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Introduction to

Sociology 3e.

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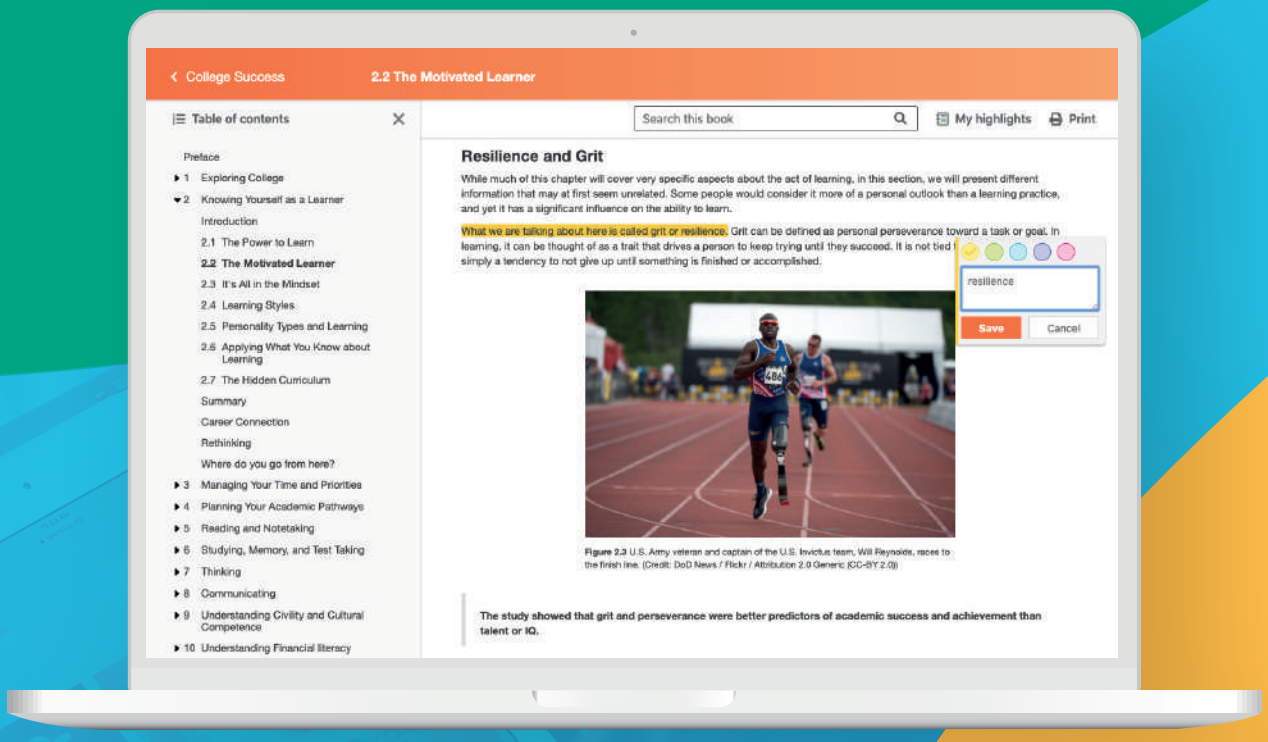

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Preface

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Format

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About *Introduction to Sociology 3e*

Introduction to Sociology 3e aligns to the topics and objectives of many introductory sociology courses. It is arranged in a manner that provides foundational sociological theories and contexts, then progresses through various aspects of human and societal interactions. The new edition is focused on driving meaningful and memorable learning experiences related to critical thinking about society and culture. Students are challenged

to look at events and situations in new ways, and, as often as possible, consider the reasons people behave and gather in the ways they do. The text includes comprehensive coverage of core concepts, discussions and data relevant to a diverse audience, and features that draw learners into the discipline in powerful and personal ways. Overall, *Introduction to Sociology 3e* aims to center the course and discipline as crucial elements for understanding relationships, society, and civic engagement; we seek to lay the foundation for students to apply what they learn throughout their lives and careers.

Changes to the Third Edition

The guiding principle of the revision was to build from the concept that students are not simply observers of the world, but are participants in it. Many discussions of new or ongoing changes have been improved in tone and content, based on reviewer feedback, to better reflect student experiences. Of course, much of the information in the text will be new to students, but the concepts, examples, and data are written in a way that will encourage students to apply their own experiences and to better consider those outside of their own.

The purpose of these changes, however, is not only to make the book more informative and effective, but more so to create additional opportunities for instructors to launch relevant and interesting discussions. In concert with the changes in the text, the accompanying lecture materials have been thoroughly revised and enhanced to include material beyond what is in the book, in order for instructors--at their discretion--to deepen these engagements.

A number of chapter introductions have been revised with substantial vignettes or narratives relating to the chapter content. Examples include the experience of a teenager in sub-Saharan Africa (chapter 4), a comparison of the emergence of the Tea Party and the MeToo movements (chapter 6), a more nuanced and historically accurate view of the issue of marijuana criminalization and legalization (chapter 7), and a discussion of voter referendums and subsequent governmental responses (chapter 17). Other references and coverage are meant to relate to students' careers; these include issues around online privacy, the impacts of posting offensive content, and new material on adult socialization and workplace culture.

Extensive use of survey outcomes and governmental data is designed to add current perspectives on the concepts and provide more discussion starters for faculty and students. Some of these outcomes may challenge preconceived notions, while others may simply be interesting to discuss. For example, poll outcomes regarding perspectives on "When Does Someone Become Old?" in the chapter on Aging and the Elderly may be notable on their own, but could be also used to begin reflective discussions or further research. The COVID-19 pandemic is referenced frequently, but its inclusion is meant to offer opportunities for students to share their own stories, and for instructors to lead into more current outcomes.

Finally, the authors, reviewers, and the entire team worked to build understanding of the causes and impacts of discrimination and prejudice. *Introduction to Sociology 3e* contains dozens of examples of discrimination and its outcomes regarding social science, society, institutions, and individuals. The text seeks to strike a balance between confronting the damaging aspects of our culture and history and celebrating those who have driven change and overcome challenges. The core discussion of these topics are present in Chapter 11 on Race and Ethnicity, and Chapter 12 on Gender, Sex, and Sexuality, but their causes and effects are extensively discussed in the context of other topics, including education, law enforcement, government, healthcare, the economy, and so on. Together and when connected by an instructor, these elements have potential for deep and lasting effects.

Pedagogical Foundation

Learning Objectives

Every module begins with a set of clear and concise learning objectives, which have been thoroughly revised to be both measurable and more closely aligned with current teaching practice. These objectives are designed to help the instructor decide what content to include or assign, and to guide student expectations of learning.

After completing the module and end-of-module exercises, students should be able to demonstrate mastery of the learning objectives.

Key Features

- **Sociological Research:** Highlights specific current and relevant research studies.
- **Sociology in the Real World:** Ties chapter content to student life and discusses sociology in terms of the everyday. New and updated examples include discussions of princess culture, social media employment consequences, and sports teams with Native American names/mascots.
- **Big Picture:** Present sociological concepts at a national or international level, including the most recent mass migration crises, the rise of e-waste, and global differences in education pathways.
- **Social Policy and Debate:** Discusses political issues that relate to chapter content, such as "The Legalese of Sex and Gender" and "Is the U.S. Bilingual?"

Section Summaries

Section summaries distill the information in each section for both students and instructors down to key, concise points addressed in the section.

Key Terms

Key terms are bold and are followed by a definition in context. Definitions of key terms are also listed in the Glossary, which appears at the end of the chapter.

Section Quizzes

Section quizzes provide opportunities to apply and test the information students learn throughout each section. Both multiple-choice and short-response questions feature a variety of question types and range of difficulty.

Further Research

This feature helps students further explore the section topic through links to other information sources or discussions.

Acknowledgements

Introduction to Sociology 3e is based on the work of numerous professors, writers, editors, and reviewers who are able to bring topics to students in the most engaging way.

We would like to thank all those listed below as well as many others who have contributed their time and energy to review and provide feedback on the manuscript. Their input has been critical in maintaining the pedagogical integrity and accuracy of the text.

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Additional Resources

Student and Instructor Resources

We've compiled additional resources for both students and instructors, including Getting Started Guides, a test bank, and lecture slides. Instructor resources require a verified instructor account, which you can apply for when you log in or create your account on openstax.org. Take advantage of these resources to supplement your OpenStax book.

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An Introduction to Sociology 1

FIGURE 1.1 Every day, 7.5 million people use the railways around Mumbai, India. The vast majority of them don't know each other, but they share much in common as they move together. (Credit: Rajarshi MITRA/flickr)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION A busy commuter train station might seem like a very individualized place. Tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of strangers flow through with a singular purpose: to get where they need to go. Whether walking through main doors at a pace of a dozen people each second, or arriving by train hundreds at a time, the station can feel a bit like a balloon being pumped too full. Throngs of people cluster in tight bottlenecks until they burst through corridors and stairways and tunnels to reach the next stage of their journey. In some stations, walking against the crowd can be a tedious, nearly impossible process. And cutting across a river of determined commuters can be almost dangerous. Things are fast, relentless, and necessary.

But are those hundred thousand or half a million or, in the case of Tokyo's Shinjuku station, 3.5 million people really acting individually? It may seem surprising, but even with those numbers, strangers from across cities can synch up on the same schedules, use the same doors, take one leg of the trip together every day before separating into different directions. After just a few months, faces can become familiar, and senses can be tuned. An experienced commuter can tell where another person is going according to their pace and whatever announcement just went out; they may slow up a bit to let the other person pass, or hold a door open just a bit

longer than usual, certain that someone will grab the handle behind them. Many regulars don't need to check the schedule board; they sense whether a train is running late or whether a track has changed simply by the movement of the crowd.

