwinism was discredited, and few today remember Spencer.

The next sociologist, in contrast, has a name that is recognized around the world.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), sometimes called the second founder of sociology, coined the term "survival of the fittest." Spencer thought that helping the poor was wrong, that this merely helped the "less fit" survive.

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Karl Marx and Class Conflict

Karl Marx (1818–1883) influenced not only sociology but also world history. Marx's influence has been so great that even the *Wall Street Journal,* that staunch advocate of capitalism, has called him one of the three greatest modern thinkers (the other two being Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein).

Like Comte, Marx thought that people should try to change society. His proposal for change was radical: revolution. This got him thrown out of Germany, and he settled in England. Marx believed that the engine of human history is **class conflict.** Society is made up of two social classes, he said, and they are natural enemies: the **bourgeoisie** (boo-shwa-ZEE) (the *capitalists,* those who own the capital, land, factories, and machines) and the **proletariat** (the exploited workers, who do not own the means of production). Eventually, the workers will unite and break their chains of bondage. The revolution will be bloody, but it will usher in a classless society, one free of exploitation. People will work according to their abilities and receive goods and services according to their needs (Marx and Engels 1848/1967).

Marxism is not the same as communism. Although Marx proposed revolution as the way for workers to gain control of society, he did not develop the political system called *communism.* This is a later application of his ideas. Marx himself felt disgusted when he heard debates about his insights into social life. After listening to some of the positions attributed to him, he shook his head and said, "I am not a Marxist" (Dobriner 1969b:222; Gitlin 1997:89).

Unlike Comte and Spencer, Marx did not think of himself as a sociologist—and with his reputation for communism and revolution, many sociologists wish that no one else did either. Marx spent years studying in the library of the British Museum in London, where he wrote widely on history, philosophy, economics, and political science. Because of his insights into the relationship between the social classes, Marx is generally recognized as a significant early sociologist. He introduced *conflict theory,* one of today's major perspectives in sociology.
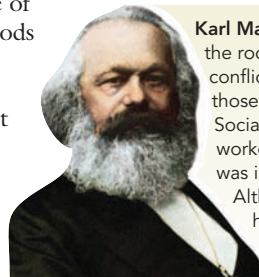
Karl Marx (1818–1883) believed that the roots of human misery lay in class conflict, the exploitation of workers by those who own the means of production. Social change, in the form of the workers overthrowing the capitalists was inevitable from Marx's perspective. Although Marx did not consider himself a sociologist, his ideas have influenced many sociologists, particularly conflict theorists.

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class conflict Marx's term for the struggle between capitalists and workers

bourgeoisie Marx's term for capitalists, those who own the means of production

proletariat Marx's term for the exploited class, the mass of workers who do not own the means of production

Emile Durkheim and Social Integration

Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) had a primary professional goal—to get sociology recognized as a separate academic discipline (Coser 1977). Until Durkheim's time, sociology was viewed as part of history and economics. Durkheim, who grew up in France and was educated in both Germany and France, achieved his goal in 1887 when the University of Bordeaux awarded him the world's first academic appointment in sociology.

Why is Marx known as a sociologist? What is social Darwinism?

The French sociologist **Emile Durkheim** (1858–1917) contributed many important concepts to sociology. His comparison of the suicide rates of several countries revealed an underlying social factor: People are more likely to commit suicide if their ties to others in their communities are weak. Durkheim's identification of the key role of *social integration* in social life remains central to sociology today.
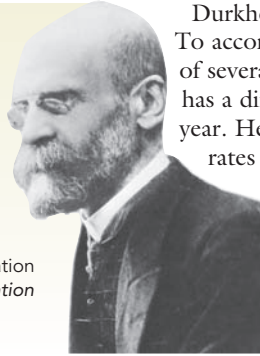
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social integration the degree to which members of a group or a society feel united by shared values and other social bonds; also known as *social cohesion*

patterns of behavior recurring characteristics or events

Durkheim's second goal was to show how social forces affect people's behavior. To accomplish this, he conducted rigorous research. Comparing the suicide rates of several European countries, Durkheim (1897/1966) found that each country has a different suicide rate—and that these rates remain about the same year after year. He also found that different groups within a country have different suicide rates and that these, too, remain stable from year to year. His data showed that Protestants, males, and the unmarried kill themselves at a higher rate than do Catholics or Jews, females, and the married. From these observations, Durkheim concluded that suicide is not what it appears—simply a matter of individuals here and there deciding to take their lives for personal reasons. Instead, *social factors underlie suicide,* which is why a group's rate remains fairly constant year after year.

Durkheim identified **social integration,** the degree to which people are tied to their social group, as a key social factor in suicide. He concluded that people who have weaker social ties are more likely to commit suicide. This, he said, explains why Protestants, males, and the unmarried have higher suicide rates. This is how it works: Protestantism encourages greater freedom of thought and action; males are more independent than females; and the unmarried lack the ties and responsibilities that come with marriage. In other words, members of these groups have fewer of the social bonds that keep people from committing suicide. In Durkheim's term, they have less social integration.

Although strong social ties help protect people from suicide, Durkheim noted that in some instances strong bonds encourage suicide. An example is people who, torn apart by grief, kill themselves after their spouse dies. Their own feelings are so integrated with those of their spouse that they prefer death rather than life without the one who gave it meaning.

Despite the many years that have passed since Durkheim did his research, the principle he uncovered still applies: People who are less socially integrated have higher rates of suicide. Even today, more than a century later, those same groups that Durkheim identified—Protestants, males, and the unmarried—are more likely to kill themselves.

It is important for you to understand the principle that was central in Durkheim's research: *Human behavior cannot be understood only in terms of the individual; we must always examine the social forces that affect people's lives.* Suicide, for example, appears to be such an intensely individual act that psychologists should study it, not sociologists. As Durkheim stressed, however, if we look at human behavior only in reference to the individual, we miss its *social* basis.

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©Jamie Carstairs/Impact/HIP/The Image Works

Applying Durkheim Did you know that 29,000 whites and 2,000 African Americans will commit suicide this year? Of course not. And you probably are wondering if anyone can know something like this before it happens. Sociologists can. How? Sociologists look at **patterns of behavior,** recurring characteristics or events.

The patterns let us be even more specific. Look at Figure 1. There you can see the methods by which African Americans and whites commit suicide. These patterns are so consistent that we can predict with high certainty that of the 29,000 whites about 15,500 will use guns

Durkheim believed that modern societies produce feelings of isolation, much of which comes from the division of labor. In contrast, members of traditional societies, who work alongside family and neighbors and participate in similar activities, experience a high degree of *social integration*. The photo on the right shows women pounding millet in Mali.

How do the patterns of suicide reveal its social nature?

FIGURE 1	How Americans Commit Suicide
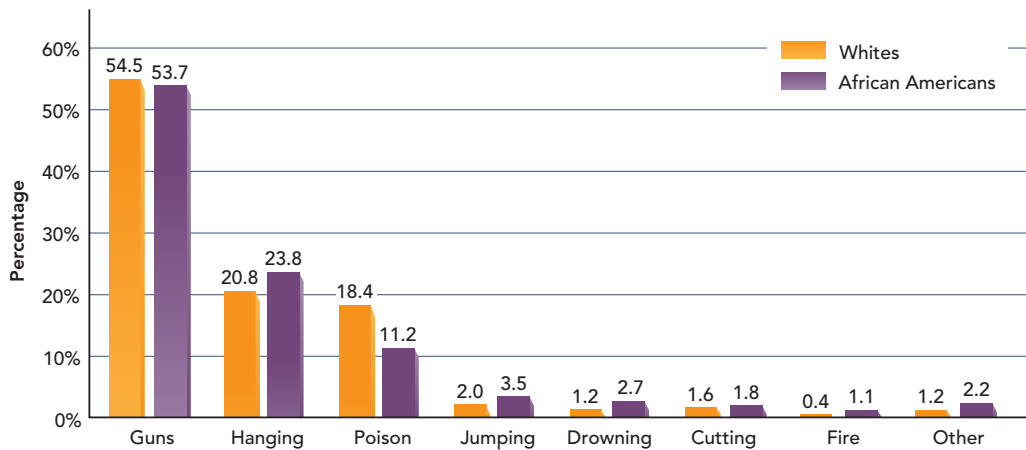
Note: These totals are the mean of years 2001–2006.

Source: By the author. Based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.

to kill themselves, and that of the 2,000 African Americans 60 to 70 will jump to their deaths.

These patterns—both the numbers and the way people take their lives—recur year after year. This indicates something far beyond the individuals who kill themselves. They reflect conditions in society, such as the popularity and accessibility of guns. They also reflect conditions that we don't understand. I am hoping that one day this textbook will pique a student's interest enough to investigate these patterns.

Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic

Max Weber (Mahx VAY-ber) (1864–1920), a German sociologist and a contemporary of Durkheim's, also held professorships in the new academic discipline of sociology. Like Durkheim and Marx, Weber is one of the most influential of all sociologists. Let's consider an issue Weber raised that remains controversial today.

Religion and the Origin of Capitalism. Weber disagreed with Marx's claim that economics is the central force in social change. That role, he said, belongs to religion. Weber (1904/1958) theorized that the Roman Catholic belief system encouraged followers to hold on to traditional ways of life, while the Protestant belief system encouraged its members to embrace change. Roman Catholics were taught that because they were Church members they were on the road to heaven, but Protestants, those of the Calvinist tradition, were told that they wouldn't know if they were saved until Judgment Day. Uncomfortable with this, the Calvinists began to look for "signs" that they were in God's will. They concluded that financial success was the blessing that indicated that God was on their side. To bring about this "sign" and receive spiritual comfort, they began to live frugal lives, saving their money and investing it in order to make even more. This, said Weber, brought about the birth of capitalism.

Weber called this self-denying approach to life the *Protestant ethic*. He termed the desire to invest capital in order to make more money the *spirit of capitalism*. To test his theory, Weber compared the extent of capitalism in Roman Catholic and Protestant countries. In line with his theory, he found that capitalism was more likely to flourish in Protestant countries. Weber's conclusion that religion was the key factor in the rise of
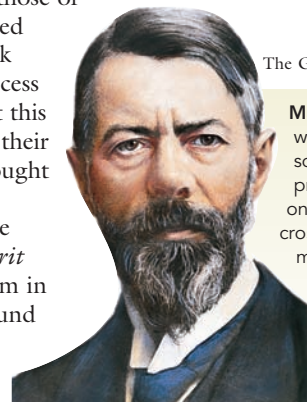
The Granger Collection, New York

Max Weber (1864–1920) was another early sociologist who left a profound impression on sociology. He used cross-cultural and historical materials to trace the causes of social change and to determine how social groups affect people's orientations to life.

What did Weber mean that religion produced capitalism? Can you explain the connection?

capitalism was controversial when he made it, and it continues to be debated today (Cantoni 2009).

Values in Sociological Research

Weber raised another issue that remains controversial among sociologists. He said that sociology should be **value free.** By this, he meant that a sociologist's **values**—beliefs about what is good or desirable in life and the way the world ought to be—should not affect his or her research. Weber wanted **objectivity,** value neutrality, to be the hallmark of social research. If values influence research, he said, sociological findings will be biased.

That bias has no place in research is not a matter of debate. All sociologists agree that no one should distort data to make them fit preconceived ideas or personal values. It is equally clear, however, that because sociologists—like everyone else—are members of a particular society at a given point in history, they, too, are infused with values of all sorts. These values inevitably play a role in the topics we choose to research. For example, values are part of the reason that one sociologist chooses to do research on the Mafia, while another turns a sociological eye on kindergarten students.

Because values can lead to unintended distortions in how we interpret our findings, sociologists stress the need of **replication,** repeating a study in order to compare the new results with the original findings. If an individual's values have distorted research findings, replication by other sociologists should uncover the bias and correct it.

Despite this consensus, however, values remain a hotly debated topic in sociology (Burawoy 2007; Piven 2007). As summarized in Figure 2, the disagreement centers on the proper purposes and uses of sociology. Regarding its *purpose,* some sociologists take the position that their goal should be simply to advance understanding of social life. They should gather data on any topic in which they are interested and then use the best theory available to interpret their findings. Others are convinced that sociologists have the responsibility to investigate the social arrangements that harm people—the causes of poverty, crime, racism, war, and other forms of human exploitation.

Then there is the disagreement over the *uses* of sociology. Those who say that sociology's purpose is to understand human behavior take the position that the knowledge gained by social research belongs to both the scientific community and the world. It can be used by anyone for any purpose. In contrast, those who say that sociologists should focus on investigating harmful social conditions take the position that sociological knowledge should be used to alleviate human suffering and improve society. Some also say that sociologists should spearhead social reform.

Although this debate is more complicated than the argument summarized here—few sociologists take such one-sided views—this sketch does identify its major issues. Here is how sociologist John Galliher (1991) expresses today's majority position:

Some argue that social scientists, unlike politicians and religious leaders, should merely attempt to describe and explain the events of the world but should never make value judgments based on those observations. Yet a value-free and nonjudgmental social science has no place in a world that has experienced the Holocaust, in a world having had slavery, in a world with the ever-present threat of rape and other sexual assault, in a world with frequent, unpunished crimes in high places, including the production of products known by their manufacturers to cause death and injury as has been true of asbestos products and continues to be true of the cigarette industry, and in a world dying from environmental pollution by these same large multinational corporations.

value free the view that a sociologist's personal values or beliefs should not influence social research

values the standards by which people define what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad, beautiful or ugly

objectivity value neutrality in research

replication the repetition of a study in order to test its findings

FIGURE 2 The Debate over Values in Sociological Research

The Purposes of Social Research

To understand human behavior ◀versus▶ To investigate harmful social arrangements

The Uses of Social Research

Can be used by anyone for any purpose ◀versus▶ Should be used to reform society

Source: By the author.

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What are the opposing arguments in the debate about values in sociological research?

Verstehen and Social Facts

Weber and *Verstehen*

Max Weber also stressed that to understand human behavior, we should use *Verstehen* (vare-shtay-in) (a German word meaning "to understand"). Perhaps a better translation of this term is "to grasp by insight." By emphasizing *Verstehen,* Weber meant that the best interpreter of human behavior is someone who "has been there," someone who can understand the feelings and motivations of the people being studied. In short, we must pay attention to what are called **subjective meanings**—how people interpret their situation in life, how they view what they are doing and what is happening to them.

To better understand this term, let's return to the homeless in our opening vignette. As in the photo below, why were the men so silent? Why were they so unlike the noisy, sometimes boisterous college students who swarm dorms and cafeterias?

Verstehen can help explain this. When I interviewed men in the shelters (and, in other settings, homeless women), they revealed their despair. Because you know—at least on some level—what the human emotion of despair is, you can do *Verstehen,* that is, you can apply your knowledge of despair to understand their situation. You know that people in despair feel a sense of hopelessness. The future looks bleak, hardly worth plodding toward. Consequently, why is it worth talking about? Who wants to hear another hard-luck story?