And then the customs develop: Which side to walk on, how fast to go, where to stand, how much space to leave between people on the escalator. When you board early, which seat should you take? When you see someone running for the train, do you jam the closing door with your foot? How does the crowd treat people who ask for food or money? What's the risk level in telling someone to be quiet?

Very few of these behaviors are taught. None are written down. But the transit hub, that pocket of constant flow, is an echo of its society. It takes on some aspects of the city and country around it, but its people also form an informal group of their own. Sociologists, as you will learn, may study these people. Sociologists may seek to understand how they feel about their trip, be it proud or annoyed or just plain exhausted. Sociologists might study how length of commute relates to job satisfaction or family relationships. They may study the ways that conditions of a train station affect attitudes about government, or how the difficulty of commuting may lead people to relocate. This understanding isn't just a collection of interesting facts; it can influence government policy and spending decisions, employer interventions, and healthcare practices. The work sociologists do to understand our society, and the work you will do in learning about it, is meaningful to our lives and our futures.

1.1 What Is Sociology?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain concepts central to sociology.
- Describe how different sociological perspectives have developed.

What Are Society and Culture?

FIGURE 1.2 Sociologists learn about society while studying one-to-one and group interactions. (Credit: GlacierNPS/Flickr)

Sociology is the scientific and systematic study of groups and group interactions, societies and social interactions, from small and personal groups to very large groups. A group of people who live in a defined geographic area, who interact with one another, and who share a common culture is what sociologists call a **society**.

Sociologists study all aspects and levels of society. Sociologists working from the **micro-level** study small groups and individual interactions, while those using **macro-level** analysis look at trends among and between

large groups and societies. For example, a micro-level study might look at the accepted rules of conversation in various groups such as among teenagers or business professionals. In contrast, a macro-level analysis might research the ways that language use has changed over time or in social media outlets.

The term **culture** refers to the group's shared practices, values, and beliefs. Culture encompasses a group's way of life, from routine, everyday interactions to the most important parts of group members' lives. It includes everything produced by a society, including all the social rules.

Sociologists often study culture using the **sociological imagination**, which pioneer sociologist C. Wright Mills described as an awareness of the relationship between a person's behavior and experience and the wider culture that shaped the person's choices and perceptions. It's a way of seeing our own and other people's behavior in relationship to history and social structure (1959). One illustration of this is a person's decision to marry. In the United States, this choice is heavily influenced by individual feelings. However, the social acceptability of marriage relative to the person's circumstances also plays a part.

Remember, though, that culture is a product of the people in a society. Sociologists take care not to treat the concept of "culture" as though it were alive and real. The error of treating an abstract concept as though it has a real, material existence is known as reification (Sahn, 2013).

Studying Patterns: How Sociologists View Society

All sociologists are interested in the experiences of individuals and how those experiences are shaped by interactions with social groups and society. To a sociologist, the personal decisions an individual makes do not exist in a vacuum. **Cultural patterns**, social forces and influences put pressure on people to select one choice over another. Sociologists try to identify these general patterns by examining the behavior of large groups of people living in the same society and experiencing the same societal pressures.

Consider the changes in U.S. families. The "typical" family in past decades consisted of married parents living in a home with their unmarried children. Today, the percent of unmarried couples, same-sex couples, single-parent and single-adult households is increasing, as well as is the number of expanded households, in which extended family members such as grandparents, cousins, or adult children live together in the family home. While 15 million mothers still make up the majority of single parents, 3.5 million fathers are also raising their children alone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Increasingly, single people and cohabitating couples are choosing to raise children outside of marriage through surrogates or adoption.

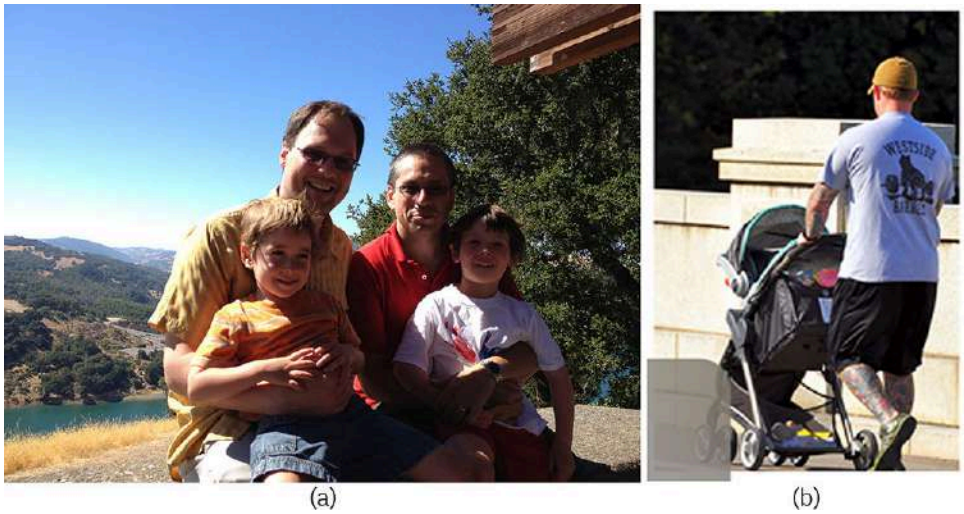

FIGURE 1.3 Modern U.S. families may be very different in makeup from what was historically typical. (Credit A: Paul Brody/flickr; B: Tony Alter/Wikimedia Commons)

Some sociologists study **social facts**—the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and cultural rules that govern social life—that may contribute to these changes in the family. Do people in the

United States view marriage and family differently over the years? Do they view them differently than Peruvians? Do employment and economic conditions play a role in families? Other sociologists are studying the consequences of these new patterns, such as the ways children influence and are influenced by them and/or the changing needs for education, housing, and healthcare.

Sociologists identify and study patterns related to all kinds of contemporary social issues. The "Stop and Frisk" policy, the emergence of new political factions, how Twitter influences everyday communication—these are all examples of topics that sociologists might explore.

Studying Part and Whole: How Sociologists View Social Structures

A key component of the sociological perspective is the idea that the individual and society are inseparable. It is impossible to study one without the other. German sociologist Norbert Elias called the process of simultaneously analyzing the behavior of individuals and the society that shapes that behavior **figuration**.

Consider religion. While people experience religion in a distinctly individual manner, religion exists in a larger social context as a **social institution**. For instance, an individual's religious practice may be influenced by what government dictates, holidays, teachers, places of worship, rituals, and so on. These influences underscore the important relationship between individual practices of religion and social pressures that influence that religious experience (Elias, 1978). In simpler terms, figuration means that as one analyzes the social institutions in a society, the individuals using that institution in any fashion need to be 'figured' in to the analysis.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Individual-Society Connections

When sociologist Nathan Kierns spoke to his friend Ashley (a pseudonym) about the move she and her partner had made from an urban center to a small Midwestern town, he was curious about how the social pressures placed on a lesbian couple differed from one community to the other. Ashley said that in the city they had been accustomed to getting looks and hearing comments when she and her partner walked hand in hand. Otherwise, she felt that they were at least being tolerated. There had been little to no outright discrimination.

Things changed when they moved to the small town for her partner's job. For the first time, Ashley found herself experiencing direct discrimination because of her sexual orientation. Some of it was particularly hurtful. Landlords would not rent to them. Ashley, who is a highly trained professional, had a great deal of difficulty finding a new job.

When Nathan asked Ashley if she and her partner became discouraged or bitter about this new situation, Ashley said that rather than letting it get to them, they decided to do something about it. Ashley approached groups at a local college and several churches in the area. Together they decided to form the town's first Gay-Straight Alliance.

The alliance has worked successfully to educate their community about same-sex couples. It also worked to raise awareness about the kinds of discrimination that Ashley and her partner experienced in the town and how those could be eliminated. The alliance has become a strong advocacy group, and it is working to attain equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or LGBTQ individuals.

Kierns observed that this is an excellent example of how negative social forces can result in a positive response from individuals to bring about social change (Kierns, 2011).

1.2 The History of Sociology

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain why sociology emerged when it did
- Describe how sociology became a separate academic discipline

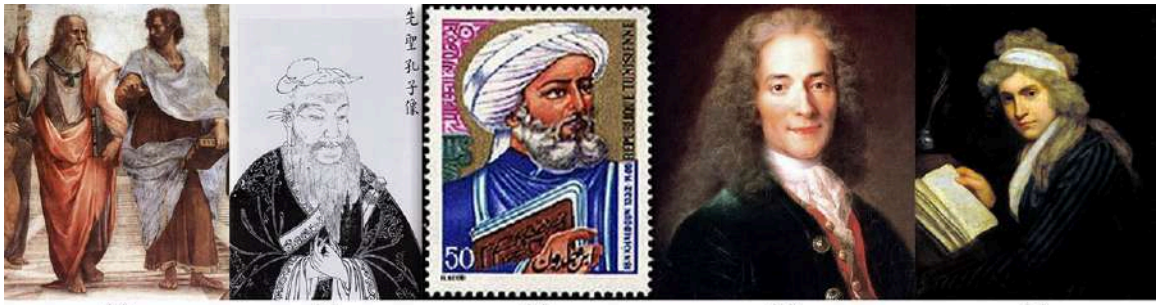

FIGURE 1.4 People have been thinking like sociologists long before sociology became a distinct academic discipline: Plato and Aristotle, Confucius, Khaldun, Voltaire, and Mary Wollenscraft set the stage for modern sociology. (Credit: A, B, C, and E Wikimedia Commons; D: publicdomainfiles.com.)