By applying *Verstehen*—your understanding of what it means to be human and to face some situation in life—you gain insight into other people's behavior. In this case, you can understand these men's silence, their lack of communication in the shelter.

Durkheim and Social Facts

In contrast to Weber's emphasis on *Verstehen* and subjective meanings, Durkheim stressed what he called **social facts.** By this term, he meant the patterns of behavior that characterize a social group. Examples of social facts in the United States include June being the most popular month for weddings, suicide rates being higher among the elderly, and more births occurring on Tuesdays than on any other day of the week.

Durkheim said that we must use social facts to interpret social facts. In other words, each pattern reflects some condition of society. People all over the country don't just coincidentally decide to do similar things, whether that is to get married or to commit suicide. If this were the case, in some years, middle-aged people would be the most likely to kill themselves, in other years, young people, and so on. *Patterns that hold true year after year indicate that as thousands and even millions of people make their individual decisions, they are responding to conditions in their society.* It is the job of the sociologist, then, to uncover social facts and to explain them through other social facts. To see how this works, let's look at how the social facts I mentioned—weddings, suicide, and births—are explained by other social facts.

Verstehen a German word used by Weber that is perhaps best understood as "to have insight into someone's situation"

subjective meanings the meanings that people give their own behavior

social facts Durkheim's term for a group's patterns of behavior

Granted their deprivation, it is not surprising that the homeless are not brimming with optimism. This scene at a homeless shelter in Detroit is typical, reminiscent of the many meals I ate in soup kitchens with men like this.

CARLOS BARRIA/Reuters/Landov

What does *Verstehen* mean? How is it valuable for sociologists? For yourself?

How Social Facts and *Verstehen* Fit Together

Social facts and *Verstehen* go hand in hand. As a member of U.S. society, you know how June weddings are related to the end of the school year and how this month, now locked in tradition, common sentiment, and advertising, carries its own momentum. As for suicide among the elderly, you probably already have a sense of the greater despair that many older Americans feel.

But do you know why more Americans are born on Tuesday than on any other day of the week? One would expect Tuesday to be no more common than any other day, and that is how it used to be. But no longer (Martin et al. 2007). To understand this change, we need to combine social facts and *Verstehen*. Four social facts are relevant: First, technology has made the hospital a dominating force in the U.S. medical system. Second, medical technology has made births by cesarean section safer. Third, doctors have replaced midwives in the delivery of babies. Fourth, medicine in the United States is a business, with profit a major goal. These four social facts have coalesced to make an operation that used to be a last resort for emergencies now so routine that 32 percent of all U.S. babies are now delivered in this manner (Menacker and Hamilton 2010).

If we add *Verstehen* to these social facts, we gain insight that goes far beyond the cold statistics. Let's try it. You know that most American mothers-to-be prefer to give birth in a hospital. You can also understand how influential physicians can be at such an emotionally charged and vulnerable moment and how alternatives can appear so slim. Finally, you can also understand why physicians would schedule births for a time that is most convenient for them, which happens to be Tuesdays. Combine *Verstehen* with social facts and you have the answer.

Sociology in North America

Transplanted to U.S. soil, sociology first took root at the University of Kansas in 1890, at the University of Chicago in 1892, and at Atlanta University (then an all-black school) in 1897. From there, sociology spread rapidly throughout North America, jumping from four instructors offering courses in 1880 to 225 instructors and 59 sociology departments just 20 years later (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2007).

Some universities were slow to adopt sociology. Not until 1922 did McGill University become Canada's first department of sociology. Harvard University did not open its sociology department until 1930, and it took until 1946 for the University of California at Berkeley to do so.

The University of Chicago initially dominated North American sociology. Albion Small (1854–1926), who founded this department, also launched *The American Journal of Sociology* and was its editor from 1895 to 1925. Members of this sociology faculty whose ideas continue to influence today's sociologists include Robert Park (1864–1944), Ernest Burgess (1886–1966), and George Herbert Mead (1863–1931). Mead developed the symbolic interactionist perspective.

Sexism at the Time: Women in Early Sociology

As you may have noticed, all the sociologists we have discussed are men. In the 1800s, sex roles were rigid, with women assigned the roles of wife and mother. In the classic German phrase, women were expected to devote themselves to the four K's: *Kirche, Küche, Kinder, und Kleider* (church, cooking, children, and clothes). Trying to break out of this mold meant risking severe disapproval.

Few people, male or female, attained any education beyond basic reading and writing and a little math. Higher education, for the rare few who received it, was reserved primarily for men. Of the handful of women who did pursue higher education, some became prominent in early sociology. Marion Talbot, for example, was an associate editor of the *American Journal of Sociology* for thirty years, from its founding in 1895 to 1925. The influence of some early female sociologists went far beyond sociology. Grace Abbott became

How does *Verstehen* help us interpret social facts? Can you give an example?

FIGURE 3   The Forgotten Sociologists

The Forgotten Sociologists

Early North American sociologists combined the roles of social analysis and social reform. As sociology became a respected academic subject and sociology departments developed across the United States, academic sociologists began to emphasize social research and theory. From this orientation, the academic sociologists wrote the history of sociology. They designated non-academic activists as social workers, not sociologists, effectively writing them out of the history of sociology. The women shown here, among the forgotten sociologists of this period, are gradually regaining a place in the history of sociology.

Beatrice Potter Webb (1858–1943) Self–educated

Alice Paul (1885–1977) American University D.C.L. 1928

Marion Talbot (1858–1948) MIT B.S. 1888

Frances Perkins (1880–1965) Columbia University M.A. 1910

Anna Julia Cooper (1858–1964) University of Paris Ph.D. 1925

Grace Abbott (1878–1939) University of Chicago M.Phil. 1909

Florence Kelley (1859–1932) Northwestern University J.D. 1895

Emily Greene Balch (1867–1961) Bryn Mawr College B.A. 1889

Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1862–1931) Attended Fisk University 1882–1884

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935) Attended Rhode Island School of Design 1878–1880

chief of the U.S. government's Children's Bureau, and Frances Perkins was the first woman to hold a cabinet position, serving twelve years as Secretary of Labor under President Franklin Roosevelt. The photo wheel above portrays some of these early sociologists.

   For the most part, early female sociologists viewed sociology as a path to social reform. They focused on ways to improve society, such as how to stop lynching, integrate immigrants into society, and improve the conditions of workers. As sociology developed in North America, a debate arose about the proper purpose of sociology. You are already familiar with this tension: Should the purpose of sociology be to

What was the role of women in early sociology?

reform society or to do objective research on society? Those who held the university positions won the debate. They were men who feared that advocacy for social causes would jeopardize the reputation of sociology—and their own university positions. It was these men who wrote the history of sociology. Distancing themselves from the social reformers, they ignored the early female sociologists (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2007). Now that women have regained their voice in sociology—and have begun to rewrite its history—early female sociologists are again, as here, being acknowledged.

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) provides a classic example of how the contributions of early female sociologists were ignored. Although Martineau was from England, she is included here because she did extensive analyses of U.S. social customs. Sexism was so pervasive that when Martineau first began to analyze social life, she would hide her writing beneath her sewing when visitors arrived, for writing was "masculine" and sewing "feminine" (Gilman 1911/1971:88). Despite her extensive and acclaimed research on social life in both Great Britain and the United States, until recently Martineau was known primarily for translating Comte's ideas into English. The Down-to-Earth Sociology box on the next page features Martineau's research on the United States.

Racism at the Time: W. E. B. Du Bois

Not only was sexism assumed to be normal during this early period of sociology but so was racism, which made life difficult for African American professionals such as W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963). After earning a bachelor's degree from Fisk University, Du Bois became the first African American to earn a doctorate at Harvard. He then studied at the University of Berlin, where he attended lectures by Max Weber. After teaching Greek and Latin at Wilberforce University, in 1897 Du Bois moved to Atlanta University to teach sociology and do research. He remained there for most of his career (Du Bois 1935/1992).

It is difficult to grasp how racist society was at this time. As Du Bois passed a butcher shop in Georgia one day, he saw the fingers of a lynching victim displayed in the window (Aptheker 1990). When Du Bois went to national meetings of the American Sociological Society, restaurants and hotels would not allow him to eat or room with the white sociologists. How times have changed. Not only would today's sociologists boycott such establishments, but they also would refuse to hold meetings in that state. At that time, however, racism, like sexism, prevailed throughout society, rendering it mostly invisible to white sociologists. Du Bois eventually became such an outspoken critic of racism that the U.S. State Department, fearing he would criticize the United States, refused to issue him a passport (Du Bois 1968).

Each year between 1896 and 1914, Du Bois published a book on relations between African Americans and whites. Not content to collect and interpret objective data, Du Bois, along with Jane Addams and others from Hull-House (see the next section), was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (Deegan 1988). Continuing to battle racism both as a sociologist and as a journalist, Du Bois eventually embraced revolutionary Marxism. At age 93, dismayed that so little improvement had been made in race relations, he moved to Ghana, where he was buried (Stark 1989).

Until recently, Du Bois' work was neglected by sociologists. As a personal example, during my entire graduate program at Washington University, the faculty never mentioned him. Today, however, sociologists are rediscovering Du Bois, reading and discussing his research. Of his almost 2,000 writings, *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899/1967) stands out. In this analysis, Du Bois pointed out that some successful African Americans were breaking their ties with other African Americans and "passing as white." This, he said, weakened the African American community by depriving it of their influence. Taken from a 1903 book by Du Bois, the Down-to-Earth Sociology box provides a picture of race relations when Du Bois was young.

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W(illiam) **E**(dward) **B**(urghardt) **Du Bois** (1868–1963) spent his lifetime studying relations between African Americans and whites. Like many early North American sociologists, Du Bois combined the role of academic sociologist with that of social reformer.
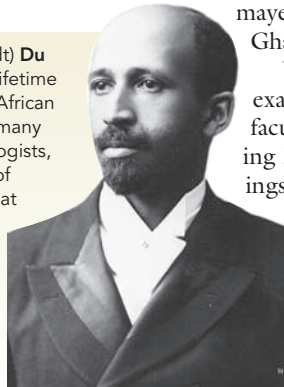
What was Du Bois' place in early U.S. sociology? What role did race relations play in his life?

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Harriet Martineau and U.S. Customs: Listening to an Early Feminist

*T*he breadth of Martineau's research is striking. In 1834, two or three decades before Durkheim and Weber were born, Martineau began a two-year study of U.S. customs. Traveling by foot, horseback, stagecoach, and steamboat, she visited twenty of the then twenty-four states. She observed and interviewed Americans, from those who lived in poverty to Andrew Jackson, then the President of the United States, with whom she had dinner (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2007). She spoke with both slaveholders and abolitionists. She also visited prisons and attended sessions of the U.S. Supreme Court. To summarize her research, in 1837 she published *Society in America*, from which these excerpts are taken.

Concerning women not being allowed to vote

One of the fundamental principles announced in the Declaration of Independence is that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. How can the political condition of women be reconciled with this?

Governments in the United States have power to tax women who hold property . . . to fine, imprison, and execute them for certain offences. Whence do these governments derive their powers? They are not "just," as they are not derived from the consent of the women thus governed. . . .

The democratic principle condemns all this as wrong; and requires the equal political representation of all rational beings. Children, idiots, and criminals . . . are the only fair exceptions. . . .

Concerning the education of women

The intellect of woman is confined by an unjustifiable restriction. . . . As women have none of the objects in life for which an enlarged education is considered requisite, the education is not given. . . . [S]ome things [are] taught

Interested in social refor, Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) turned to sociology, where she discovered the writing of Comte. She became an advocate for the abolition of slavery, traveled widely, and wrote extensive analyses of social life.
The Granger Collection, New York

which . . . serve to fill up time . . . to improve conversation, and to make women something like companions to their husbands, and able to teach their children somewhat. . . . There is rarely or never a . . . promotion of clear intellectual activity. . . . [A]s long as women are excluded from the objects for which men are trained . . . intellectual activity is dangerous: or, as the phrase is, unfit. Accordingly marriage is the only object left open to woman.

Concerning sex and slavery, and relations between white women and men in the South

[White American women] are all married young . . . and there is ever present an unfortunate servile class of their own sex [female slaves] to serve the purposes of licentiousness [as sexual objects for white slaveholders]. . . . [When most] men carry secrets which their wives must be the last to know . . . there is an end to all wholesome confidence and sympathy, and woman sinks to be the ornament of her husband's house, the domestic manager of his establishment, instead of being his all-sufficient friend. . . . I have seen, with heart-sorrow, the kind politeness, the gallantry, so insufficient to the loving heart, with which the wives of the south are treated by their husbands. . . . I know the tone of conversation which is adopted towards women; different in its topics and its style from that which any man would dream of offering to any other man. I have heard the boast of chivalrous consideration in which women are held throughout their woman's paradise; and seen something of the anguish of crushed pride, of the conflict of bitter feelings with which such boasts have been listened to by those whose aspirations teach them the hollowness of the system. . . .

For Your Consideration

➜ How do you think relations between men and women have changed since Martineau did her research?

The Granger Collection, New York

Jane Addams: Sociologist and Social Reformer

Of the many early sociologists who combined the role of sociologist with that of social reformer, none was as successful as Jane Addams (1860–1935), who was a member of the American Sociological Society from its founding in 1905. Like Harriet Martineau, Addams, too, came from a background of wealth and privilege. She attended the Women's Medical College of Philadelphia, but dropped out because of illness (Addams 1910/1981). On a trip to Europe, Addams saw the work being done to help London's poor. The memory wouldn't leave her, she said, and she decided to work for social justice.
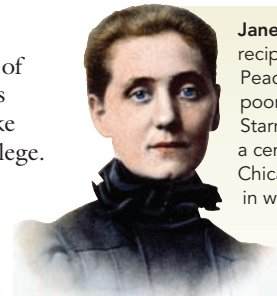
Jane Addams (1860–1935) a recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace, worked on behalf of poor immigrants. With Ellen G. Starr, she founded Hull-House, a center to help immigrants in Chicago. She was also a leader in women's rights (women's suffrage), as well as the peace movement of World War I.

What was Martineau's place in early U.S. sociology? Can you describe her research? What role did gender relations play in her life?

Down-to-Earth Sociology

W. E. B. Du Bois: The Souls of Black Folk

Du Bois wrote more like an accomplished novelist than a sociologist. The following excerpts are from pages 66–68 of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). In this book, Du Bois analyzes changes that occurred in the social and economic conditions of African Americans during the thirty years following the Civil War.

For two summers, while he was a student at Fisk, Du Bois taught in a segregated school in a little log cabin "way back in the hills" of rural Tennessee. These excerpts help us understand conditions at that time.