For millennia, people have been fascinated by the relationships between individuals and societies. Many topics studied by ancient philosophers in their desire to describe an ideal society are still studied in modern sociology, including theories of social conflict, economics, social cohesion, and power in a continued attempt to describe an ideal society (Hannoum, 2003). Although we are more familiar with western philosophers like Plato and his student, Aristotle, eastern philosophers also thought about social issues.

Until recently, we have very few texts that are non-religious in nature that theorize about social life. From 4th century through the 19th century, the Catholic Church was the seat of power from today's Turkey in the east to western and northern Europe, including the British Isles. Only monks who were charged with rewriting holy texts by hand and the aristocracy were literate. Moreover, the Church consolidated power. In the year 800, Pope Leo III named Charlemagne, the king of Francia (today's France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany) emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, giving one individual control over most of Europe. Doing so gave the Catholic Church the power to maintain its own traditions safeguard them from the influence of people practicing other religions. If any social patterns challenged any belief of the Church, those practitioners were massacred, burned at the stake, or labeled heretics. As a result, the records that we have are extremely subjective and do not offer an unbiased view of social practice.

In the 13th century, Ma Tuan-Lin, a Chinese historian, was the first to record, in his seminal encyclopedia titled *General Study of Literary Remains*, the social dynamics underlying and generating historical development.

In the 14th century, the Tunisian historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) set the foundation for both modern sociology and economics. Khaldun proposed a theory of social conflict and provided a comparison of nomadic and sedentary life, an analysis of political economy, and a study connecting a tribe's social cohesion to its capacity for power (Hannoum, 2003). Khaldun often challenged authorities. As sociologists continue to study and report on social issues and problems, they often find themselves in the center of controversy.

From 1347 to 1522, the bubonic plague ravaged Europe, killing up to 35% of population (Armstrong, 2019). The plague dealt a major blow to the credibility of the Catholic Church. Out of this chaos emerged the the work of Copernicus, Galileo, Leonardo, Newton, Linnaeus, and other philosophers whose work sometimes contradicted church teachings. Events once held to be the product of the divine hand could be analyzed by human reason and observation and could be explained by scientific, testable, and retestable hypotheses. As literacy spread through conquests and colonization, more records and literature became available for sociologists and historians to put social puzzles together.

In the 18th century, Enlightenment philosophers developed general principles that could be used to explain social life. Thinkers such as John Locke, François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire), Immanuel Kant, and Thomas Hobbes responded to what they saw as social ills by writing on topics that they hoped would lead to social reform. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) wrote about women's conditions in society. Like Harriet Martineau and Jane Addams, her works were long ignored by the male academic structure, but since the 1970s, Wollstonecraft has been widely considered the first feminist thinker of consequence. Ideas about economic

systems, the family, health and hygiene, national offense and defense, were among the many concerns of social life.

The early 19th century saw great changes with the Industrial Revolution, increased mobility, and new kinds of employment. It was also a period of increased trade, travel, and globalization that exposed many people — for the first time—to societies and cultures other than their own. Millions of people moved into cities and many people turned away from their traditional religious beliefs. Ideas spread rapidly, groups were created, political decisions became public decisions. Among a new generation of philosophers, there were some who believed they could make sense of it all.

Creating a Discipline: European Theorists

FIGURE 1.5 Early major European theorists. Top row, left to right: Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, and Herbert Spencer. Bottom row, left to right: Goerg Simmel, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons; Julius Cornelius Schaarwächter/Public domain.)

Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857)

The term sociology was first coined in 1780 by the French essayist Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836) in an unpublished manuscript (Fauré et al. 1999). In 1838, the term was reintroduced by Auguste Comte (1798–1857). Comte originally studied to be an engineer, but later became a pupil of social philosopher Claude Henri de Rouvroy Comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825). They both thought that social scientists could study society using the same scientific methods utilized in natural sciences. Comte also believed in the potential of social scientists to work toward the betterment of society. He held that once scholars identified the laws that governed society, sociologists could address problems such as poor education and poverty (Abercrombie et al. 2000).

Comte named the scientific study of social patterns **positivism**. He described his philosophy in a series of

books called *The Course in Positive Philosophy* (1830–1842) and *A General View of Positivism* (1848). He believed that revealing the laws by which societies and individuals interact would usher in a new "positivist" age of history. While the field and its terminology have grown, sociologists still believe in the positive impact of their work.

Harriet Martineau (1802 – 1876)

Harriet Martineau introduced sociology to English speaking scholars through her translation of Comte's writing from French to English. She was an early analyst of social practices, including economics, social class, religion, suicide, government, and women's rights. Her career began with *Illustrations of Political Economy*, a work educating ordinary people about the principles of economics (Johnson, 2003). She later developed the first systematic methodological international comparisons of social institutions in two of her most famous sociological works: *Society in America* (1837) and *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838).

Martineau found the workings of capitalism at odds with the professed moral principles of people in the United States. She pointed out the faults with the free enterprise system in which workers were exploited and impoverished while business owners became wealthy. She further noted that the belief that all are created equal was inconsistent with the lack of women's rights. Much like Mary Wollstonecraft, Martineau was often discounted in her own time because academic sociology was a male-dominated profession.

Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Karl Marx was a German philosopher and economist. In 1848, he and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) coauthored the *Communist Manifesto*. This book is one of the most influential political manuscripts in history. It also presents Marx's theory of society, which differed from what Comte proposed.

Marx rejected Comte's positivism. He believed that societies grew and changed as a result of the struggles of different social classes over the means of production. At the time he was developing his theories, the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism led to great disparities in wealth between the owners of the factories and workers. Capitalism, an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of goods and the means to produce them, had developed in many nations.

Marx predicted that inequalities of capitalism would become so extreme that workers would eventually revolt. This would lead to the collapse of capitalism, which would be replaced by communism. Communism is an economic system under which there is no private or corporate ownership: everything is owned communally and distributed as needed. Marx believed that communism was a more equitable system than capitalism.

While his economic predictions did not materialize in the time frame he predicted, Marx's idea that social conflict leads to change in society is still one of the major theories used in modern sociology.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)

In 1873, the English philosopher Herbert Spencer published *The Study of Sociology*, the first book with the term "sociology" in the title. Spencer rejected much of Comte's philosophy as well as Marx's theory of class struggle and his support of communism. Instead, he favored a form of government that allowed market forces to control capitalism. His work influenced many early sociologists including Émile Durkheim (1858–1917). Spencer, using Charles Darwin's work as a comparison said, "This survival of the fittest, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called 'natural selection,' or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life." (Spencer, 1864) The statement is often misinterpreted and adopted by those who believe in the superiority of one race over another.

Georg Simmel (1858–1918)

Georg Simmel was a German art critic who wrote widely on social and political issues as well. Simmel took an anti-positivism stance and addressed topics such as social conflict, the function of money, individual identity in city life, and the European fear of outsiders (Stapley 2010). Much of his work focused on micro-level theories

and analyzed the dynamics of two-person and three-person groups. His work also emphasized individual culture as the creative capacities of individuals (Ritzer and Goodman 2004).

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917)

Émile Durkheim helped establish sociology as a formal academic discipline by establishing the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895 and by publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method* in 1895. In *Division of Labour in Society* (1893), Durkheim further laid out his theory on how societies transformed from a primitive state into a capitalist, industrial society. According to Durkheim, people rise to their proper levels in society based on merit.

Durkheim believed that sociologists could study objective social facts (Poggi, 2000). He also believed that through such studies it would be possible to determine if a society was "healthy" or "pathological." Healthy societies were stable while pathological societies experienced a breakdown in social norms.

In 1897, Durkheim attempted to demonstrate the effectiveness of his rules of social research when he published a work titled *Suicide*. Durkheim examined suicide statistics in different police districts to research differences between Catholic and Protestant communities. He attributed the differences to socio-religious forces rather than to individual or psychological causes.

Max Weber (1864–1920)

Prominent sociologist Max Weber established a sociology department in Germany at the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich in 1919. Weber wrote on many topics related to sociology including political change in Russia and social forces that affect factory workers. He is known best for his 1904 book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The theory that Weber sets forth in this book is still controversial. Some believe that Weber argued that the beliefs of many Protestants, especially Calvinists, led to the rise of capitalism. Others interpret it as simply claiming that the ideologies of capitalism and Protestantism are complementary.

Weber believed that it was difficult, if not impossible, to use standard scientific methods to accurately predict the behavior of groups as some sociologists hoped to do. Weber argued that the influence of culture on human behavior had to be taken into account. This even applied to the researchers themselves, who should be aware of how their own cultural biases could influence their research. To deal with this problem, Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey introduced the concept of *verstehen*, a German word that means to understand in a deep way. In seeking *verstehen*, outside observers of a social world—an entire culture or a small setting—attempt to understand it from an insider's point of view.

In *The Nature of Social Action*, Weber described sociology as striving to "... interpret the meaning of social action and thereby give a causal explanation of the way in which action proceeds and the effects it produces." He and other like-minded sociologists proposed a philosophy of anti-positivism whereby social researchers would strive for subjectivity as they worked to represent social processes, cultural norms, and societal values. This approach led to some research methods whose aim was not to generalize or predict (traditional in science), but to systematically gain an in-depth understanding of social worlds.

The different approaches to research based on positivism or anti-positivism are often considered the foundation for the differences found today between quantitative sociology and qualitative sociology. Quantitative sociology uses statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants. Researchers analyze data using statistical techniques to see if they can uncover patterns of human behavior. Qualitative sociology seeks to understand human behavior by learning about it through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and analysis of content sources (like books, magazines, journals, and popular media).

SOCIAL POLICY AND DEBATE

Should We Raise the Minimum Wage?