It was a hot morning late in July when the school opened. I trembled when I heard the patter of little feet down the dusty road, and saw the growing row of dark solemn faces and bright eager eyes facing me. . . . There they sat, nearly thirty of them, on the rough benches, their faces shading from a pale cream to deep brown, the little feet bare and swinging, the eyes full of expectation, with here and there a twinkle of mischief, and the hands grasping Webster's blue-black spelling-book. I loved my school, and the fine faith the children had in the wisdom of their teacher was truly marvelous. We read and spelled together, wrote a little, picked flowers, sang, and listened to stories of the world beyond the hill. . . .

On Friday nights I often went home with some of the children,—sometimes to Doc Burke's farm. He was a great, loud, thin Black, ever working, and trying to buy these seventy-five acres of hill and dale where he lived; but people said that he would surely fail and the "white folks would get it all." His wife was a magnificent Amazon, with saffron face and shiny hair, uncorseted and barefooted, and the children were strong and barefooted. They lived in a one-and-a-half-room cabin in the hollow of the farm near the spring. . . .

In the 1800s, most people were poor, and formal education beyond the first several grades was a luxury. This photo depicts the conditions of the people Du Bois worked with.
©Everett Collection/SuperStock

Often, to keep the peace, I must go where life was less lovely; for instance, 'Tildy's mother was incorrigibly dirty, Reuben's larder was limited seriously, and herds of untamed insects wandered over the Eddingses' beds. Best of all I loved to go to Josie's, and sit on the porch, eating peaches, while the mother bustled and talked: how Josie had bought the sewing-machine; how Josie worked at service in winter, but that four dollars a month was "mighty little" wages; how Josie longed to go away to school, but that it "looked like" they never could get far enough ahead to let her; how the crops failed and the well was yet unfinished; and, finally, how mean some of the white folks were.

For two summers I lived in this little world. . . . I have called my tiny community a world, and so its isolation made it; and yet there was among us but a half-awakened common consciousness, sprung from common joy and grief, at burial, birth, or wedding; from common hardship in poverty, poor land, and low wages, and, above all, from the sight of the Veil* that hung between us and Opportunity. All this caused us to think some thoughts together; but these, when ripe for speech, were spoken in various languages. Those whose eyes twenty-five and more years had seen "the glory of the coming of the Lord," saw in every present hindrance or help a dark fatalism bound to bring all things right in His own good time. The mass of those to whom slavery was a dim recollection of childhood found the world a puzzling thing: it asked little of them, and they answered with little, and yet it ridiculed their offering. Such a paradox they could not understand, and therefore sank into listless indifference, or shiftlessness, or reckless bravado.

*"The Veil" is shorthand for the Veil of Race, referring to how race colors all human relations. Du Bois' hope, as he put it, was that "sometime, somewhere, men will judge men by their souls and not by their skins" (p. 261).

In 1889, Addams co-founded Hull-House with Ellen Gates Starr. Located in Chicago's notorious slums, Hull-House was open to people who needed refuge—to immigrants, the sick, the aged, the poor. Sociologists from the nearby University of Chicago were frequent visitors at Hull-House. With her piercing insights into the exploitation of workers and the adjustment of rural immigrants to city life, Addams strove to bridge the gap between the powerful and the powerless. She co-founded the American Civil Liberties Union and campaigned for the eight-hour workday and for laws against child labor. She wrote books on poverty, democracy, and peace. Addams'

What was Addam's place in early U.S. sociology?

writings and efforts at social reform were so outstanding that in 1931, she was a co-winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace. She and Emily Greene Balch are the only sociologists to have won this coveted award.

C. Wright Mills was a controversial figure in sociology because of his analysis of the role of the power elite in U.S. society. Today, his analysis is taken for granted by many sociologists and members of the public.

Photo by Yaroslava Mills

Talcott Parsons and C. Wright Mills: Contrasting Views

Like Du Bois and Addams, many early North American sociologists saw society, or parts of it, as corrupt and in need of reform. During the 1920s and 1930s, for example, Robert Park and Ernest Burgess (1921) not only studied crime, drug addiction, juvenile delinquency, and prostitution but also offered suggestions for how to alleviate these social problems. As the emphasis shifted from social reform to objective analyses, the abstract models of society developed by sociologist Talcott Parsons (1902–1979) influenced a generation of sociologists. These models of how the parts of society work together harmoniously did nothing to stimulate social activism.

Another sociologist, C. Wright Mills (1916–1962), deplored such theoretical abstractions. Trying to push the pendulum the other way, he urged sociologists to get back to social reform. In his writings, he warned that the nation faced an imminent threat to freedom—the coalescing of interests of a *power elite,* the top leaders of business, politics, and the military. Shortly after Mills' death came the turbulent late 1960s and the 1970s. This precedent-shaking era sparked interest in social activism, making Mills' ideas popular among a new generation of sociologists.
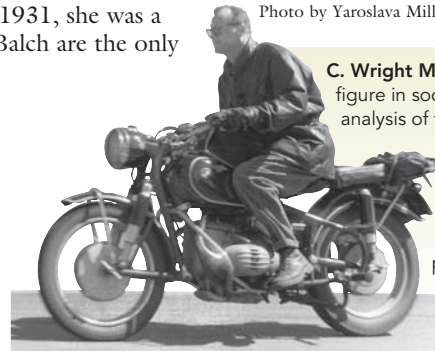
The Continuing Tension: Basic, Applied, and Public Sociology

Basic Sociology.   As we have seen, two contradictory aims—analyzing society versus working toward its reform—have run through North American sociology since its founding. This tension is still with us. As we saw in Figure 2, some sociologists see their proper role as doing **basic** (or **pure**) **sociology,** analyzing some aspect of society with no goal other than gaining knowledge. Others reply, "Knowledge for what?" They argue that gaining knowledge through research is not enough, that sociologists need to use their expertise to help reform society, especially to help bring justice and better conditions to the poor and oppressed.

Applied Sociology. As Figure 4 shows, one attempt to go beyond basic sociology is **applied sociology,** using sociology to solve problems. Applied sociology goes back

basic or **pure sociology** sociological research for the purpose of making discoveries about life in human groups, not for making changes in those groups

applied sociology the use of sociology to solve problems— from the micro level of classroom interaction and family relationships to the macro level of crime and pollution

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FIGURE 4   **Comparing Basic and Applied Sociology**

BASIC SOCIOLOGY

Audience: Fellow sociologists and anyone interested
Product: Knowledge

PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

APPLIED SOCIOLOGY

Audience: Clients
Product: Change

| 1 Constructing theory and testing hypotheses | 2 Research on basic social life, on how groups affect people | 3 The middle ground: criticisms of society and social policy | 4 Analyzing problems, evaluating programs, and suggesting solutions | 5 Implementing solutions (clinical sociology) |

Source: By the author. Based on DeMartini 1982, plus events since then.

What is the difference between basic and applied sociology?

to the roots of sociology, for as you have seen, sociologists founded the NAACP. Today's applied sociologists lack the broad vision that the early sociologists had of reforming society, but their application of sociology is wide-ranging. Some work for business firms to solve problems in the workplace, while others investigate social problems such as pornography, rape, pollution, or the spread of AIDS. Sociology is even being applied to find ways to disrupt terrorist groups (Sageman 2008a). To see some of the variety of work that applied sociologists do, look at the Down-to-Earth Sociology box below.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Careers in Sociology: What Applied Sociologists Do

Most sociologists teach in colleges and universities, where they share sociological knowledge with students, as your instructor is doing with you in this course. Applied sociologists, in contrast, work in a wide variety of areas—from counseling children to studying how diseases are transmitted. To give you an idea of this variety, let's look over the shoulders of five applied sociologists.

Leslie Green, who does marketing research at Vanderveer Group in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, earned her bachelor's degree in sociology at Shippensburg University. She helps to develop strategies to get doctors to prescribe particular drugs. She sets up the meetings, locates moderators for the discussion groups, and arranges payments to the physicians who participate in the research. "My training in sociology," she says, "helps me in 'people skills.' It helps me to understand the needs of different groups, and to interact with them."

Stanley Capela, whose master's degree is from Fordham University, works as an applied sociologist at HeartShare Human Services in New York City. He evaluates how children's programs—such as ones that focus on housing, AIDS, group homes, and preschool education—actually work, compared with how they are supposed to work. He spots problems and suggests solutions. One of his assignments was to find out why it was taking so long to get children adopted, even though there was a long list of eager adoptive parents. Capela pinpointed how the paperwork got bogged down as it was routed through the system and suggested ways to improve the flow of paperwork.

Laurie Banks, who received her master's degree in sociology from Fordham University, analyzes statistics for the New York City Health Department. As she examined death certificates, she noticed that a Polish neighborhood had a high

How can Dora the Explorer be an example of applied sociology? The text explains the reason.
©Nickelodeon/Courtesy Everett Collection

rate of stomach cancer. She alerted the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which conducted interviews in the neighborhood. Scientists from the CDC traced the cause to eating large amounts of sausage. In another case, Banks compared birth certificates with school records. She found that lack of prenatal care and problems at birth—low birth weight and birth complications—were linked to low reading skills and behavior problems in school.

Daniel Knapp, who earned a doctorate from the University of Oregon, applied sociology by going to the city dump. Moved by the idea that urban wastes could be recycled and reused, he first tested this idea by scavenging in a small way—at the city dump at Berkeley, California. After starting a company called Urban Ore, Knapp (2005) did research on how to recycle urban wastes and worked to change waste disposal laws. As a founder of the recycling movement in the United States, Knapp's application of sociology continues to influence us all.

Clara Rodriguez, who earned her doctorate at the University of Washington, also illustrates how wide-ranging applied sociology is. Rodriguez is the sociological consultant for *Dora the Explorer*. She advises on the social implications of what the viewers will see on this program. This ranges from advice about Dora as a girl role model to what aspects of Latino culture to present and even to colors, music, and Spanish phrases (Havrilla 2010).

From just these few examples, you can catch a glimpse of the variety of work that applied sociologists do. Some work for corporations, some are employed by government and private agencies, and others run their own businesses. You can also see that you don't need a doctorate in order to work as an applied sociologist.

Can you explain what applied sociology is?

Public Sociology. To get sociologists to apply sociology in a broader way, the American Sociological Association (ASA) is promoting a middle ground between research and reform called **public sociology.** By this term, the ASA refers to harnessing the sociological perspective for the benefit of the public. Of special interest to the ASA is getting politicians and policy makers to apply the sociological understanding of how society works as they develop social policy (American Sociological Association 2004). Public sociology would incorporate both items 3 and 4 of Figure 4.

The lines between basic, applied, and public sociology are not always firm. In the Cultural Diversity box, you can see how basic sociology can morph into public sociology.

public sociology applying sociology for the public good; especially the use of the sociological perspective (how things are related to one another) to guide politicians and policy makers

Cultural Diversity in the United States

Unanticipated Public Sociology: Studying Job Discrimination

Basic sociology—research aimed at learning more about some behavior—can turn into public sociology. Here is what happened to Devah Pager (2003) when she was a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. She was doing volunteer work in a homeless shelter, and some of the men told her how hard it was to find work if they had been in prison. Were the men exaggerating? she wondered. To find out what difference a prison record makes in getting a job, she sent pairs of college men to apply for 350 entry-level jobs in Milwaukee. One team was African American, and one

U.S.A.

was white. Pager prepared identical résumés for the teams, but with one difference: On each team, one of the men said he had served eighteen months in prison for possession of cocaine.

Figure 5 shows the difference that the prison record made. Men without a prison record were two or three times more likely to be called back.

But Pager came up with another significant finding. Look at the difference that race–ethnicity made. White men with a prison record were more likely to be offered a job than African American men who had a clean record!

Sociological research often remains in obscure journals, read by only a few specialists. But Pager's findings got around, turning basic research into public sociology. Someone told President George W. Bush about the research, and he announced in his State of the Union speech that he wanted Congress to fund a $300 million program to provide mentoring and other support to help former prisoners get jobs (Kroeger 2004).

Pager repeated her research in New York City and found similar results (Pager et al. 2009).

As you can see, sometimes only a thin line separates basic and public sociology.

FIGURE 5 Call-Back Rates by Race–Ethnicity and Criminal Record

- Without criminal record
- With criminal record

Whites: 34, 17
African Americans: 14, 5
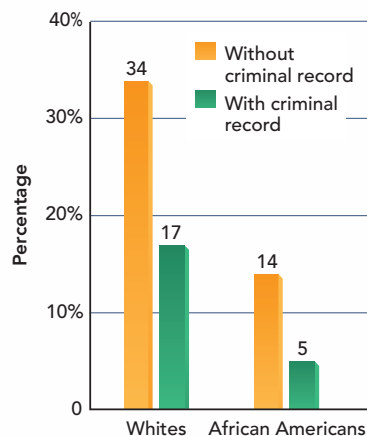
Source: Courtesy of Devah Pager.
Figure from "The Mark of a Criminal Record" by Devah Pager, from AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY, March 2003. Volume 108(5). Copyright © 2003 by Devah Pager. Reprinted with permission by University of Chicago Press.

For Your Consideration

➔ What findings would you expect if women had been included in this study?

Can you explain what public sociology is?

Social Reform Is Risky.   As some sociologists have found, often to their displeasure, promoting social reform is risky. This is especially the case if they work with oppressed people to demand social change. What someone wants to "reform" is inevitably something that someone else wants to keep just the way it is. Those who resist change can be formidable opponents—and well connected politically. For their efforts, some sociologists have been fired. In a couple of cases, entire departments of sociology have even been taken over by their university administrators for "taking sociology to the streets," siding with the poor and showing them how to use the law to improve their lives.

With roots that go back a century or more, this contemporary debate about the purpose and use of sociology is likely to continue for another generation. At this point, let's consider how theory fits into sociology.

Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

Facts never interpret themselves. To make sense out of life, we use our common sense. That is, to understand our experiences (our "facts"), we place them into a framework of more-or-less related ideas. Sociologists do this, too, but they place their observations into a conceptual framework called a theory. A **theory** is a general statement about how some parts of the world fit together and how they work. It is an explanation of how two or more "facts" are related to one another.

Sociologists use three major theories: symbolic interactionism, functional analysis, and conflict theory. Each theory is like a lens through which we can view social life. Let's first examine the main elements of each theory, and then apply each to the U.S. divorce rate to see why it is so high. As we do this, you will see how each theory, or perspective, provides a distinct interpretation of social life.

Symbolic Interactionism

The central idea of **symbolic interactionism** is that *symbols*—things to which we attach meaning—are the key to understanding how we view the world and communicate with one another. George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) and Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) developed this perspective in sociology. Let's look at the main elements of this theory.

Symbols in Everyday Life.   Without symbols, our social life would be no more sophisticated than that of animals. For example, without symbols we would have no aunts or uncles, employers or teachers—or even brothers and sisters. I know that this sounds strange, but it is symbols that define our relationships. There would still be reproduction, of course, but no symbols to tell us how we are related to whom. We would not know to whom we owe respect and obligations, or from whom we can expect privileges—two elements that lie at the essence of human relationships.

I know it is vague to say that symbols tell you how you are related to others and how you should act toward them, so let's make this less abstract:

Suppose that you have fallen head over heels in love. Finally, after what seems forever, it is the night before your wedding. As you are contemplating tomorrow's bliss, your mother comes to you in tears. Sobbing, she tells you that she had a child before she married your father, a child that she gave up for adoption. Breaking down, she says that she has just discovered that the person you are going to marry is this child.

You can see how the symbol will change overnight—and your behavior, too! The symbols "boyfriend" and "brother"—or "girlfriend" and "sister"—are certainly different, and, as you know, each symbol requires rather different behavior.

Not only do relationships depend on symbols, but so does society itself. Without symbols, we could not coordinate our actions with

theory a general statement about how some parts of the world fit together and how they work; an explanation of how two or more facts are related to one another

symbolic interactionism a theoretical perspective in which society is viewed as composed of symbols that people use to establish meaning, develop their views of the world, and communicate with one another

University of Chicago

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) is one of the founders of symbolic interactionism, a major theoretical perspective in sociology. He taught at the University of Chicago, where his lectures were popular. Although he wrote little, after his death students compiled his lectures into an influential book, *Mind, Self, and Society*.
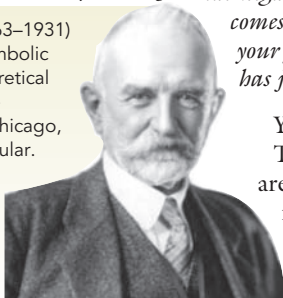
How are symbols the basis of human relationships?

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those of others. We could not make plans for a future day, time, and place. Unable to specify times, materials, sizes, or goals, we could not build bridges and highways. Without symbols, we would have no movies or musical instruments, no hospitals, no government, no religion. The class you are taking could not exist—nor could this book. On the positive side, there would be no war.

In Sum: Symbolic interactionists analyze how social life depends on the ways we define ourselves and others. They study face-to-face interaction, examining how people make sense out of life and their place in it.

Applying Symbolic Interactionism. Look at Figure 6, which shows U.S. marriages and divorces over time. Let's see how symbolic interactionists would use changing symbols to explain this figure. For background, you should understand that marriage used to be a *lifelong commitment*. A hundred years ago (and less) getting divorced was viewed as immoral, a flagrant disregard for public opinion, and the abandonment of adult responsibilities. Let's see what changed.

The meaning of marriage: By the 1930s, young people were coming to view marriage in a different way, a change that was reported by sociologists of the time. In 1933, William Ogburn observed that they were placing more emphasis on the personality of potential mates. Then in 1945, Ernest Burgess and Harvey Locke noted that people were expecting more affection, understanding, and compatibility in marriage. As marriage came to be viewed as an arrangement that was based less on duty and obligation and more on feelings—attraction and intimacy—it became one that could be broken when feelings changed.

The meaning of divorce: As divorce became more common, its meaning also changed. Rather than being a symbol of failure, divorce came to indicate freedom and new beginnings. Removing the stigma from divorce shattered a strong barrier that had prevented husbands and wives from breaking up.

FIGURE 6 **U.S. Marriage, U.S. Divorce**
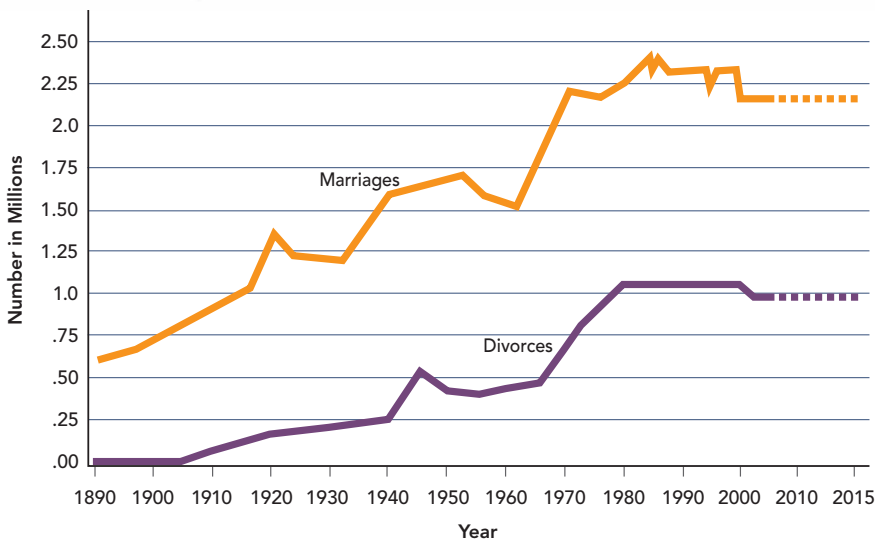
Source: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 1998:Table 92 and 2011:Tables 78, 129; earlier editions for earlier years. The broken lines indicate the author's estimates.

How would a symbolic interactionist explain the increase in U.S. divorce?

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functional analysis a theoretical framework in which society is viewed as composed of various parts, each with a function that, when fulfilled, contributes to society's equilibrium; also known as *functionalism* and *structural functionalism*

The meaning of parenthood: Parents used to have little responsibility for their children beyond providing food, clothing, shelter, and moral guidance. And they needed to do this for only a short time, because children began to contribute to the support of the family early in life. Among many people, parenthood is still like this. In Colombia, for example, children of the poor often are expected to support themselves by the age of 8 or 10. In industrial societies, however, we assume that children are vulnerable beings who must depend on their parents for financial and emotional support for many years—often until they are well into their 20s. The greater responsibilities that we assign to parenthood place heavy burdens on today's couples and, with them, more strain on marriage.

The meaning of love: And we can't overlook the love symbol. As surprising as it may sound, to have love as the main reason for marriage is to weaken marriage. In some depth of our being, we expect "true love" to deliver constant emotional highs. This expectation sets people up for crushed hopes, as dissatisfactions in marriage are inevitable. When they come, spouses tend to blame one another for failing to deliver the expected satisfaction.

In Sum: Symbolic interactionists look at how changing ideas (or symbols) of love, marriage, relationships, parenthood, and divorce put pressure on married couples. No single change is *the* cause of our divorce rate, but, taken together, these changes provide a strong push toward divorce by making it more acceptable.

Functional Analysis

The central idea of **functional analysis** is that society is a whole unit, made up of interrelated parts that work together. Functional analysis (also known as *functionalism* and *structural functionalism*) is rooted in the origins of sociology. Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer viewed society as a kind of living organism. Just as a person or animal has organs that function together, they wrote, so does society. And like an organism, if society is to function smoothly, its parts must work together in harmony.

Emile Durkheim also viewed society as being composed of many parts, each with its own function. When all the parts of society fulfill their functions, society is in a "normal" state. If they do not fulfill their functions, society is in an "abnormal" or "pathological" state. To understand society, then, functionalists say that we need to look at both *structure* (how the parts of a society fit together to make the whole) and *function* (what each part does, how it contributes to society).

Robert Merton and Functionalism. Robert Merton (1910–2003) dismissed the organic analogy, but he did maintain the essence of functionalism—the image of society as a whole being composed of parts that work together. Merton used the term *functions* to refer to the beneficial consequences of people's actions: Functions help keep a group (society, social system) in balance. In contrast, *dysfunctions* are the harmful consequences of people's actions. They undermine a system's equilibrium.

Functions can be either manifest or latent. If an action is *intended* to help some part of a system, it is a *manifest function*. For example, suppose that government officials become concerned that women are having so few children. Congress offers a $10,000 bonus for every child born to a married couple. The intention, or manifest function, of the bonus is to increase childbearing within the family unit. Merton pointed out that people's actions can also have *latent functions;* that is, they can have *unintended* consequences that help a system adjust. Let's suppose that the bonus works. As the birth rate jumps, so does the sale of diapers and baby furniture. Because the benefits to these businesses were not the intended consequences, they are latent functions of the bonus.

Of course, human actions can also hurt a system. Because such consequences usually are unintended, Merton called them *latent dysfunctions*. Let's assume that

Pictorial Parade/Getty Images

Robert K. Merton (1910–2003), who spent most of his academic career at Columbia University, was a major proponent of functionalism, one of the main theoretical perspectives in sociology.
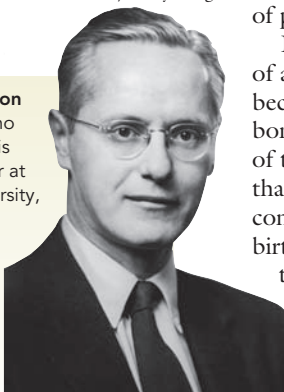
What are the basic ideas of functional analysis? Manifest functions? Latent functions?

the government has failed to specify a "stopping point" with regard to its bonus system. To collect more bonuses, some people keep on having children. The more children they have, however, the more they need the next bonus to survive. Large families become common, and poverty increases. Welfare is reinstated, taxes jump, and the nation erupts in protest. Because these results were not intended and because they harmed the social system, they would be latent dysfunctions of the bonus program.

In Sum: From the perspective of functional analysis, society is a functioning unit, with each part related to the whole. Whenever we examine a smaller part, we need to look for its functions and dysfunctions to see how it is related to the larger unit. This basic approach can be applied to any social group, whether an entire society, a college, or even a group as small as a family.

Applying Functional Analysis.   Now let's apply functional analysis to the U.S. divorce rate. Functionalists stress that industrialization and urbanization undermined the traditional functions of the family. For example, before industrialization, the family formed an economic team. On the farm, where most people lived, each family member had jobs or "chores" to do. The wife was in charge not only of household tasks but also of raising small animals, such as chickens, milking cows, collecting eggs, and churning butter. She also did the cooking, baking, canning, sewing, darning, washing, and cleaning. The daughters helped her. The husband was responsible for caring for large animals, such as horses and cattle, for planting and harvesting, and for maintaining buildings and tools. The sons helped him.

Sociologists who use the *functionalist perspective* stress how industrialization and urbanization undermined the traditional *functions* of the family. Before industrialization, members of the family worked together as an economic unit, as in this photo of a farm family in Nebraska in the 1890s. As production moved away from the home, it took with it first the father and, more recently, the mother. One consequence is a major dysfunction, the weakening of family ties.

Bettmann/CORBIS

What are latent dysfunctions? How have family functions changed?

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This certainly doesn't sound like life today! But what does it have to do with divorce? Simply put, the husband and wife depended on each other for survival—and there weren't many alternatives.

Other functions also bound family members to one another: educating the children, teaching them religion, providing home-based recreation, and caring for the sick and elderly. To further see how sharply family functions have changed, look at this example from the 1800s:

> *When Phil became sick, he was nursed by Ann, his wife. She cooked for him, fed him, changed the bed linens, bathed him, read to him from the Bible, and gave him his medicine. (She did this in addition to doing the housework and taking care of their six children.) Phil was also surrounded by the children, who shouldered some of his chores while he was sick. When Phil died, the male neighbors and relatives made the casket while Ann, her mother, and female friends washed and dressed the body. Phil was then "laid out" in the front parlor (the formal living room), where friends, neighbors, and relatives paid their last respects. From there, friends moved his body to the church for the final message and then to the grave they themselves had dug.*

In Sum: When the family loses functions, it becomes more fragile, making an increase in divorce inevitable. These changes in economic production illustrate how the family has lost functions. No longer is making a living a cooperative, home-based effort, with husband and wife depending on one another for their interlocking contributions to a mutual endeavor. Instead, husbands and wives today earn individual paychecks and increasingly function as separate components in an impersonal, multinational, and even global system. The fewer functions that family members share, the fewer are their "ties that bind"—and these ties are what help husbands and wives get through the problems they inevitably experience.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory provides a third perspective on social life. Unlike the functionalists, who view society as a harmonious whole, with its parts working together, conflict theorists stress that society is composed of groups that are competing with one another for scarce resources. The surface might show cooperation, but scratch that surface and you will find a struggle for power.

Karl Marx and Conflict Theory. Karl Marx, the founder of conflict theory, witnessed the Industrial Revolution that transformed Europe. He saw that peasants who had left the land to work in cities earned barely enough to eat. Things were so bad that the average worker died at age 30, the average wealthy person at age 50 (Edgerton 1992:87). Shocked by this suffering and exploitation, Marx began to analyze society and history. As he did so, he developed **conflict theory.** He concluded that the key to human history is *class conflict*. In each society, some small group controls the means of production and exploits those who are not in control. In industrialized societies, the struggle is between the *bourgeoisie,* the small group of capitalists who own the means to produce wealth, and the *proletariat,* the mass of workers who are exploited by the bourgeoisie. The capitalists control the legal and political system: If the workers rebel, the capitalists call on the power of the state to subdue them.

When Marx made his observations, capitalism was in its infancy and workers were at the mercy of their employers. Workers had none of what we take for granted today—minimum wages, eight-hour days, coffee breaks, five-day work weeks, paid vacations and holidays, medical benefits, sick leave, unemployment compensation, Social Security, and, for union workers, the right to strike. Marx's analysis reminds us that these benefits came not from generous hearts, but by workers forcing concessions from their employers.

conflict theory a theoretical framework in which society is viewed as composed of groups that are competing for scarce resources

How would a functionalist explain the increase in U.S. divorce? What is class conflict?

Conflict Theory Today.   Many sociologists extend conflict theory beyond the relationship of capitalists and workers. They examine how opposing interests run through every layer of society—whether in a small group, an organization, a community, or the entire society. For example, when police, teachers, and parents try to enforce conformity, this creates resentment and resistance. It is the same when a teenager tries to "change the rules" to gain more independence. Throughout society, then, there is a constant struggle to determine who has authority or influence and how far that dominance goes (Turner 1978; Leeson 2006; Piven 2008).

Sociologist Lewis Coser (1913–2003) pointed out that conflict is most likely to develop among people who are in close relationships. These people have worked out ways to distribute power and privilege, responsibilities and rewards. Any change in this arrangement can lead to hurt feelings, resentment, and conflict. Even in intimate relationships, then, people are in a constant balancing act, with conflict lying uneasily just beneath the surface.

Feminists and Conflict Theory.   Just as Marx examined conflict between capitalists and workers, many feminists analyze conflict between men and women. Their primary focus is the historical, contemporary, and global inequalities of men and women—and how the traditional dominance by men can be overcome to bring about equality of the sexes. Feminists are not united by the conflict perspective, however. They tackle a variety of topics and use whatever theory applies.

Applying Conflict Theory.   To explain why the U.S. divorce rate is high, conflict theorists focus on how men's and women's relationships have changed. For millennia, men dominated women, and women had few alternatives other than to accept their exploitation. As industrialization transformed the world, it brought women the ability to meet their basic survival needs without being married. This new ability gave them the power to refuse to bear burdens that earlier generations accepted as inevitable. The result is that today's women are likely to dissolve a marriage that becomes intolerable—or even just unsatisfactory.