During his hard-fought 2020 campaign, President Joe Biden promised Americans that he would raise the federal minimum wage. Opponents of raising the minimum wage argue that some workers would get larger paychecks while others would lose their jobs, and companies would be less likely to hire new workers because of the increased cost of paying them. Biden and other proponents of raising the minimum wage contend that some job loss would be greatly offset by the positive effects on the standard of living of low-wage workers and reducing the income gap between the rich and poor.

Sociologists may consider the minimum wage issue from differing perspectives as well. How much of an impact would a minimum wage raise have for a single mother? Some might study the economic effects, such as her ability to pay bills and keep food on the table. Others might look at how reduced economic stress could improve family relationships. Some sociologists might research the impact on the status of small business owners. These could all be examples of public sociology, a branch of sociology that strives to bring sociological dialogue to public forums. The goals of public sociology are to increase understanding of the social factors that underlie social problems and assist in finding solutions. According to Michael Burawoy (2005), the challenge of public sociology is to engage multiple publics in multiple ways.

Applying the Discipline: American Theorists and Practitioners

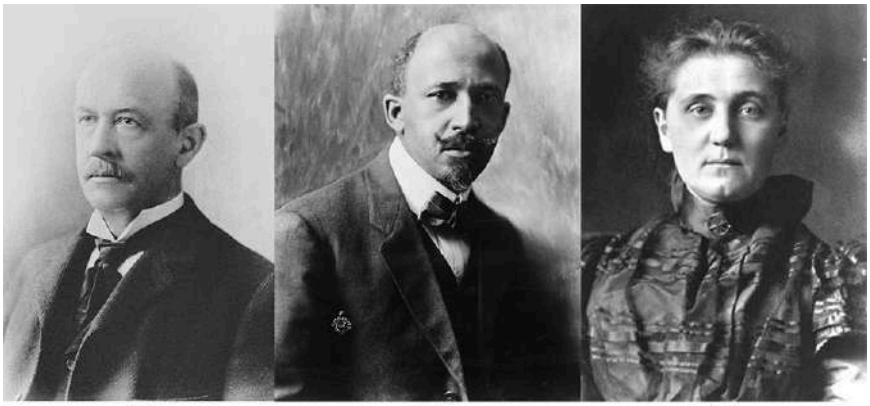

FIGURE 1.6 From left to right, William Sumner, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Jane Adams. (Credit A, B, and C: Wikimedia Commons.)

In the early 1900s, sociology reached universities in the United States. William Sumner held the first professorship in sociology (Yale University), Franklin Giddings was the first full professor of Sociology (Columbia University), and Albion Small wrote the first sociology textbook. Early American sociologists tested and applied the theories of the Europeans and became leaders in social research. Lester Ward (1841 – 1913) developed social research methods and argued for the use of the scientific method and quantitative data (Chapter 2) to show the effectiveness of policies. In order for sociology to gain respectability in American academia, social researchers understood that they must adopt empirical approaches.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963)

William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B.) Du Bois, a Harvard-trained historian, pioneered the use of rigorous empirical methodology into sociology. His groundbreaking 1896-1897 study of the African American community in Philadelphia incorporated hundreds of interviews Du Bois conducted in order to document the familial and employment structures and assess the chief challenges of the community. These new, comprehensive research methods stood in stark contrast to the less scientific practices of the time, which Du

Bois critiqued as being similar to doing research as if through the window of a moving car. His scientific approach became highly influential to entire schools of sociological study, and is considered a forerunner to contemporary practices. Additionally, Du Bois' 1899 publication provided empirical evidence to challenge pseudoscientific ideas of biological racism (Morris, 2015; Green & Wortham, 2018), which had been used as justification to oppress people of different races.

Du Bois also played a prominent role in the effort to increase rights for Black people. Concerned at the slow pace of progress and advice from some Black leaders to be more accommodating of racism, Du Bois became a leader in what would later be known as the Niagara Movement. In 1905, he and others drafted a declaration that called for immediate political, economic, and social equality for African Americans. A few years later, he helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and served as its director of publications.

Thorstein Veblen (1857 – 1929)

After a brief stint as an unemployed college graduate, Thorstein Veblen began to study the economy through a social lens, writing about the leisure class, the business class, and other areas that touched on the idea of 'working' itself. He researched the chronically unemployed, the currently unemployed, the working classes, and the working classes.

Jane Addams (1860-1935)

Jane Addams founded *Hull House*, a center that served needy immigrants through social and educational programs while providing extensive opportunities for sociological research. Founded in Chicago, Addams worked closely with University of Chicago's Chicago School of Sociology. This school of thought places much importance on environment in which relationships and behaviors develop. Research conducted at Hull House informed child labor, immigration, health care, and other areas of public policy.

Charles Herbert Cooley (1864-1929)

Charles Herbert Cooley posited that individuals compare themselves to others in order to check themselves against social standards and remain part of the group. Calling this idea 'the looking-glass self,' Cooley argued that we 'see' ourselves by the reactions of others with whom we interact. If someone reacts positively to our behavior, theoretically we will continue that behavior. He wrote substantially on what he saw as the order of life in *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1902) followed by *Social Organization* in 1909. He was very concerned with the increasing individualism and competitiveness of US society, fearing it would disrupt families as primary groups lost their importance.

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931)

George Herbert Mead was a philosopher and sociologist whose work focused on the ways in which the mind and the self were developed as a result of social processes (Cronk, n.d.). He argued that how an individual comes to view himself or herself is based to a very large extent on interactions with others. Though Mead adopted Cooley's concept of 'looking-glasses,' Mead felt that an individual's reaction to a positive or negative reflection depended on who the 'other' was. Individuals that had the greatest impact on a person's life were **significant others** while **generalized others** were the organized and generalized attitude of a social group. Mead often shares the title of father of symbolic interactionism with Cooley and Erving Goffman.

Robert E. Park (1864-1944)

Robert E. Park is best known as the founder of social ecology. Attached to the Chicago School, Park focused on how individuals lived within their environment. One of the first sociologists to focus on ethnic minorities, he wrote on the Belgian oppression of the Congolese. When he returned to the US, he and Ernest Burgess researched the inner city to show that no matter who lived there, social chaos was prevalent. As such, it was not the residents who caused the chaos but the environment.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section you should be able to:

- Describe the ways that sociological theories are used to explain social institutions.
- Differentiate between functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

FIGURE 1.7 Sociologists develop theories to explain social occurrences such as protest rallies. (Credit: David Shankbone/flickr)

Sociologists study social events, interactions, and patterns, and they develop theories to explain why things work as they do. In sociology, a theory is a way to explain different aspects of social interactions and to create a testable proposition, called a **hypothesis**, about society (Allan 2006).

For example, although suicide is generally considered an individual phenomenon, Émile Durkheim was interested in studying the social factors that affect it. He studied **social solidarity**, social ties within a group, and hypothesized that differences in suicide rates might be explained by religious differences. Durkheim gathered a large amount of data about Europeans and found that Protestants were more likely to commit suicide than Catholics. His work supports the utility of theory in sociological research.

Theories vary in scope depending on the scale of the issues that they are meant to explain. Macro-level theories relate to large-scale issues and large groups of people, while micro-level theories look at very specific relationships between individuals or small groups. **Grand theories** attempt to explain large-scale relationships and answer fundamental questions such as why societies form and why they change. Sociological theory is constantly evolving and should never be considered complete. Classic sociological theories are still considered important and current, but new sociological theories build upon the work of their predecessors and add to them (Calhoun, 2002).

In sociology, a few theories provide broad perspectives that help explain many different aspects of social life, and these are called **paradigms**. Paradigms are philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them. Three paradigms have come to dominate sociological thinking because they provide useful explanations: structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Sociological Theories/ Paradigms	Level of Analysis	Focus	Analogies	Questions that might be asked
Structural Functionalism	Macro or Mid	The way each part of society functions together to contribute to the functioning of the whole.	How each organ works to keep your body healthy (or not.)	How does education work to transmit culture?
Conflict Theory	Macro	The way inequities and inequalities contribute to social, political, and power differences and how they perpetuate power.	The ones with the most toys wins and they will change the rules to the games to keep winning.	Does education transmit only the dominant certain cultures?
Symbolic Interactionism	Micro	The way one-on-one interactions and communications behave.	What's it mean to be an X?	How do students react to cultural messages in school?

TABLE 1.1 Sociological Theories or Perspectives Different sociological perspectives enable sociologists to view social issues through a variety of useful lenses.

Functionalism

Functionalism, also called structural-functional theory, sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of the individuals in that society. Functionalism grew out of the writings of English philosopher and biologist, Herbert Spencer, who saw similarities between society and the human body. He argued that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, the various parts of society work together to keep society functioning (Spencer, 1898). The parts of society that Spencer referred to were the **social institutions**, or patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs, such as government, education, family, healthcare, religion, and the economy.

Émile Durkheim applied Spencer's theory to explain how societies change and survive over time. Durkheim believed that society is a complex system of interrelated and interdependent parts that work together to maintain stability (Durkheim, 1893), and that society is held together by shared values, languages, and symbols. He believed that to study society, a sociologist must look beyond individuals to social facts such as laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashion, and rituals, which all serve to govern social life (Durkheim, 1895). Alfred Radcliff-Brown (1881–1955) defined the **function** of any recurrent activity as the part it played in social life as a whole, and therefore the contribution it makes to social stability and continuity (Radcliff-Brown 1952). In a healthy society, all parts work together to maintain stability, a state called **dynamic equilibrium** by later sociologists such as Parsons (1961).

Durkheim believed that individuals may make up society, but in order to study society, sociologists have to look beyond individuals to social facts. . Each of these social facts serves one or more functions within a society. For example, one function of a society's laws may be to protect society from violence, while another is to punish criminal behavior, while another is to preserve public health.