In Sum: The dominance of men over women was once considered natural and right. As women gained education and earnings, however, they first questioned and then rejected this assumption. As wives strove for more power and grew less inclined to put up with relationships that they defined as unfair, the divorce rate increased. From the conflict perspective, then, our high divorce rate does not mean that marriage has weakened, but, rather, that women are making headway in their historical struggle with men.

Putting the Theoretical Perspectives Together

Which of these theoretical perspectives is *the* right one? As you have seen, each is a lens that produces a contrasting picture of divorce, with each picture quite different from the commonsense understanding that two people divorce because they are "incompatible." Because these perspectives focus on different features of social life, we need to use all three to analyze human behavior. By combining the contributions of each, we gain a more comprehensive picture of social life.

Levels of Analysis: Macro and Micro

A major difference between these three theoretical perspectives is their level of analysis. Functionalists and conflict theorists focus on the **macro level;** that is, they examine large-scale patterns of society. In contrast, symbolic interactionists usually focus on the **micro level,** on **social interaction**—what people do when they are in one another's presence. These levels are summarized in Table 1.

macro-level analysis an examination of large-scale patterns of society

micro-level analysis an examination of small-scale patterns of society; such as how the members of a group interact

social interaction one person's actions influencing someone else; usually refers to what people do when they are in one another's presence, but also includes communications at a distance

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How would a conflict theorist explain the increase in U.S. divorce? Why do we need all three theoretical perspectives?

TABLE 1	Three Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology			
Theoretical Perspective	Usual Level of Analysis	Focus of Analysis	Key Terms	Applying the Perspective to the U.S. Divorce Rate
Symbolic Interactionism	Microsociological: examines small-scale patterns of social interaction	Face-to-face interaction, how people use symbols to create social life	Symbols Interaction Meanings Definitions	Industrialization and urbanization changed marital roles and led to a redefinition of love, marriage, children, and divorce.
Functional Analysis (also called functionalism and structural functionalism)	Macrosociological: examines large-scale patterns of society	Relationships among the parts of society; how these parts are functional (have beneficial consequences) or dysfunctional (have negative consequences)	Structure Functions (manifest and latent) Dysfunctions Equilibrium	As social change erodes the traditional functions of the family, family ties weaken, and the divorce rate increases.
Conflict Theory	Macrosociological: examines large-scale patterns of society	The struggle for scarce resources by groups in a society; how the elites use their power to control the weaker groups	Inequality Power Conflict Competition Exploitation	When men control economic life, the divorce rate is low because women find few alternatives to a bad marriage. The high divorce rate reflects a shift in the balance of power between men and women.

To make this distinction between micro and macro levels clearer, let's return to the example of the homeless, with which we opened this chapter. To study homeless people, symbolic interactionists would focus on the micro level. They would analyze what homeless people do when they are in shelters and on the streets. They would also analyze their communications, both their talk and their **nonverbal interaction** (gestures, use of space, and so on). The observations I made at the beginning of this chapter about the silence in the homeless shelter, for example, would be of interest to symbolic interactionists.

This micro level, however, would not interest functionalists and conflict theorists. They would focus instead on the macro level, how changes in society increase homelessness. Functionalists might focus on changes in the family—how because of divorce and small families many people who can't find work don't have others to fall back on. For their part, conflict theorists would stress the struggle between social classes. They would be interested in how decisions by international elites on global production and trade affect the local job market, and along with it unemployment and homelessness.

Trends Shaping the Future of Sociology

Two major trends indicate changing directions in sociology. Let's look again at the relationship of sociology to social reform, and then at globalization.

Sociology's Tension: Research versus Reform

nonverbal interaction communication without words through gestures, use of space, silence, and so on

Three Stages in Sociology. As you have seen, a tension between social reform and social analysis runs through the history of sociology. To better understand this tension,

What are macro and micro levels of analysis? How do these levels apply to the three theoretical perspectives?

we can divide sociology into three time periods (Lazarsfeld and Reitz 1989). During the *first* phase, which lasted until the 1920s, the primary purpose of research was to improve society. During the *second* phase, from the 1920s until World War II, the concern switched to developing abstract knowledge. We are now in a *third* phase, which began around the end of World War II, in which sociologists increasingly seek ways to apply their research findings. Many sociology departments offer courses in applied sociology, with some offering internships in applied sociology at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Diversity of Orientations.   I want to stress that sociology is filled with diverse opinions. (From my observations, I would say that when two sociologists meet, they will express three firmly held, contradictory opinions.) In any event, to divide sociology into three separate phases overlooks as much as it reveals. During the first phase, for example, some leading sociologists campaigned against helping the poor, saying that their deaths were good for the progress of society (Stokes 2009). Similarly, during the second phase, many sociologists who wanted to reform society chafed at the emphasis on understanding. And today, many sociologists want the emphasis to remain on basic sociology. Some say that applied sociology is not "real" sociology; it is just social work or psychology masquerading as sociology. As you can see, sociologists do not move in lockstep toward a single goal.

Each particular period, however, does have basic emphases, and this division of sociology into three phases pinpoints major trends. The tension that has run through sociology—between gaining knowledge and applying knowledge—will continue. During this current phase, the pendulum is swinging toward applying sociological knowledge.

Globalization

A second major trend, globalization, is also leaving its mark on sociology. **Globalization** is the breaking down of national boundaries because of advances in communications, trade, and travel. Because the United States dominates sociology and we U.S. sociologists tend to concentrate on events and relationships that occur in our own country, most of our findings are based on U.S. samples. Globalization is destined to broaden our horizons, directing us to a greater consideration of global issues. This, in turn, is likely to motivate us to try more vigorously to identify universal principles.

Application of Globalization to This Text.   You are living at a great historical moment, something that isn't easy to do. You are personally experiencing globalization, one of the most significant events in all of world history. This process is shaping your life, your hopes, and your future—sometimes even twisting them. As globalization shrinks the globe, that is, as people around the world become more interconnected within the same global village, your welfare is increasingly tied to that of people in other nations. From time to time in the following pages, you will also explore how the **globalization of capitalism**—capitalism becoming the world's dominant economic system—is having profound effects on your life. You will also confront the developing *new world order,* which, if it can shave off its rough edges, also appears destined to play a significant role in your future.

To help broaden your horizons, in this text you will visit many cultures around the world, looking at what life is like for the people who live in those cultures. Seeing how *their* society affects their behavior and orientations to life should help you understand how *your* society influences what you do and how you feel about life. This, of course, takes you to one of the main goals of this book.

I wish you a fascinating sociological journey, one with new insights around every corner.

globalization the growing interconnections among nations due to the expansion of capitalism

globalization of capitalism capitalism (investing to make profits within a rational system) becoming the globe's dominant economic system

How does a tension between social reform and social analysis run through sociology? How does globalization apply to this text?

Summary and Review

The Sociological Perspective

What is the sociological perspective?

The **sociological perspective** stresses that people's social experiences—the groups to which they belong and their experiences within these groups—underlie their behavior. C. Wright Mills referred to this as the intersection of biography (the individual) and history (social factors that influence the individual).

Sociology and the Other Sciences

What is science, and where does sociology fit in?

Science is the application of systematic methods to obtain knowledge and the knowledge obtained by those methods. The sciences are divided into the **natural sciences,** which seek to explain and predict events in the natural environment, and the **social sciences**, which seek to understand the social world objectively by means of controlled and repeated observations. **Sociology** is the scientific study of society and human behavior.

Origins of Sociology

When did sociology first appear as a separate discipline?

Sociology emerged as a separate discipline in the mid-1800s in western Europe, during the onset of the Industrial Revolution. Industrialization affected all aspects of human existence—where people lived, the nature of their work, their relationships, and how they viewed life. Early sociologists who focused on these social changes include Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Harriet Martineau, and W. E. B. Du Bois.

Values in Sociological Research

Should the purpose of social research be only to advance human understanding or also to reform society?

Sociologists agree that research should be objective, that is, that the researcher's **values** and beliefs should not influence conclusions. But sociologists do not agree on the uses and purposes of social research. Some say that its purpose should be only to advance understanding of human behavior; others that its goal should be to reform harmful social arrangements.

Verstehen and Social Facts

How do sociologists use *Verstehen* and social facts to study human behavior?

According to Weber, to understand why people act as they do, sociologists must try to put themselves in their shoes. He used the German verb *Verstehen,* "to grasp by insight," to describe this essentially subjective approach. Although not denying the importance of *Verstehen,* Emile Durkheim emphasized the importance of uncovering **social facts,** social conditions that influence how people behave. Contemporary sociologists use both approaches to understand human behavior.

Sociology in North America

When were the first academic departments of sociology established in the United States?

The earliest departments of sociology were established in the late 1800s at the universities of Kansas, Chicago, and Atlanta.

What was the position of women and minorities in early sociology?

Sociology developed during a historical period of deep sexism and racism, and the contributions of women and minorities were largely ignored. The few women, such as Harriet Martineau, and minorities, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, who received the education necessary to become sociologists felt the sting of discrimination.

What is the difference between basic (or pure) and applied sociology?

Basic (or **pure**) **sociology** is sociological research whose purpose is to make discoveries. In contrast, **applied sociology** is the use of sociology to solve problems.

Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

What is a theory?

A **theory** is a general statement about how facts are related to one another. A theory provides a conceptual framework for interpreting facts.

What are sociology's major theoretical perspectives?

Sociologists use three primary theoretical frameworks to interpret social life. **Symbolic interactionists** examine

how people use symbols to develop and share their views of the world. Symbolic interactionists usually focus on the **micro level**—on small-scale, face-to-face interaction. **Functionalists,** in contrast, focus on the **macro level**—on large-scale patterns of society. They stress that a social system is made up of interrelated parts. When working properly, each part fulfills a function that contributes to the system's stability. **Conflict theorists** also focus on large-scale patterns of society. They stress that society is composed of competing groups that struggle for scarce resources.

With each perspective focusing on different features of social life and each providing a unique interpretation, no single theory is adequate. The combined insights of all three perspectives yield a more comprehensive picture of social life.

Trends Shaping the Future of Sociology
What trends are likely to have an impact on sociology?
Sociology has gone through three phases: The first was an emphasis on reforming society; the second had its focus on basic sociology; the third, today's phase, is taking us closer to our roots of applying sociology to social change. **Public sociology** is the most recent example of this change. A second major trend, **globalization,** is likely to broaden sociological horizons, refocusing research and theory away from its concentration on U.S. society.

Thinking Critically about this Chapter

1. Do you think that sociologists should try to reform society or to study it dispassionately?
2. Of the three theoretical perspectives, which one would you prefer to use if you were a sociologist? Why?
3. Considering the macro- and micro-level approaches in sociology, which one do you think better explains social life? Why?

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Culture

Culture

When I first arrived in Morocco, I found the sights that greeted me exotic—not unlike the scenes in *Casablanca* or *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. The men, women, and even the children really did wear those white robes that reached down to their feet. What was especially striking was that the women were almost totally covered. Despite the heat, they wore not only full-length gowns but also head coverings that reached down over their foreheads with veils that covered their faces from the nose down. You could see nothing but their eyes—and every eye seemed the same shade of brown.

And how short everyone was! The Arab women looked to be, on average, 5 feet, and the men only about three or four inches taller. As the only blue-eyed, blond, 6-foot-plus person around, and the only one who was wearing jeans and a pullover shirt, in a world of white-robed short people I stood out like a creature from another planet. Everyone stared. No matter where I went, they stared. Wherever I looked, I saw people watching me intently. Even staring back had no effect. It was so different from home, where, if you caught someone staring at you, that person would look embarrassed and immediately glance away.

> "Everyone stared. No matter where I went, they stared."

And lines? The concept apparently didn't even exist. Buying a ticket for a bus or train meant pushing and shoving toward the ticket man (always a man—no women were visible in any public position), who took the money from whichever outstretched hand he decided on.

And germs? That notion didn't seem to exist here either. Flies swarmed over the food in the restaurants and the unwrapped loaves of bread in the stores. Shopkeepers would considerately shoo off the flies before handing me a loaf. They also offered home delivery. I watched a bread vendor deliver a loaf to a woman who was standing on a second-floor balcony. She first threw her money to the bread vendor, and he then threw the unwrapped bread up to her. Unfortunately, his throw was off. The bread bounced off the wrought-iron balcony railing and landed in the street, which was filled with people, wandering dogs, and the ever-present urinating and defecating donkeys. The vendor simply picked up the unwrapped loaf and threw it again. This certainly wasn't his day, for he missed again. But he made it on his third attempt. The woman smiled as she turned back into her apartment, apparently to prepare the noon meal for her family.

Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) California

What Is Culture?

What is culture? The concept is sometimes easier to grasp by description than by definition. For example, suppose you meet a young woman from India who has just arrived in the United States. That her culture is different from yours is immediately evident. You first see it in her clothing, jewelry, makeup, and hairstyle. Next you hear it in her speech. It then becomes apparent by her gestures. Later, you might hear her express unfamiliar beliefs about relationships or what is valuable in life. All of these characteristics are indicative of **culture**—the language, beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and even material objects that are passed from one generation to the next.

In northern Africa, I was surrounded by a culture quite different from mine. It was evident in everything I saw and heard. The **material culture**—such things as jewelry, art, buildings, weapons, machines, and even eating utensils, hairstyles, and clothing—provided a sharp contrast to what I was used to seeing. There is nothing inherently "natural" about material culture. That is, it is no more natural (or unnatural) to wear gowns on the street than it is to wear jeans.

I also found myself immersed in an unfamiliar **nonmaterial culture,** that is, a group's ways of thinking (its beliefs, values, and other assumptions about the world) and doing (its common *patterns of behavior*, including language, gestures, and other forms of interaction). North African assumptions that it is acceptable to stare at others in public and to push people aside to buy tickets are examples of nonmaterial culture. So are U.S. assumptions that it is wrong to do either of these things. Like material culture, neither custom is "right." People simply become comfortable with the customs they learn during childhood, and—as happened when I visited northern Africa—uncomfortable when their basic assumptions about life are challenged.

Culture and Taken-for-Granted Orientations to Life

To develop a sociological imagination, it is essential to understand how culture affects people's lives. If we meet someone from a different culture, the encounter may make us aware of culture's pervasive influence on all aspects of a person's life. Attaining the same level of awareness regarding our own culture, however, is quite another matter. We usually take *our* speech, *our* gestures, *our* beliefs, and *our* customs for granted. We assume that they are "normal" or "natural," and we almost always follow them without question. As anthropologist Ralph Linton (1936) said, "The last thing a fish would ever notice would be water." So also with people: Except in unusual circumstances, most characteristics of our own culture remain imperceptible to us.

Yet culture's significance is profound; it touches almost every aspect of who and what we are. We came into this life without a language; without values and morality; with no ideas about religion, war, money, love, use of space, and so on. We possessed none of these fundamental orientations that are so essential in determining the type of people we become. Yet by this point in our lives, we all have acquired them—and take them for granted. Sociologists call this *culture within us.* These learned and shared ways of believing and of doing (another definition of culture) penetrate our beings at an early age and quickly become part of our taken-for-granted assumptions about what normal behavior is. *Culture becomes the lens through which we perceive and evaluate what is going on around us.* Seldom do we question these assumptions, for, like water to a fish, the lens through which we view life remains largely beyond our perception.

The rare instances in which these assumptions are challenged, however, can be upsetting. Although as a sociologist I should be able to look at my own culture "from the outside," my trip to Africa quickly revealed how fully I had internalized my own culture. My upbringing in Western culture had given me assumptions about aspects of social life that had become rooted deeply in my being—appropriate eye contact, proper hygiene, and the use of space. But in this part of Africa these assumptions

culture the language, beliefs, values, norms, behaviors, and even material objects that characterize a group and are passed from one generation to the next

material culture the material objects that distinguish a group of people, such as their art, buildings, weapons, utensils, machines, hairstyles, clothing, and jewelry

nonmaterial culture a group's ways of thinking (including its beliefs, values, and other assumptions about the world) and doing (its common patterns of behavior, including language and other forms of interaction); also called *symbolic culture*

What is culture? How does it provide our basic orientations to life?

were useless in helping me navigate everyday life. No longer could I count on people to stare only surreptitiously, to take precautions against invisible microbes, or to stand in line in an orderly fashion, one behind the other.

As you can tell from the opening vignette, I found these unfamiliar behaviors unsettling, for they violated my basic expectations of "the way people *ought* to be"—and I did not even realize how firmly I held these expectations until they were challenged so abruptly. When my nonmaterial culture failed me—when it no longer enabled me to make sense out of the world—I experienced a disorientation known as **culture shock.** In the case of buying tickets, the fact that I was several inches taller than most Moroccans and thus able to outreach others helped me to adjust partially to their different ways of doing things. But I never did get used to the idea that pushing ahead of others was "right," and I always felt guilty when I used my size to receive preferential treatment.

AFP PHOTO/KARIM SAHIB/Newscom

What a tremendous photo for sociologists! Seldom are we treated to such cultural contrasts. Can you see how the cultures of these women have given them not only different orientations concerning the presentation of their bodies but also of gender relations, how they expect to relate to men?

Culture shock is a two-way street, of course. You can imagine what culture shock people from a tribal society would experience if they were thrust into the United States. This actually happened, as the Cultural Diversity box on the next page describes.

An important consequence of culture within us is **ethnocentrism,** a tendency to use our own group's ways of doing things as a yardstick for judging others. All of us learn that the ways of our own group are good, right, and even superior to other ways of life. As sociologist William Sumner (1906), who developed this concept, said, "One's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it." Ethnocentrism has both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, it creates in-group loyalties. On the negative side, ethnocentrism can lead to discrimination against people whose ways differ from ours.

The many ways in which culture affects our lives fascinate sociologists. In this chapter, we'll examine how profoundly culture influences everything we are and whatever we do. This will serve as a basis from which you can start to analyze your own assumptions of reality. I should give you a warning at this point: You might develop a changed perspective on social life and your role in it. If so, life will never look the same.

In Sum: To avoid losing track of the ideas under discussion, let's pause for a moment to summarize and, in some instances, clarify the principles we have covered.

1. There is nothing "natural" about material culture. Arabs wear gowns on the street and feel that it is natural to do so. Americans do the same with jeans.
2. There is nothing "natural" about nonmaterial culture. It is just as arbitrary to stand in line as to push and shove.
3. Culture penetrates deeply into our thinking, becoming a taken-for-granted lens through which we see the world and obtain our perception of reality.
4. Culture provides implicit instructions that tell us what we ought to do and how we ought to think. It establishes a fundamental basis for our decision making.
5. Culture also provides a "moral imperative"; that is, the culture that we internalize becomes the "right" way of doing things. (I, for example, believed deeply that it was wrong to push and shove to get ahead of others.)
6. Coming into contact with a radically different culture challenges our basic assumptions of life. (I experienced culture shock when I discovered that my deeply ingrained cultural ideas about hygiene and the use of personal space no longer applied.)
7. Although the particulars of culture differ from one group of people to another, culture itself is universal. That is, all people have culture, for a society cannot exist without developing shared, learned ways of dealing with the challenges of life.
8. All people are ethnocentric, which has both positive and negative consequences.

culture shock the disorientation that people experience when they come in contact with a fundamentally different culture and can no longer depend on their taken-for-granted assumptions about life

ethnocentrism the use of one's own culture as a yardstick for judging the ways of other individuals or societies, generally leading to a negative evaluation of their values, norms, and behaviors

What is culture shock? Ethnocentrism? How are they related to our assumptions about life?

Cultural Diversity in the United States

Culture Shock: The Arrival of the Hmong

Imagine that you were a member of a small tribal group in the mountains of Laos. Village life and the clan were all you knew. There were no schools, and you learned everything you needed to know from your relatives. U.S. agents recruited the men of your village to fight communists, and they gained a reputation as fierce fighters. When the U.S. forces were defeated in Vietnam, your people were moved to the United States so they wouldn't be killed in reprisal.

Here is what happened. Keep in mind that you had never seen a television or a newspaper and that you had never gone to school. Your entire world had been the village.

They put you in a big house with wings. It flew.

They gave you strange food on a tray. The Sani-Wipes were hard to chew.

After the trip, you were placed in a house. This was an adventure. You had never seen locks before, as no one locked up anything in the village. Most of the village homes didn't even have doors, much less locks.

You found the bathroom perplexing. At first, you tried to wash rice in the bowl of water, which seemed to be provided for this purpose. But when you pressed the handle, the water and rice disappeared. After you learned what the toilet was for, you found it difficult not to slip off the little white round thing when you stood on it. In the village, you didn't need a toilet seat when you squatted in a field to defecate.

When you threw water on the electric stove to put out the burner, it sparked and smoked. You became afraid to use the stove because it might explode.

And no one liked it when you tried to plant a vegetable garden in the park.

Your new world was so different that, to help you adjust, the settlement agency told you (Fadiman 1997):

1. To send mail, you must use stamps.
2. The door of the refrigerator must be shut.
3. Do not stand or squat on the toilet since it may break.
4. Always ask before picking your neighbor's flowers, fruit, or vegetables.
5. In colder areas you must wear shoes, socks, and appropriate outerwear. Otherwise, you may become ill.
6. Always use a handkerchief or a tissue to blow your nose in public places or inside a public building.
7. Picking your nose or ears in public is frowned upon in the United States.
8. Never urinate in the street. This creates a smell that is offensive to Americans. They also believe that it causes disease.

To help the Hmong assimilate, U.S. officials dispersed them across the nation. This, they felt, would help them to adjust to the dominant culture and prevent a Hmong subculture from developing. The dispersal brought feelings of isolation to the clan- and village-based Hmong. As soon as they had a chance, the Hmong moved from these towns scattered across the country to live in areas with other Hmong, the major one being in California's Central Valley. Here they renewed village relationships and helped one another adjust to the society they had never desired to join.

GARY PORTER/KRT/Newscom

Children make a fast adjustment to a new culture, although, as with this Hmong child and her grandmother in Minneapolis, they are caught between the old and the new.

For Your Consideration

➤ Do you think you would have reacted differently if you had been a displaced Hmong? Why did the Hmong need one another more than their U.S. neighbors to adjust to their new life? What cultural shock do you think a U.S.-born 19-year-old Hmong would experience if his or her parents decided to return to Laos?

U.S.A.

Practicing Cultural Relativism

cultural relativism not judging a culture but trying to understand it on its own terms

To counter our tendency to use our own culture as the standard by which we judge other cultures, we can practice **cultural relativism;** that is, we can try to understand a culture on its own terms. This means looking at how the elements of a culture fit together, without judging those elements as superior or inferior to our own way of life.

Why did the Hmong need their fellow villagers to help them adjust to American life? What is cultural relativism?

With our own culture embedded so deeply within us, however, practicing cultural relativism can challenge our orientations to life. For example, most U.S. citizens appear to have strong feelings against raising bulls for the purpose of stabbing them to death in front of crowds that shout "Olé!" According to cultural relativism, however, bullfighting must be viewed from the perspective of the culture in which it takes place—*its* history, *its* folklore, *its* ideas of bravery, and *its* ideas of sex roles.

You may still regard bullfighting as wrong, of course, particularly if your culture, which is deeply ingrained in you, has no history of bullfighting. We all possess culturally specific ideas about cruelty to animals, ideas that have evolved slowly and match other elements of our culture. In some areas of the United States, cock fighting, dog fighting, and bear–dog fighting were once common. Only as the culture changed were they gradually eliminated.

None of us can be entirely successful at practicing cultural relativism. I think you will enjoy the Cultural Diversity box on the next page, but my best guess is that you will evaluate these "strange" foods through the lens of your own culture. Applying cultural relativism, however, is an attempt to refocus that lens so we can appreciate other ways of life rather than simply asserting "Our way is right." Look at the photos a few pages ahead. As you view them, try to appreciate the cultural differences they illustrate about standards of beauty.

Although cultural relativism helps us to avoid cultural smugness, this view has come under attack. In a provocative book, *Sick Societies* (1992), anthropologist Robert Edgerton suggests that we develop a scale for evaluating cultures on their "quality of life," much as we do for U.S. cities. He also asks why we should consider cultures that practice female circumcision, gang rape, or wife beating, or cultures that sell little girls into prostitution, as morally equivalent to those that do not. Cultural values that result in exploitation, he says, are inferior to those that enhance people's lives.

Edgerton's sharp questions and incisive examples bring us to a topic that comes up repeatedly in this text: the disagreements that arise among scholars as they confront contrasting views of reality. It is such questioning of assumptions that keeps sociology interesting.

JESUS DIGES/EPA/Landov

Many Americans perceive bullfighting as a cruel activity that should be illegal everywhere. To most Spaniards, bullfighting is a sport that pits matador and bull in a unifying image of power, courage, and glory. *Cultural relativism* requires that we suspend our own perspectives in order to grasp the perspectives of others, something easier described than attained.

Components of Symbolic Culture

Sociologists often refer to nonmaterial culture as **symbolic culture,** because it consists of the symbols that people use. A **symbol** is something to which people attach meaning and that they use to communicate with one another. Symbols include gestures, language, values, norms, sanctions, folkways, and mores. Let's look at each of these components of symbolic culture.

Gestures

Gestures, movements of the body to communicate with others, are shorthand ways to convey messages without using words. Although people in every culture of the world use gestures, a gesture's meaning may change completely from one culture to another. North Americans, for example, communicate a succinct message by raising the middle finger in a short, upward stabbing motion. I wish to stress "North Americans," for this gesture does not convey the same message in most parts of the world.

I was surprised to find that this particular gesture was not universal, having internalized it to such an extent that I thought everyone knew what it meant. When I was comparing gestures with friends in Mexico, however, this gesture drew a blank look from them. After I explained its intended meaning, they laughed and showed me their rudest gesture—placing the hand under the armpit and moving the upper arm up and down. To me, they simply looked as if they were imitating monkeys, but to them the gesture meant "Your mother is a whore"—the worst possible insult in that culture.

symbolic culture another term for nonmaterial culture

symbol something to which people attach meaning and then use to communicate with one another

gestures the ways in which people use their bodies to communicate with one another

What does this statement mean? "Cultural relativism helps us to avoid cultural smugness."

Cultural Diversity around the World

You Are What You Eat? An Exploration in Cultural Relativity

Here is a chance to test your ethnocentrism and ability to practice cultural relativity. You probably know that the French like to eat snails and that in some Asian cultures chubby dogs and cats are considered a delicacy ("Ah, lightly browned with a little doggy sauce!"). But did you know that cod sperm is a delicacy in Japan (Halpern 2011)? That flies, scorpions, crickets, and beetles are on the menu of restaurants in parts of Thailand (Gampbell 2006)?

Marston Bates (1967), a zoologist, noted this ethnocentric reaction to food:

I remember once, in the llanos of Colombia, sharing a dish of toasted ants at a remote farmhouse. . . . My host and I fell into conversation about the general question of what people eat or do not eat, and I remarked that in my country people eat the legs of frogs.

The very thought of this filled my ant-eating friends with horror; it was as though I had mentioned some repulsive sex habit.

Then there is the experience of a friend, Dusty Friedman, who told me:

When traveling in Sudan, I ate some interesting things that I wouldn't likely eat now that I'm back in our society. Raw baby camel's liver with chopped herbs was a delicacy. So was camel's milk cheese patties that had been cured in dry camel's dung.

You might be able to see yourself eating frog legs and toasted ants, beetles, even flies. (Or maybe not.) Perhaps you could even stomach cod sperm and raw camel liver, maybe even dogs and cats, but here's another test of your ethnocentrism and cultural relativity. Maxine Kingston (1975),

an English professor whose parents grew up in China, wrote:

"Do you know what people in [the Nantou region of] China eat when they have the money?" my mother began. "They buy into a monkey feast. The eaters sit around a thick wood table with a hole in the middle. Boys bring in the monkey at the end of a pole. Its neck is in a collar at the end of the pole, and it is screaming. Its hands are tied behind it. They clamp the monkey into the table; the whole table fits like another collar around its neck. Using a surgeon's saw, the cooks cut a clean line in a circle at the top of its head. To loosen the bone, they tap with a tiny hammer and wedge here and there with a silver pick. Then an old woman reaches out her hand to the monkey's face and up to its scalp, where she tufts some hairs and lifts off the lid of the skull. The eaters spoon out the brains."

MARIANA BAZO/Reuters/Landov

What some consider food, even delicacies, can turn the stomachs of others. This ready-to-eat guinea pig was photographed in Lima, Peru.

For Your Consideration

→ What is your opinion about eating toasted ants? Beetles? Flies? Fried frog legs? Cod sperm? About eating puppies and kittens? About eating brains scooped out of a living monkey?

→ If you were reared in U.S. society, more than likely you think that eating frog legs is okay; eating ants or beetles is disgusting; and eating flies, cod sperm, dogs, cats, and monkey brains is downright repugnant. How would you apply the concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism to your perceptions of these customs?

Gestures not only facilitate communication but also, because they differ around the world, can lead to misunderstanding, embarrassment, or worse. One time in Mexico, for example, I raised my hand to a certain height to indicate how tall a child was. My hosts began to laugh. It turned out that Mexicans use three hand gestures to indicate height: one for people, a second for animals, and yet another for plants. They were amused because I had used the plant gesture to indicate the child's height. (See Figure 1.)