Another noted structural functionalist, Robert Merton (1910–2003), pointed out that social processes often have many functions. **Manifest functions** are the consequences of a social process that are sought or

anticipated, while **latent functions** are the unsought consequences of a social process. A manifest function of a college education, for example, includes gaining knowledge, preparing for a career, and finding a good job that utilizes that education. Latent functions of your college years include meeting new people, participating in extracurricular activities, or even finding a spouse or partner. Another latent function of education is creating a hierarchy of employment based on the level of education attained. Latent functions can be beneficial, neutral, or harmful. Social processes that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society are called **dysfunctions**. In education, examples of dysfunction include getting bad grades, truancy, dropping out, not graduating, and not finding suitable employment.

Criticism

One criticism of the structural-functional theory is that it can't adequately explain social change even though the functions are processes. Also problematic is the somewhat circular nature of this theory: repetitive behavior patterns are assumed to have a function, yet we profess to know that they have a function only because they are repeated. Furthermore, dysfunctions may continue, even though they don't serve a function, which seemingly contradicts the basic premise of the theory. Many sociologists now believe that functionalism is no longer useful as a macro-level theory, but that it does serve a useful purpose in some mid-level analyses.

BIG PICTURE

A Global Culture?

FIGURE 1.8 Some sociologists see the online world contributing to the creation of an emerging global culture. Are you a part of any global communities? This Indiana rabbi is participating in what was recognized as the longest Zoom meeting, which started in Australia after the Sabbath and proceeded through each of the world's time zones, effectively lasting much longer than a day. (Credit: Chabad Lubavitch/flickr)

Sociologists around the world look closely for signs of what would be an unprecedented event: the emergence of a global culture. In the past, empires such as those that existed in China, Europe, Africa, and Central and South America linked people from many different countries, but those people rarely became part of a common culture. They lived too far from each other, spoke different languages, practiced different religions, and traded few goods. Today, increases in communication, travel, and trade have made the world a much smaller place. More and more people are able to communicate with each other instantly—wherever they are located—by telephone, video, and

text. They share movies, television shows, music, games, and information over the Internet. Students can study with teachers and pupils from the other side of the globe. Governments find it harder to hide conditions inside their countries from the rest of the world.

Sociologists research many different aspects of this potential global culture. Some explore the dynamics involved in the social interactions of global online communities, such as when members feel a closer kinship to other group members than to people residing in their own countries. Other sociologists study the impact this growing international culture has on smaller, less-powerful local cultures. Yet other researchers explore how international markets and the outsourcing of labor impact social inequalities. Sociology can play a key role in people's abilities to understand the nature of this emerging global culture and how to respond to it.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory looks at society as a competition for limited resources. This perspective is a macro-level approach most identified with the writings of German philosopher and sociologist Karl Marx, who saw society as being made up of individuals in different social classes who must compete for social, material, and political resources such as food and housing, employment, education, and leisure time. Social institutions like government, education, and religion reflect this competition in their inherent inequalities and help maintain the unequal social structure. Some individuals and organizations are able to obtain and keep more resources than others, and these "winners" use their power and influence to maintain social institutions. The perpetuation of power results in the perpetuation of oppression.

Several theorists suggested variations on this basic theme like Polish-Austrian sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838–1909) who expanded on Marx's ideas by arguing that war and conquest are the bases of civilizations. He believed that cultural and ethnic conflicts led to states being identified and defined by a dominant group that had power over other groups (Irving, 2007).

German sociologist Max Weber agreed with Marx but also believed that, in addition to economic inequalities, inequalities of political power and social structure cause conflict. Weber noted that different groups were affected differently based on education, race, and gender, and that people's reactions to inequality were moderated by class differences and rates of social mobility, as well as by perceptions about the legitimacy of those in power. A reader of Marx, Georg Simmel believed that conflict can help integrate and stabilize a society. He said that the intensity of the conflict varies depending on the emotional involvement of the parties, the degree of solidarity within the opposing groups, and the clarity and limited nature of the goals. Simmel also showed that groups work to create internal solidarity, centralize power, and reduce dissent. The stronger the bond, the weaker the discord. Resolving conflicts can reduce tension and hostility and can pave the way for future agreements.

In the 1930s and 1940s, German philosophers, known as the Frankfurt School, developed **critical theory** as an elaboration on Marxist principles. Critical theory is an expansion of conflict theory and is broader than just sociology, incorporating other social sciences and philosophy. A critical theory is a holistic theory and attempts to address structural issues causing inequality. It must explain what's wrong in current social reality, identify the people who can make changes, and provide practical goals for social transformation (Horkeimer, 1982).

More recently, inequality based on gender or race has been explained in a similar manner and has identified institutionalized power structures that help to maintain inequality between groups. Janet Saltzman Chafetz (1941–2006) presented a model of feminist theory that attempts to explain the forces that maintain gender inequality as well as a theory of how such a system can be changed (Turner, 2003). Similarly, critical race theory grew out of a critical analysis of race and racism from a legal point of view. Critical race theory looks at structural inequality based on white privilege and associated wealth, power, and prestige.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Farming and Locavores: How Sociological Perspectives Might View Food Consumption

The consumption of food is a commonplace, daily occurrence. Yet, it can also be associated with important moments in our lives. Eating can be an individual or a group action, and eating habits and customs are influenced by our cultures. In the context of society, our nation's food system is at the core of numerous social movements, political issues, and economic debates. Any of these factors might become a topic of sociological study.

A structural-functional approach to the topic of food consumption might analyze the role of the agriculture industry within the nation's economy and how this has changed from the early days of manual-labor farming to modern mechanized production. Another might study the different functions of processes in food production, from farming and harvesting to flashy packaging and mass consumerism.

A conflict theorist might be interested in the power differentials present in the regulation of food, by exploring where people's right to information intersects with corporations' drive for profit and how the government mediates those interests. Or a conflict theorist might examine the power and powerlessness experienced by local farmers versus large farming conglomerates, such as the documentary Food Inc., which depicts as resulting from Monsanto's patenting of seed technology. Another topic of study might be how nutrition varies between different social classes.

A sociologist viewing food consumption through a symbolic interactionist lens would be more interested in microlevel topics, such as the symbolic use of food in religious rituals, or the role it plays in the social interaction of a family dinner. This perspective might also explore the interactions among group members who identify themselves based on their sharing a particular diet, such as vegetarians (people who don't eat meat) or locavores (people who strive to eat locally produced food).

Criticism

Just as structural functionalism was criticized for focusing too much on the stability of societies, conflict theory has been criticized because it tends to focus on conflict to the exclusion of recognizing stability. Many social structures are extremely stable or have gradually progressed over time rather than changing abruptly as conflict theory would suggest.

Symbolic Interactionist Theory

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theory that focuses on the relationships among individuals within a society. Communication—the exchange of meaning through language and symbols—is believed to be the way in which people make sense of their social worlds. Theorists Herman and Reynolds (1994) note that this perspective sees people as being active in shaping the social world rather than simply being acted upon.

George Herbert Mead is considered a founder of symbolic interactionism though he never published his work on it (LaRossa and Reitzes, 1993). Mead's student, Herbert Blumer (1900-1987), coined the term "symbolic interactionism" and outlined these basic premises: humans interact with things based on meanings ascribed to those things; the ascribed meaning of things comes from our interactions with others and society; the meanings of things are interpreted by a person when dealing with things in specific circumstances (Blumer 1969). If you love books, for example, a symbolic interactionist might propose that you learned that books are good or important in the interactions you had with family, friends, school, or church. Maybe your family had a special reading time each week, getting your library card was treated as a special event, or bedtime stories were associated with warmth and comfort.

Social scientists who apply symbolic-interactionist thinking look for patterns of interaction between individuals. Their studies often involve observation of one-on-one interactions. For example, while a conflict theorist studying a political protest might focus on class difference, a symbolic interactionist would be more interested in how individuals in the protesting group interact, as well as the signs and symbols protesters use

to communicate their message.

The focus on the importance of symbols in building a society led sociologists like Erving Goffman (1922-1982) to develop a technique called **dramaturgical analysis**. Goffman used theater as an analogy for social interaction and recognized that people's interactions showed patterns of cultural "scripts." He argued that individuals were actors in a play. We switched roles, sometimes minute to minute—for example, from student or daughter to dog walker. Because it can be unclear what part a person may play in a given situation, he or she has to improvise his or her role as the situation unfolds (Goffman, 1958).

Studies that use the symbolic interactionist perspective are more likely to use qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or participant observation, because they seek to understand the symbolic worlds in which research subjects live.

Constructivism is an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be. We develop social constructs based on interactions with others, and those constructs that last over time are those that have meanings which are widely agreed-upon or generally accepted by most within the society. This approach is often used to examine what's defined as deviant within a society. There is no absolute definition of deviance, and different societies have constructed different meanings for deviance, as well as associating different behaviors with deviance.

One situation that illustrates this is what you believe you're to do if you find a wallet in the street. In the United States, turning the wallet in to local authorities would be considered the appropriate action, and to keep the wallet would be seen as deviant. In contrast, many Eastern societies would consider it much more appropriate to keep the wallet and search for the owner yourself. Turning it over to someone else, even the authorities, would be considered deviant behavior.

Criticism

Research done from this perspective is often scrutinized because of the difficulty of remaining objective. Others criticize the extremely narrow focus on symbolic interaction. Proponents, of course, consider this one of its greatest strengths.

Sociological Theory Today

These three approaches still provide the main foundation of modern sociological theory though they have evolved. Structural-functionalism was a dominant force after World War II and until the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, sociologists began to feel that structural-functionalism did not sufficiently explain the rapid social changes happening in the United States at that time. The women's movement and the Civil Rights movement forced academics to develop approaches to study these emerging social practices.