To get along in another culture, then, it is important to learn the gestures of that culture. If you don't, you will fail to achieve the simplicity of communication that gestures allow and you may overlook or misunderstand much of what is happening, run the risk of appearing foolish, and possibly offend people. In some cultures, for example,

Bates, Marston. Gluttons and Libertines: Human Problems of Being Natural. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. Quoted in Crapo, Richley H. Cultural Anthropology: Understanding Ourselves and Others, 5th ed. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. The Woman Warrior. New York: Vintage Books, 1975:108. Quoted in Frank J. Zulke and Jacqueline P. Kirley. Through the Eyes of Social Science, 6th ed. Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2002.

How does cultural relativism apply to food customs?

Figure 1   Gestures to Indicate Height, Southern Mexico
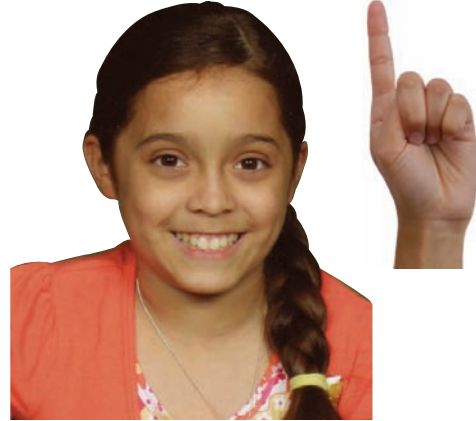
C.M. Holmgren/Lightbox

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By the author.

C.M. Holmgren/Lightbox

Lena Leal-Floyd/Lightbox

you would provoke deep offense if you were to offer food or a gift with your left hand, because the left hand is reserved for dirty tasks, such as wiping after going to the toilet. Left-handed Americans visiting Arabs, please note!

Suppose for a moment that you are visiting southern Italy. After eating one of the best meals in your life, you are so pleased that when you catch the waiter's eye, you smile broadly and use the standard U.S. "A-OK" gesture of putting your thumb and forefinger together and making a large "O." The waiter looks horrified, and you are struck speechless when the manager asks you to leave. What have you done? Nothing on purpose, of course, but in that culture this gesture refers to a lower part of the human body that is not mentioned in polite company (Ekman et al. 1984).

Is it really true that there are no universal gestures? There is some disagreement on this point. Some anthropologists claim that no gesture is universal. They point out that even nodding the head up and down to indicate "yes" is not universal, because in some parts of the world, such as areas of Turkey, nodding the head up and down means "no" (Ekman et al. 1984). However, ethologists, researchers who study biological bases of behavior, claim that expressions of anger, pouting, fear, and sadness are built into our biological makeup and are universal (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1970:404; Horwitz and Wakefield 2007). They point out that even infants who are born blind and deaf, who have had no chance to learn these gestures, express themselves in the same way.

Although this matter is not yet settled, we can note that gestures tend to vary remarkably around the world. It is also significant that certain gestures can elicit emotions; some gestures are so closely associated with emotional messages that the gestures themselves summon up emotions. For example, my introduction to Mexican gestures of insult mentioned earlier took place at a dinner table. It was evident that my husband-and-wife hosts were trying to hide their embarrassment at using their culture's obscene gesture at their dinner table. And I felt the same way—not about *their* gesture, of course, which meant nothing to me—but about the one I was teaching them.

James M. Henslin

Although most *gestures* are learned, and therefore vary from culture to culture, some gestures that represent fundamental emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear appear to be inborn. This crying child whom I photographed in India differs little from a crying child in China—or the United States or anywhere else on the globe. In a few years, however, this child will demonstrate a variety of gestures highly specific to his Hindu culture.

How are gestures an essential part of symbolic culture?

Standards of Beauty

Standards of beauty vary so greatly from one culture to another that what one group finds attractive, another may not. Yet, in its *ethnocentrism*, each group thinks that its standards are the best—that the appearance reflects what beauty "really" is.

As indicated by these photos, around the world men and women aspire to their group's norms of physical attractiveness. To make themselves appealing to others, they try to make their appearance reflect those standards.

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Jordan Siemens/Photodisc/Getty Images Royalty Free

Ecuador

United States

Jean-Pierre Lescourret/Corbis

Thailand

China

Kenya

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Panorama/The Image Works

Cameroon

Tibet

New Guinea

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How is beauty an essential part of symbolic culture?

Language

The primary way in which people communicate with one another is through **language**—symbols that can be combined in an infinite number of ways for the purpose of communicating abstract thought. Each word is actually a symbol, a sound to which we have attached some particular meaning. Although all human groups have language, there is nothing universal about the meanings given to particular sounds. Like gestures, in different cultures the same sound may mean something entirely different—or may have no meaning at all. In German, for example, *gift* means "poison," so if you give a box of chocolates to a non-English-speaking German and say, "Gift, Eat" . . . .

Because *language allows culture to exist,* its significance for human life is difficult to overstate. Consider the following effects of language.

Language Allows Human Experience to Be Cumulative.
By means of language, we pass ideas, knowledge, and even attitudes on to the next generation. This allows others to build on experiences in which they may never directly participate. As a result, humans are able to modify their behavior in light of what earlier generations have learned. This takes us to the central sociological significance of language: *Language allows culture to develop by freeing people to move beyond their immediate experiences.*

Without language, human culture would be little more advanced than that of the lower primates. If we communicated by grunts and gestures, we would be limited to a short time span—to events now taking place, those that have just taken place, or those that will take place immediately—a sort of slightly extended present. You can grunt and gesture, for example, that you want a drink of water, but in the absence of language how could you share ideas concerning past or future events? There would be little or no way to communicate to others what event you had in mind, much less the greater complexities that humans communicate—ideas and feelings about events.

Language Provides a Social or Shared Past.
Without language, we would have few memories, for we associate experiences with words and then use those words to recall the experience. In the absence of language, how would we communicate the few memories we had to others? By attaching words to an event, however, and then using those words to recall it, we are able to discuss the event. This is highly significant for what we are as humans, for our talking is far from "just talk." As we talk about past events, we develop shared understandings about what those events mean. In short, through talk, people develop a shared past.

Language Provides a Social or Shared Future.
Language also extends our time horizons forward. Because language enables us to agree on times, dates, and places, it allows us to plan activities with one another. Think about it for a moment. Without language, how could you ever plan future events? How could you possibly communicate goals, times, and plans? Whatever planning could exist would be limited to rudimentary communications, perhaps to an agreement to meet at a certain place when the sun is in a certain position. But think of the difficulty, perhaps the impossibility, of conveying just a slight change in this simple arrangement, such as "I can't make it tomorrow, but my neighbor can take my place, if that's all right with you."

Language Allows Shared Perspectives.
Our ability to speak, then, provides us with a social (or shared) past and future. This is vital for humanity. It is a watershed that distinguishes us from animals. But speech does much more than this. When we talk with one another, we are exchanging ideas about events; that is, we are sharing perspectives. Our words are the embodiment of our experiences, distilled into a readily exchangeable form, one that is mutually understandable to people who have learned that language. *Talking about events allows us to arrive at the shared understandings that form the basis of social life.* Not sharing a language while living alongside one another, however, invites miscommunication and suspicion. This risk, which comes with a diverse society, is discussed in the Cultural Diversity box on the next page.

> **language** a system of symbols that can be combined in an infinite number of ways and can represent not only objects but also abstract thought

How does *language* provide a shared past, present, and future?

Cultural Diversity in the United States

Miami—Continuing Controversy over Language

Immigration from Cuba and other Spanish-speaking countries has been so vast that most residents of Miami are Latinos. Half of Miami's 400,000 residents have trouble speaking English. Only *one-fourth* of Miamians speak English at home. Many English-only speakers are leaving Miami, saying that not being able to speak Spanish is a handicap to getting work. "They should learn Spanish," some reply. As Pedro Falcon, an immigrant from Nicaragua, said, "Miami is the capital of Latin America. The population speaks Spanish."

As the English-speakers see it, this pinpoints the problem: Miami is in the United States, not in Latin America.

Controversy over immigrants and language isn't new. The millions of Germans who moved to the United States in the 1800s brought their language with them. Not only did they hold their religious services in German, but they also opened schools taught in German; published German-language newspapers; and spoke German at home, in the stores, and in the taverns.

Some of their English-speaking neighbors didn't like this a bit. "Why don't those Germans assimilate?" they wondered. "Just whose side would they fight on if we had a war?"

This question was answered, of course, with the participation of German Americans in two world wars. It was even a

Florida

Heather Boone/Lightbox

Mural on Calle Ocho in Miami
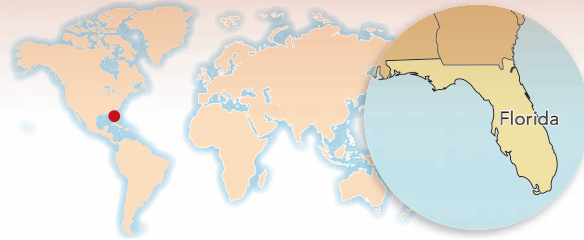
general descended from German immigrants (Eisenhower) who led the armed forces that defeated Hitler.

But what happened to all this German language? The first generation of immigrants spoke German almost exclusively. The second generation assimilated, speaking English at home, but also speaking German when they visited their parents. For the most part, the third generation knew German only as "that language" that their grandparents spoke.

The same thing is happening with the Latino immigrants. Spanish is being kept alive longer, however, because Mexico borders the United States, and there is constant traffic between the countries. The continuing migration from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries also feeds the language.

If Germany bordered the United States, there would still be a lot of German spoken here.

Sources: Based on Sharp 1992; Usdansky 1992; Kent and Lalasz 2007; Salomon 2008.

Language Allows Shared, Goal-Directed Behavior. Common understandings enable us to establish a *purpose* for getting together. Let's suppose you want to go on a picnic. You use speech not only to plan the picnic but also to decide on reasons for having the picnic—which may be anything from "because it's a nice day and it shouldn't be wasted studying" to "because it's my birthday." Language permits you to blend individual activities into an integrated sequence. In other words, through discussion you decide when and where you will go; who will drive; who will bring the hamburgers, the potato chips, the soda; where and when you will meet. Only because of language can you participate in such a common yet complex event as a picnic—or build roads and bridges or attend college classes.

In Sum: The sociological significance of language is that it takes us beyond the world of apes and allows culture to develop. Language frees us from the present, actually giving us a social past and a social future. That is, language gives us the capacity to share understandings about the past and to develop shared perceptions about the future. Language also allows us to establish underlying purposes for our activities. In short, *language is the basis of culture*.

Language and Perception: The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

In the 1930s, two anthropologists, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, became intrigued when they noticed that the Hopi Indians of the southwestern United States

How does language both unite and divide people? How can language be a basis of conflict?

had no words to distinguish the past, the present, and the future. English, in contrast—as well as French, Spanish, Swahili, and other languages—carefully distinguishes these three time frames. From this observation, Sapir and Whorf began to think that words might be more than labels that people attach to things. Eventually, they concluded that *language has embedded within it ways of looking at the world*. In other words, language not only expresses our thoughts and perceptions, but language also shapes the way we think and perceive (Sapir 1949; Whorf 1956).

The **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** challenges common sense: It indicates that rather than objects and events forcing themselves onto our consciousness, it is our language that determines our consciousness, and hence our perception of objects and events. Sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel (1991) points out that his native language, Hebrew, does not have separate words for jam and jelly. Both go by the same term, and only when Zerubavel learned English could he "see" this difference, which is "obvious" to native English speakers. Similarly, if you learn to classify students as Jocks, Goths, Stoners, Skaters, Band Geeks, and Preps, you will perceive students in entirely different ways from someone who does not know these classifications.

When I lived in Spain, I was struck by the relevance of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. As a native English speaker, I had learned that the term *dried fruits* refers to apricots, apples, and so on. In Spain, I found that *frutos secos* refers not only to such objects but also to things like almonds, walnuts, and pecans. My English makes me see fruits and nuts as quite separate types of objects. This seems "natural" to me, while combining them into one unit seems "natural" to Spanish speakers. If I had learned Spanish first, my perception of these objects would be different.

Although Sapir and Whorf's observation that the Hopi do not have tenses was inaccurate (Edgerton 1992:27), they did stumble onto a major truth about social life. Learning a language means not only learning words but also acquiring the perceptions embedded in that language. In other words, language both reflects and shapes our cultural experiences (Boroditsky 2010). The racial–ethnic terms that our culture provides, for example, influence how we see both ourselves and others, a point that is discussed in the Cultural Diversity box on the next page.

Values, Norms, and Sanctions

To learn a culture is to learn people's **values,** their ideas of what is desirable in life. When we uncover people's values, we learn a great deal about them, for values are the standards by which people define what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly. Values underlie our preferences, guide our choices, and indicate what we hold worthwhile in life.

Every group develops expectations concerning the "right" way to reflect its values. Sociologists use the term **norms** to describe those expectations (or rules of behavior) that develop out of a group's values. The term **sanctions** refers to the reactions people receive for following or breaking norms. A **positive sanction** expresses approval for following a norm, and a **negative sanction** reflects disapproval for breaking a norm. Positive sanctions can be material, such as a prize, a trophy, or money, but in everyday life they usually consist of hugs, smiles, a pat on the back, or even handshakes and "high fives." Negative sanctions can also be material—being fined in court is one example—but negative sanctions, too, are more likely to be symbolic: harsh words, or gestures such as frowns, stares, clenched jaws, or raised fists. Getting a raise at work is a positive sanction, indicating that you have followed the norms clustering around work values. Getting fired, in contrast, is a negative sanction, indicating that you have violated these norms. The North American finger gesture discussed earlier is, of course, a negative sanction.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf's hypothesis that language creates ways of thinking and perceiving

values the standards by which people define what is desirable or undesirable, good or bad, beautiful or ugly

norms expectations of "right" behavior

sanctions either expressions of approval given to people for upholding norms or expressions of disapproval for violating them

positive sanction a reward or positive reaction for following norms, ranging from a smile to a material reward

negative sanction an expression of disapproval for breaking a norm, ranging from a mild, informal reaction such as a frown to a formal reaction such as a prize or a prison sentence

Many societies relax their *norms* during specified occasions. At these times, known as moral holidays, behavior that is ordinarily not permitted is allowed. Shown here at Mardi Gras in New Orleans is a woman who is about to show her breasts to get beads dropped to her from the balcony. When a moral holiday is over, the usual enforcement of rules follows.
Chris Graythen/Getty Images

According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, how does language influence our perception?

Cultural Diversity in the United States

Race and Language: Searching for Self-Labels

The groups that dominate society often determine the names that are used to refer to racial–ethnic groups. If those names become associated with oppression, they take on negative meanings. For example, the terms *Negro* and *colored people* came to be associated with submissiveness and low status. To overcome these meanings, those referred to by these terms began to identify themselves as *black* or *African American*. They infused these new terms with respect—a basic source of self-esteem that they felt the old terms denied them.

In a twist, African Americans—and to a lesser extent Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans—have changed the rejected term *colored people* to *people of color*. Those who embrace this modified term are imbuing it with meanings that offer an identity of respect. The term also has political meanings. It implies bonds that cross racial–ethnic lines, mutual ties, and a sense of identity rooted in historical oppression.

There is *always* disagreement about racial–ethnic terms, and this one is no exception. Although most rejected the term *colored people*, some found in it a sense of respect and claimed it for themselves. The acronym NAACP, for example, stands for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The new term, *people of color*, arouses similar feelings. Some individuals whom this term would include point out that this new label still makes color the primary identifier of people. They stress that humans transcend race–ethnicity, that what we have in

The ethnic terms we choose—or which are given to us—are major self-identifiers. They indicate both membership in some group and a separation from other groups.
©Owen Franken/CORBIS

common as human beings goes much deeper than what you see on the surface. They stress that we should avoid terms that focus on differences in the pigmentation of our skin.

The language of self-reference in a society that is so conscious of skin color is an ongoing issue. As long as our society continues to emphasize such superficial differences, the search for adequate terms is not likely to ever be "finished." In this quest for terms that strike the right chord, the term *people of color* may become a historical footnote. If it does, it will be replaced by another term that indicates a changing self-identification within a changing culture.

For Your Consideration
➔ What terms do you use to refer to your race–ethnicity? What "bad" terms do you know that others have used to refer to your race–ethnicity? What is the difference in meaning between the terms you use and the "bad" terms? Where does that meaning come from?

Because people can find norms stifling, some cultures relieve the pressure through *moral holidays*, specified times when people are allowed to break norms. Moral holidays such as Mardi Gras often center on getting rowdy. Some activities for which people would otherwise be arrested are permitted—and expected—including public drunkenness and some nudity. The norms are never completely dropped, however—just loosened a bit. Go too far, and the police step in.

Some societies have *moral holiday places*, locations where norms are expected to be broken. Red light districts of our cities are examples. There, prostitutes are allowed to work the streets, bothered only when political pressure builds to "clean up" the area. If these same prostitutes attempt to solicit customers in adjacent areas, however, they are promptly arrested. Each year, the hometown of the team that wins the Super Bowl becomes a moral holiday place—for one night.

One of the more interesting examples is "Party Cove" at Lake of the Ozarks in Missouri, a fairly straightlaced area of the country. During the summer, hundreds of boaters—those operating everything from cabin cruisers to jet skis—moor their vessels together in a highly publicized cove, where many get drunk, take off their clothes, and dance on the boats. In one of the more humorous incidents, boaters complained that a

How are values, norms, and sanctions related to one another? How are moral holidays related to values, norms, and sanctions?

nude woman was riding a jet ski outside of the cove. The water patrol investigated but refused to arrest the woman because she was within the law—she had sprayed shaving cream on certain parts of her body. The Missouri Water Patrol has even given a green light to Party Cove, announcing in the local newspaper that officers will not enter this cove, supposedly because "there is so much traffic that they might not be able to get out in time to handle an emergency elsewhere."

Folkways, Mores, and Taboos

Norms that are not strictly enforced are called **folkways.** We expect people to comply with folkways, but we are likely to shrug our shoulders and not make a big deal about it if they don't. If someone insists on passing you on the right side of the sidewalk, for example, you are unlikely to take corrective action, although if the sidewalk is crowded and you must move out of the way, you might give the person a dirty look.

Other norms, however, are taken much more seriously. We think of them as essential to our core values, and we insist on conformity. These are called **mores** (MORE-rays). A person who steals, rapes, or kills has violated some of society's most important mores. As sociologist Ian Robertson (1987:62) put it,

> *A man who walks down a street wearing nothing on the upper half of his body is violating a folkway; a man who walks down the street wearing nothing on the lower half of his body is violating one of our most important mores, the requirement that people cover their genitals and buttocks in public.*

It should also be noted that one group's folkways may be another group's mores. Although a man walking down the street with the upper half of his body uncovered is deviating from a folkway, a woman doing the same thing is violating the mores. In addition, the folkways and mores of a subculture (discussed in the next section) may be the opposite of mainstream culture. For example, to walk down the sidewalk in a nudist camp with the entire body uncovered would conform to that subculture's folkways.

A **taboo** refers to a norm so strongly ingrained that even the thought of its violation is greeted with revulsion. Eating human flesh and parents having sex with their children are examples of such behaviors. When someone breaks a taboo, the individual is usually judged unfit to live in the same society as others. The sanctions are severe and may include prison, banishment, or death.

The violation of *mores* is a serious matter. In this case, it is serious enough that the security at a football match in Edmonton, Alberta (Canada) have swung into action to protect the public from seeing a "disgraceful" sight, at least one so designated by this group.

REUTERS/Dan Riedlhuber/Landov

Many Cultural Worlds

Subcultures

Groups of people who occupy some small corner in life, such as an occupation, tend to develop specialized ways to communicate with one another. To outsiders, their talk, even if it is in English, can seem like a foreign language. Here is one of my favorite quotes by a politician:

> *There are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns; that is to say, there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns; there are things we do not know we don't know. (Donald Rumsfeld, quoted in Dickey and Barry 2006:38)*

Whatever Rumsfeld, the former secretary of defense under George W. Bush, meant by his statement probably will remain a known unknown. (Or would it be an unknown known?)

folkways norms that are not strictly enforced

mores norms that are strictly enforced because they are thought essential to core values or the well-being of the group

taboo a norm so strong that it often brings revulsion if violated

Can you explain the difference between folkways, mores, and taboos?

subculture the values and related behaviors of a group that distinguish its members from the larger culture; a world within a world

counterculture a group whose values, beliefs, norms, and related behaviors place its members in opposition to the broader culture

We have a similar problem in the subculture of sociology. Try to figure out what this means:

Path analysis showed that parental involvement fully mediated the effect of parental acculturation on intergenerational relationship, whereas intergenerational relationship mediated the effect of parental involvement on child outcomes. (Ying and Han 2008)

As much as possible, I will spare you from such "insider" talk.

Sociologists and politicians form a **subculture,** *a world within the larger world of the dominant culture*. Subcultures are not limited to occupations, for they include any corner in life in which people's experiences lead them to have distinctive ways of looking at the world. Even if we cannot understand the quotation from Donald Rumsfeld, it makes us aware that politicians don't view life in quite the same way most of us do.

U.S. society contains *thousands* of subcultures. Some are as broad as the way of life we associate with teenagers, others as narrow as those we associate with body builders—or with politicians. Some U.S. ethnic groups also form subcultures: Their values, norms, and foods set them apart. So might their religion, music, language, and clothing. Even sociologists form a subculture. As you are learning, they also use a unique language in their efforts to understand the world.

For a subculture in another society, one that might test the limits of your sense of cultural relativism, read the Down-to-Earth Sociology box on the next page. For a visual depiction of subcultures, see the photo essay a few pages ahead.

Countercultures

Consider this quote from another subculture:

If everyone applying for welfare had to supply a doctor's certificate of sterilization, if everyone who had committed a felony were sterilized, if anyone who had mental illness to any degree were sterilized—then our economy could easily take care of these people for the rest of their lives, giving them a decent living standard—but getting them out of the way. That way there would be no children abused, no surplus population, and, after a while, no pollution. . . .

When the . . . present world system collapses, it'll be good people like you who will be shooting people in the streets to feed their families. (Zellner 1995:58, 65)

AP Images/John Raoux

Why is salsa dancing a *subculture* and not a counterculture?

Welcome to the world of the Aryan supremacist survivalists, where the message is much clearer than that of politicians—and much more disturbing.
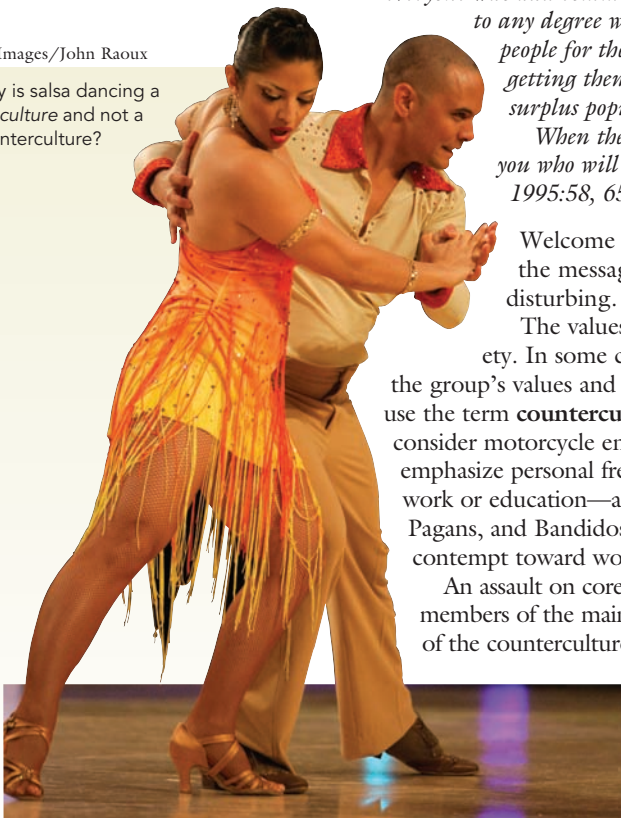
The values and norms of most subcultures blend in with mainstream society. In some cases, however, as with the survivalists quoted above, some of the group's values and norms place it at odds with the dominant culture. Sociologists use the term **counterculture** to refer to such groups. To better see this distinction, consider motorcycle enthusiasts and motorcycle gangs. Motorcycle enthusiasts—who emphasize personal freedom and speed *and* affirm cultural values of success through work or education—are members of a subculture. In contrast, the Hell's Angels, Pagans, and Bandidos not only stress freedom and speed but also value dirtiness and contempt toward women, work, and education. This makes them a counterculture.

An assault on core values is always met with resistance. To affirm their own values, members of the mainstream culture may ridicule, isolate, or even attack members of the counterculture. The Mormons, for example, were driven out of several states before they finally settled in Utah, which was at that time a wilderness. Even there, the federal government would not let them practice *polygyny* (one man having more than one wife), and Utah's statehood was made conditional on its acceptance of monogamy (Anderson 1942/1966; Williams 2007).

Zellner, William W. Countercultures: A Sociological Analysis. New York: St. Martin's, 1995.

Can you explain the difference between subcultures and countercultures?

Down-to-Earth Sociology

2-D: A New Subculture and a Different Kind of Love

" 've experienced so many amazing things because of her. She has really changed my life." —Nisan

Nisan, a 37-year old man who lives in Tokyo, has strong feelings for his girlfriend, Nemu, and loves dating her. Nemu is on the shy side, though, and in restaurants she sits quietly on the chair next to Nisan. When they ride in his Toyota, she sits silently in the passenger's seat. Never once has Nemu uttered even a single word.

The silence hasn't stopped Nisan from spending his vacations with Nemu. They have traveled hundreds of miles to Kyoto and Osaka. This has been a little hard on Nisan's modest budget, but Nemu seems to enjoy the travel. To save money while vacationing, they sleep together in the car. Sometimes they crash on friends' couches (Katayama 2009).

That's Nisan in the photo to the right. And that's Nemu that he is holding.

Nisan isn't joking. He is serious about the feelings that he has forNemu, a video game character.

And so are the other Japanese men who belong to the 2-D (two-dimensional) sub-culture. Some of these men have never been able to attract real women. Others have been disappointed in real-life love. For them, cartoon and video characters take on a lifelike reality.

To Westerners raised on Freudian imagery, the 2-D sub-culture stimulates haunting thoughts. But the Japanese seem to see matters differently. A Japanese author who has written widely on the 2-D subculture—and is himself a member of it—stresses that his subculture exists because romance has

Nisan and Nemu
Masato Seto

become a commodity. The mass media glorify good looks and money, he says, which denies romance to many men. Some of these men train their minds to experience romantic love when they look at a cartoon. As one man put it, the pillow covers represent "cute girls who live in my imagination."

Sociologically, we might point out that in Japan the sexes don't mix as easily as they do in the West. About half of Japanese adults, both men and women, have no friends of the opposite sex (Katayama 2009).

The 2-D subculture is growing. Tokyo has shops that feature 2-D products such as body pillows and dolls for men. In some Tokyo restaurants, the waitresses dress up like video-game characters.

There is even an island resort that specializes in honeymoons for men who have fallen in love with their cartoon cuties. The men check into the hotel, pay for a room for two, and immerse themselves in their virtual relationships, controlled through their hand-held devices (Wakabayashi 2010a, 2010b). The local businesses, which sell special meals with heart-shaped dishes and cakes that the lovers give their cartoon characters, are pleased with their new visitors—the flesh-and-blood ones who pay the bills.

For Your Consideration

➤ Do you agree with this statement: If a man in the United States were to carry around a body pillow like the one in the photo on this page, he would find less acceptance than do Nisan and the men like him in Japan? If so, why do you think this difference exists? Do you think that 2-D will thrive as a subculture in the United States? Why or why not?

Values in U.S. Society

An Overview of U.S. Values

As you know, the United States is a **pluralistic society,** made up of many different groups. The United States has numerous religious and racial–ethnic groups, as well as countless interest groups that focus on activities as divergent as hunting deer or collecting Barbie dolls. Within this huge diversity, sociologists have tried to identify the country's **core values,** those that are shared by most of the groups that make up U.S. society. Here are ten that sociologist Robin Williams (1965) identified:

1. *Achievement and success.* Americans praise personal achievement, especially outdoing others. This value includes getting ahead at work and school, and attaining wealth, power, and prestige.
2. *Individualism.* Americans cherish the ideal that an individual can rise from the bottom of society to its very top. If someone fails to "get ahead," Americans generally

pluralistic society a society made up of many different groups

core values the values that are central of a group, those around which it builds a common identity

Can you use 2-D to explain the essential elements of a subculture?

Looking at Subcultures

Subcultures can form around any interest or activity. Each subculture has its own values and norms that its members share, giving them a common identity. Each also has special terms that pinpoint the group's corner of life and that its members use to communicate with one another. Some of us belong to several subcultures.

As you can see from these photos, most subcultures are compatible with the values and norms of the mainstream culture. They represent specialized interests around which its members have chosen to build tiny worlds. Some subcultures, however, conflict with the mainstream culture. Sociologists give the name *countercultures* to subcultures whose values (such as those of outlaw motorcyclists) or activities and goals (such as those of terrorists) are opposed to the mainstream culture. Countercultures, however, are exceptional, and few of us belong to them.

Each subculture provides its members with values and distinctive ways of viewing the world. What values and perceptions do you think are common among body builders? What other subculture do you see here?

REUTERS/Ali Jarekji/Landov

Membership in this subculture is not easily awarded. Not only must high-steel ironworkers prove that they are able to work at great heights but also that they fit into the group socially. Newcomers are tested by members of the group, and they must demonstrate that they can take joking without offense.

PETER MORGAN/Reuters/Landov