Conflict theory then gained prominence, with its emphasis on institutionalized social inequality. Critical theory, and the particular aspects of feminist theory and critical race theory, focused on creating social change through the application of sociological principles. The field saw a renewed emphasis on helping ordinary people understand sociology principles, in the form of public sociology.

Gaining prominence in the wake of Mead's work in the 1920s and 1930s, symbolic interactionism declined in influence during the 1960s and 1970s only to be revitalized at the turn of the twenty-first century (Stryker, 1987). Postmodern social theory developed in the 1980s to look at society through an entirely new lens by rejecting previous macro-level attempts to explain social phenomena. Its growth in popularity coincides with the rise of constructivist views of symbolic interactionism.

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain why it is worthwhile to study sociology.
- Identify ways sociology is applied in the real world.

FIGURE 1.9 The research of Kenneth and Mamie Clark helped the Supreme Court decide to end "separate but equal" racial segregation in schools in the United States. (Credit: University of Texas)

When Elizabeth Eckford tried to enter Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in September 1957, she was met by an angry crowd and was turned away by authorities. But she knew she had the law on her side. Three years earlier in the landmark *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court had overturned twenty-one state laws that allowed Black and White people to be taught in separate school systems as long as the school systems were "equal." The decision was nothing short of momentous, not only for education, but for a number of other segregation and discrimination issues that have lasted into this decade. And in that momentous decision, the Supreme Court cited the research of the husband-and-wife team of social scientists, Kenneth and Mamie Clark, as evidence that segregation generates in minority students a feeling of inferiority. In the 'doll test,' for example, the Clarks showed children four dolls, two with white skin and yellow hair and two with brown skin and black hair. When asked which doll they preferred, the majority of Black children chose the doll with the light skin doll, and they assigned positive characteristics to it. Most of the Black children discarded the doll with the brown skin—the one that had a closer resemblance to themselves.

When asked to choose the doll that looked like them, many children left the room, started to cry, and/or became depressed. The Clarks' research contributed to the Supreme Court's conclusion that separate but equal was damaging to students, and that separate facilities are unequal.

Sociology and a Better Society

Since it was first founded, many people interested in sociology have been driven by the scholarly desire to contribute knowledge to this field, while others have seen it as way not only to study society but also to improve it. Besides desegregation, sociology has played a crucial role in many important social reforms, such as equal opportunity for women in the workplace, improved treatment for individuals with mental handicaps or learning disabilities, increased accessibility and accommodation for people with physical handicaps, the right of native populations to preserve their land and culture, and prison system reforms.

The predominant American sociologist, the late Peter L. Berger (1929–2017), in his 1963 book, *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*, describes a sociologist as "someone concerned with understanding society in a disciplined way." He asserts that sociologists have a natural interest in the monumental moments of people's lives, as well as a fascination with banal, everyday occurrences. Berger also describes the "aha"

moment when a sociological theory becomes applicable and understood:

> [T]here is a deceptive simplicity and obviousness about some sociological investigations. One reads them, nods at the familiar scene, remarks that one has heard all this before and don't people have better things to do than to waste their time on truisms—until one is suddenly brought up against an insight that radically questions everything one had previously assumed about this familiar scene. This is the point at which one begins to sense the excitement of sociology. (Berger, 1963)

Sociology can be exciting because it teaches people ways to recognize how they fit into the world and how others perceive them. Looking at themselves and society from a sociological perspective helps people see where they connect to different groups based on the many different ways they classify themselves and how society classifies them in turn. It raises awareness of how those classifications—such as economic and status levels, education, ethnicity, or sexual orientation—affect perceptions.

Sociology teaches people not to accept easy explanations. It teaches them a way to organize their thinking so that they can ask better questions and formulate better answers. It makes people more aware that there are many different kinds of people in the world who do not necessarily think the way they do. It increases their willingness and ability to try to see the world from other people's perspectives. This prepares them to live and work in an increasingly diverse and integrated world.

Sociology in the Workplace

Employers continue to seek people with what are called "transferable skills." This means that they want to hire people whose knowledge and education can be applied in a variety of settings and whose skills will contribute to various tasks.

Studying sociology can provide people with this wide knowledge and a skill set that can contribute to many workplaces, including

- an understanding of social systems and large bureaucracies;
- the ability to devise and carry out research projects to assess whether a program or policy is working;
- the ability to collect, read, and analyze statistical information from polls or surveys;
- the ability to recognize important differences in people's social, cultural, and economic backgrounds;
- skills in preparing reports and communicating complex ideas; and
- the capacity for critical thinking about social issues and problems that confront modern society. (Department of Sociology, University of Alabama-Huntsville)

Sociology prepares people for a wide variety of careers. Besides actually conducting social research or training others in the field, people who graduate from college with a degree in sociology are hired by government agencies and corporations in fields such as social services, counseling (e.g., family planning, career, substance abuse), community planning, health services, marketing, market research, and human resources. Even a small amount of training in sociology can be an asset in careers like sales, public relations, journalism, teaching, law, and criminal justice.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Social Networking Consequences

You've probably heard a cautionary story that goes something like this: A high school student spent years working hard, engaging in their community, helping others, and generally growing into a positive and promising young adult. During senior year, they start the college application process, and after a couple of interviews and other interactions, things are looking bright at several of their top choices. But when the time arrives for those fateful notifications about acceptance or rejection, the student and their family are shocked to get rejected from all schools but one. Inquiries from family members and guidance counselors had no results. The only news came in the form of a letter

three weeks later from the one school that had accepted the student.

"...After an initial investigation, the University has determined that several posts attributed to you violate our policies, and are offensive and troubling..."

The letter's remaining two pages detailed the ongoing investigation and outlined the potential outcomes. But that one statement said it all: The student had posted something offensive on social media, and their prospective colleges had found it.

Two years earlier, at the beginning of sophomore year, the student had posted two comments and a meme that mocked a classmate who had been assaulted at a party. Even thought the student had removed them within a few days, the posts lived on in other forums and on a few friends' pages; there was also the possibility that someone had screen-grabbed them. While social media posts are protected forms of speech in relation to the government, colleges can review them as they evaluate applicants. Employers can do the same, as can romantic partners or even volunteer organizations.

You may believe that a 15-year-old's social media comments should not impact them years later. Or you may feel that someone who jokes about assault may be a risk to commit a similar act or fail to stop or report one. Sociologists may consider all of those assumptions, and may seek answers or information through research to uncover the impacts, risks, tendencies, and outcomes on the different groups involved. For example, a sociologist might work to discover answers to the following questions:

- Is abusive speech or assault less likely to occur at colleges that screen applicants' social media posts?
- Do sensitivity trainings or cultural competency programs have an effect on online speech?
- Do colleges treat all community members equally when they discover someone has posted offensive comments or other content?
- Are algorithms and artificial intelligence used to detect problematic comments biased against certain people or communities?

None of these questions could be answered by a single study or even a group of them. But like the Supreme Court's use of Mamie and Kenneth Clarke's research, college administrators, high school counselors, and technology companies can use the outcomes of research and analysis to make decisions or implement programs.

Key Terms

antipositivism the view that social researchers should strive for subjectivity as they worked to represent social processes, cultural norms, and societal values
conflict theory a theory that looks at society as a competition for limited resources
constructivism an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be
culture a group's shared practices, values, and beliefs
dramaturgical analysis a technique sociologists use in which they view society through the metaphor of theatrical performance
dynamic equilibrium a stable state in which all parts of a healthy society work together properly
dysfunctions social patterns that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society
figuration the process of simultaneously analyzing the behavior of an individual and the society that shapes that behavior
function the part a recurrent activity plays in the social life as a whole and the contribution it makes to structural continuity
functionalism a theoretical approach that sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of individuals that make up that society
generalized others the organized and generalized attitude of a social group
grand theories an attempt to explain large-scale relationships and answer fundamental questions such as why societies form and why they change
hypothesis a testable proposition
latent functions the unrecognized or unintended consequences of a social process
macro-level a wide-scale view of the role of social structures within a society
manifest functions sought consequences of a social process
micro-level theories the study of specific relationships between individuals or small groups
paradigms philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them
positivism the scientific study of social patterns
qualitative sociology in-depth interviews, focus groups, and/or analysis of content sources as the source of its data
quantitative sociology statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants
reification an error of treating an abstract concept as though it has a real, material existence
significant others specific individuals that impact a person's life
social facts the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and all of the cultural rules that govern social life
social institutions patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs
social solidarity the social ties that bind a group of people together such as kinship, shared location, and religion
society a group of people who live in a defined geographical area who interact with one another and who share a common culture
sociological imagination the ability to understand how your own past relates to that of other people, as well as to history in general and societal structures in particular
sociology the systematic study of society and social interaction
symbolic interactionism a theoretical perspective through which scholars examine the relationship of individuals within their society by studying their communication (language and symbols)
theory a proposed explanation about social interactions or society
verstehen a German word that means to understand in a deep way

Section Summary

1.1 What Is Sociology?

Sociology is the systematic and scientific study of society and social interaction. In order to carry out their studies, sociologists identify cultural patterns and social forces and determine how they affect individuals and groups. They also develop ways to apply their findings to the real world.

1.2 The History of Sociology

Sociology was developed as an academic and scientific way to study and theorize about the changes to society brought on by the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of the earliest sociologists thought that societies and individuals' roles in society could be studied using the same scientific methodologies that were used in the natural sciences, while others believed that is was impossible to predict human behavior scientifically, and still others debated the value of such predictions. Those perspectives continue to be represented within sociology today.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

Sociologists develop theories to explain social events, interactions, and patterns. A theory is a proposed explanation of those social interactions. Theories have different scales. Macro-level theories, such as structural functionalism and conflict theory, attempt to explain how societies operate as a whole. Micro-level theories, such as symbolic interactionism, focus on interactions between individuals.

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

Studying sociology is beneficial both for the individual and for society. By studying sociology people learn how to think critically about social issues and problems that confront our society. The study of sociology enriches students' lives and prepares them for careers in an increasingly diverse world. Society benefits because people with sociological training are better prepared to make informed decisions about social issues and take effective action to deal with them.

Section Quiz

1.1 What Is Sociology?

1. Which of the following best describes sociology as a subject?
   a. The study of individual behavior
   b. The study of cultures
   c. The study of society and social interaction
   d. The study of economics

2. C. Wright Mills once said that sociologists need to develop a sociological _____ to study how society affects individuals.
   a. culture
   b. imagination
   c. method
   d. tool

3. A sociologist defines society as a group of people who reside in a defined area, share a culture, and who:
   a. interact
   b. work in the same industry
   c. speak different languages
   d. practice a recognized religion

4. Seeing patterns means that a sociologist needs to be able to:
   a. compare the behavior of individuals from different societies
   b. compare one society to another
   c. identify similarities in how social groups respond to social pressure
   d. compare individuals to groups

1.2 The History of Sociology

5. Which of the following was a topic of study in early sociology?
   a. Astrology
   b. Economics
   c. Physics
   d. History

6. Which founder of sociology believed societies changed due to class struggle?
   a. Emile Comte
   b. Karl Marx
   c. Plato
   d. Herbert Spencer

7. Weber believed humans could not be studied purely objectively because they were influenced by:
   a. drugs
   b. their culture
   c. their genetic makeup
   d. the researcher

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

8. Which of these theories is most likely to look at the social world on a micro level?
   a. Structural functionalism
   b. Conflict theory
   c. Positivism
   d. Symbolic interactionism

9. Who believed that the history of society was one of class struggle?
   a. Emile Durkheim
   b. Karl Marx
   c. Erving Goffmann
   d. George Herbert Mead

10. Who coined the phrase symbolic interactionism?
   a. Herbert Blumer
   b. Max Weber
   c. Lester F. Ward
   d. W. I. Thomas

11. A symbolic interactionist may compare social interactions to:
   a. behaviors
   b. conflicts
   c. human organs
   d. theatrical roles

12. Which research technique would most likely be used by a symbolic interactionist?
   a. Surveys
   b. Participant observation
   c. Quantitative data analysis
   d. None of the above

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

13. Kenneth and Mamie Clark used sociological research to show that segregation was:
   a. beneficial
   b. harmful
   c. illegal
   d. of no importance

14. What did the Clark's use in their experiment noted in question 15?
   a. children and dogs
   b. adults and dolls
   c. children and dolls
   d. adults and pets

15. Studying sociology helps people analyze data because they learn:
   a. interview techniques
   b. to apply statistics
   c. to generate theories
   d. all of the above

16. Berger describes sociologists as concerned with:
   a. monumental moments in people's lives
   b. common everyday life events
   c. both a and b
   d. none of the above

17. Berger writes that sociology
   a. is not an academic discipline
   b. makes the strange familiar
   c. makes the familiar strange
   d. is not a science

Short Answer

1.1 What Is Sociology?

1. What do you think C. Wright Mills meant when he said that to be a sociologist, one had to develop a sociological imagination?

2. Describe a situation in which a choice you made was influenced by societal pressures.

1.2 The History of Sociology

3. What do you make of Karl Marx's contributions to sociology? What perceptions of Marx have you been exposed to in your society, and how do those perceptions influence your views?

4. Do you tend to place more value on qualitative or quantitative research? Why? Does it matter what topic you are studying?

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

5. Which theory do you think better explains how societies operate—structural functionalism or conflict theory? Why?
6. Do you think the way people behave in social interactions is more like the behavior of animals or more like actors playing a role in a theatrical production? Why?

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

7. How do you think taking a sociology course might affect your social interactions?
8. What sort of career are you interested in? How could studying sociology help you in this career?

Further Research

1.1 What Is Sociology?

Sociology is a broad discipline. Different kinds of sociologists employ various methods for exploring the relationship between individuals and society. Check out more about sociology at this website. (http://openstax.org/l/what-is-sociology) .

1.2 The History of Sociology

Many sociologists helped shape the discipline. To learn more, check out this site featuring prominent sociologists and how they changed sociology. (https://openstax.org/l/3esociobio)

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

People often think of all conflict as violent, but many conflicts can be resolved nonviolently. To learn more about nonviolent methods of conflict resolution check out the Albert Einstein Institution (http://openstax.org/l/ae-institution) .

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

Social communication is rapidly evolving due to ever improving technologies. Check out this website to learn more about how sociologists study the impact of these changes (http://openstax.org/l/media)

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Sociological Research

2

FIGURE 2.1 Many believe that crime rates go up during the full moon, but scientific research does not support this conclusion. (Credit: Arman Thanvir/flickr.)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION As sociology made its way into American universities, scholars developed it into a science that relies on research to build a body of knowledge. Sociologists began collecting data (observations and documentation) and applying the **scientific method** or an interpretative framework to increase understanding of societies and social interactions.

Our observations about social situations often incorporate biases based on our own views and limited data. To avoid subjectivity, sociologists conduct experiments or studies that gather and analyze **empirical evidence** from direct experience. Peers review the conclusions from this research and often repeat the experiments or studies or apply them to other contexts in order to validate these conclusions. Examples of peer-reviewed research are found in scholarly journals.

Consider a study on the relationship between COVID-19 and crime rates published in *Crime Science*, a scholarly journal. Researchers hypothesized that COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions would lead to a drop both in street crimes and home burglaries. Researchers collected the data Swedish police used to track and

project future crimes. They found that assaults, pickpocketing and burglary had decreased significantly (Gerell, Kardell, and Kindgren, 2020). In this way, researchers used empirical evidence and statistical analysis to answer the question how did COVID-19 restrictions impact crime rates. In this chapter, we will explore the approaches and methods sociologists use to conduct studies like this one.

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Define and describe the scientific method.
- Explain how the scientific method is used in sociological research.
- Describe the function and importance of an interpretive framework.
- Describe the differences in accuracy, reliability and validity in a research study.

When sociologists apply the sociological perspective and begin to ask questions, no topic is off limits. Every aspect of human behavior is a source of possible investigation. Sociologists question the world that humans have created and live in. They notice patterns of behavior as people move through that world. Using sociological methods and systematic research within the framework of the scientific method and a scholarly interpretive perspective, sociologists have discovered social patterns in the workplace that have transformed industries, in families that have enlightened family members, and in education that have aided structural changes in classrooms.

Sociologists often begin the research process by asking a question about how or why things happen in this world. It might be a unique question about a new trend or an old question about a common aspect of life. Once the question is formed, the sociologist proceeds through an in-depth process to answer it. In deciding how to design that process, the researcher may adopt a scientific approach or an interpretive framework. The following sections describe these approaches to knowledge.

The Scientific Method

Sociologists make use of tried and true methods of research, such as experiments, surveys, and field research. But humans and their social interactions are so diverse that these interactions can seem impossible to chart or explain. It might seem that science is about discoveries and chemical reactions or about proving ideas right or wrong rather than about exploring the nuances of human behavior.

However, this is exactly why scientific models work for studying human behavior. A scientific process of research establishes parameters that help make sure results are objective and accurate. Scientific methods provide limitations and boundaries that focus a study and organize its results.

The scientific method involves developing and testing theories about the social world based on empirical evidence. It is defined by its commitment to systematic observation of the empirical world and strives to be objective, critical, skeptical, and logical. It involves a series of six prescribed steps that have been established over centuries of scientific scholarship.

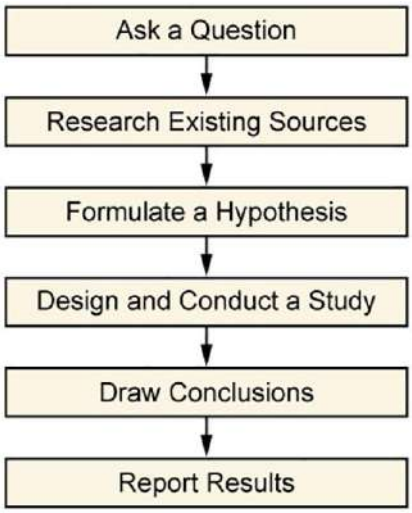

FIGURE 2.2 The Scientific Method. 6 steps of the scientific method are an essential tool in research.

Sociological research does not reduce knowledge to right or wrong facts. Results of studies tend to provide people with insights they did not have before—explanations of human behaviors and social practices and access to knowledge of other cultures, rituals and beliefs, or trends and attitudes.

In general, sociologists tackle questions about the role of social characteristics in outcomes or results. For example, how do different communities fare in terms of psychological well-being, community cohesiveness, range of vocation, wealth, crime rates, and so on? Are communities functioning smoothly? Sociologists often look between the cracks to discover obstacles to meeting basic human needs. They might also study environmental influences and patterns of behavior that lead to crime, substance abuse, divorce, poverty, unplanned pregnancies, or illness. And, because sociological studies are not all focused on negative behaviors or challenging situations, social researchers might study vacation trends, healthy eating habits, neighborhood organizations, higher education patterns, games, parks, and exercise habits.

Sociologists can use the scientific method not only to collect but also to interpret and analyze data. They deliberately apply scientific logic and objectivity. They are interested in—but not attached to—the results. They work outside of their own political or social agendas. This does not mean researchers do not have their own personalities, complete with preferences and opinions. But sociologists deliberately use the scientific method to maintain as much objectivity, focus, and consistency as possible in collecting and analyzing data in research studies.

With its systematic approach, the scientific method has proven useful in shaping sociological studies. The scientific method provides a systematic, organized series of steps that help ensure objectivity and consistency in exploring a social problem. They provide the means for accuracy, reliability, and validity. In the end, the scientific method provides a shared basis for discussion and analysis (Merton 1963). Typically, the scientific method has 6 steps which are described below.

Step 1: Ask a Question or Find a Research Topic

The first step of the scientific method is to ask a question, select a problem, and identify the specific area of interest. The topic should be narrow enough to study within a geographic location and time frame. “Are societies capable of sustained happiness?” would be too vague. The question should also be broad enough to have universal merit. “What do personal hygiene habits reveal about the values of students at XYZ High School?” would be too narrow. Sociologists strive to frame questions that examine well-defined patterns and relationships.

In a hygiene study, for instance, hygiene could be defined as “personal habits to maintain physical appearance (as opposed to health),” and a researcher might ask, “How do differing personal hygiene habits reflect the

cultural value placed on appearance?"

Step 2: Review the Literature/Research Existing Sources

The next step researchers undertake is to conduct background research through a **literature review**, which is a review of any existing similar or related studies. A visit to the library, a thorough online search, and a survey of academic journals will uncover existing research about the topic of study. This step helps researchers gain a broad understanding of work previously conducted, identify gaps in understanding of the topic, and position their own research to build on prior knowledge. Researchers—including student researchers—are responsible for correctly citing existing sources they use in a study or that inform their work. While it is fine to borrow previously published material (as long as it enhances a unique viewpoint), it must be referenced properly and never plagiarized.

To study crime, a researcher might also sort through existing data from the court system, police database, prison information, interviews with criminals, guards, wardens, etc. It's important to examine this information in addition to existing research to determine how these resources might be used to fill holes in existing knowledge. Reviewing existing sources educates researchers and helps refine and improve a research study design.

Step 3: Formulate a Hypothesis

A **hypothesis** is an explanation for a phenomenon based on a conjecture about the relationship between the phenomenon and one or more causal factors. In sociology, the hypothesis will often predict how one form of human behavior influences another. For example, a hypothesis might be in the form of an "if, then statement." Let's relate this to our topic of crime: If crime unemployment increases, then the crime rate will increase.

In scientific research, we formulate hypotheses to include an **independent variables (IV)**, which are the *cause* of the change, and a **dependent variable (DV)**, which is the *effect*, or thing that is changed. In the example above, unemployment is the independent variable and the crime rate is the dependent variable.

In a sociological study, the researcher would establish one form of human behavior as the independent variable and observe the influence it has on a dependent variable. How does gender (the independent variable) affect rate of income (the dependent variable)? How does one's religion (the independent variable) affect family size (the dependent variable)? How is social class (the dependent variable) affected by level of education (the independent variable)?

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
The greater the availability of affordable housing, the lower the homeless rate.	Affordable Housing	Homeless Rate
The greater the availability of math tutoring, the higher the math grades.	Math Tutoring	Math Grades
The greater the police patrol presence, the safer the neighborhood.	Police Patrol Presence	Safer Neighborhood
The greater the factory lighting, the higher the productivity.	Factory Lighting	Productivity

TABLE 2.1 Examples of Dependent and Independent Variables Typically, the independent variable causes the dependent variable to change in some way.

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
The greater the amount of media coverage, the higher the public awareness.	Observation	Public Awareness

TABLE 2.1 Examples of Dependent and Independent Variables Typically, the independent variable causes the dependent variable to change in some way.

Taking an example from Table 12.1, a researcher might hypothesize that teaching children proper hygiene (the independent variable) will boost their sense of self-esteem (the dependent variable). Note, however, this hypothesis can also work the other way around. A sociologist might predict that increasing a child's sense of self-esteem (the independent variable) will increase or improve habits of hygiene (now the dependent variable). Identifying the independent and dependent variables is very important. As the hygiene example shows, simply identifying related two topics or variables is not enough. Their prospective relationship must be part of the hypothesis.

Step 4: Design and Conduct a Study

Researchers design studies to maximize **reliability**, which refers to how likely research results are to be replicated if the study is reproduced. Reliability increases the likelihood that what happens to one person will happen to all people in a group or what will happen in one situation will happen in another. Cooking is a science. When you follow a recipe and measure ingredients with a cooking tool, such as a measuring cup, the same results is obtained as long as the cook follows the same recipe and uses the same type of tool. The measuring cup introduces **accuracy** into the process. If a person uses a less accurate tool, such as their hand, to measure ingredients rather than a cup, the same result may not be replicated. Accurate tools and methods increase reliability.

Researchers also strive for **validity**, which refers to how well the study measures what it was designed to measure. To produce reliable and valid results, sociologists develop an **operational definition**, that is, they define eacj concept, or variable, in terms of the physical or concrete steps it takes to objectively measure it. The operational definition identifies an observable condition of the concept. By operationalizing the concept, all researchers can collect data in a systematic or replicable manner. Moreover, researchers can determine whether the experiment or method validly represent the phenomenon they intended to study.

A study asking how tutoring improves grades, for instance, might define "tutoring" as "one-on-one assistance by an expert in the field, hired by an educational institution." However, one researcher might define a "good" grade as a C or better, while another uses a B+ as a starting point for "good." For the results to be replicated and gain acceptance within the broader scientific community, researchers would have to use a standard operational definition. These definitions set limits and establish cut-off points that ensure consistency and replicability in a study.

We will explore research methods in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

Step 5: Draw Conclusions

After constructing the research design, sociologists collect, tabulate or categorize, and analyze data to formulate conclusions. If the analysis supports the hypothesis, researchers can discuss the implications of the results for the theory or policy solution that they were addressing. If the analysis does support the hypothesis, researchers may consider repeating the experiment or think of ways to improve their procedure.

However, even when results contradict a sociologist's prediction of a study's outcome, these results still contribute to sociological understanding. Sociologists analyze general patterns in response to a study, but they

are equally interested in exceptions to patterns. In a study of education, a researcher might predict that high school dropouts have a hard time finding rewarding careers. While many assume that the higher the education, the higher the salary and degree of career happiness, there are certainly exceptions. People with little education have had stunning careers, and people with advanced degrees have had trouble finding work. A sociologist prepares a hypothesis knowing that results may substantiate or contradict it.

Sociologists carefully keep in mind how operational definitions and research designs impact the results as they draw conclusions. Consider the concept of "increase of crime," which might be defined as the percent increase in crime from last week to this week, as in the study of Swedish crime discussed above. Yet the data used to evaluate "increase of crime" might be limited by many factors: who commits the crime, where the crimes are committed, or what type of crime is committed. If the data is gathered for "crimes committed in Houston, Texas in zip code 77021," then it may not be generalizable to crimes committed in rural areas outside of major cities like Houston. If data is collected about vandalism, it may not be generalizable to assault.

Step 6: Report Results

Researchers report their results at conferences and in academic journals. These results are then subjected to the scrutiny of other sociologists in the field. Before the conclusions of a study become widely accepted, the studies are often repeated in the same or different environments. In this way, sociological theories and knowledge develops as the relationships between social phenomenon are established in broader contexts and different circumstances.

Interpretive Framework

While many sociologists rely on empirical data and the scientific method as a research approach, others operate from an **interpretive framework**. While systematic, this approach doesn't follow the hypothesis-testing model that seeks to find generalizable results. Instead, an interpretive framework, sometimes referred to as an *interpretive perspective*, seeks to understand social worlds from the point of view of participants, which leads to in-depth knowledge or understands about the human experience.

Interpretive research is generally more descriptive or narrative in its findings. Rather than formulating a hypothesis and method for testing it, an interpretive researcher will develop approaches to explore the topic at hand that may involve a significant amount of direct observation or interaction with subjects including storytelling. This type of researcher learns through the process and sometimes adjusts the research methods or processes midway to optimize findings as they evolve.

Critical Sociology

Critical sociology focuses on deconstruction of existing sociological research and theory. Informed by the work of Karl Marx, scholars known collectively as the Frankfurt School proposed that social science, as much as any academic pursuit, is embedded in the system of power constituted by the set of class, caste, race, gender, and other relationships that exist in the society. Consequently, it cannot be treated as purely objective. Critical sociologists view theories, methods, and the conclusions as serving one of two purposes: they can either legitimate and rationalize systems of social power and oppression or liberate humans from inequality and restriction on human freedom. Deconstruction can involve data collection, but the analysis of this data is not empirical or positivist.

2.2 Research Methods

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Recall the 6 Steps of the Scientific Method
- Differentiate between four kinds of research methods: surveys, field research, experiments, and secondary data analysis.
- Explain the appropriateness of specific research approaches for specific topics.

Sociologists examine the social world, see a problem or interesting pattern, and set out to study it. They use research methods to design a study. Planning the research design is a key step in any sociological study. Sociologists generally choose from widely used methods of social investigation: **primary source data collection** such as survey, participant observation, ethnography, case study, unobtrusive observations, experiment, and **secondary data analysis**, or use of existing sources. Every research method comes with plusses and minuses, and the topic of study strongly influences which method or methods are put to use. When you are conducting research think about the best way to gather or obtain knowledge about your topic, think of yourself as an architect. An architect needs a blueprint to build a house, as a sociologist your blueprint is your research design including your data collection method.

When entering a particular social environment, a researcher must be careful. There are times to remain anonymous and times to be overt. There are times to conduct interviews and times to simply observe. Some participants need to be thoroughly informed; others should not know they are being observed. A researcher wouldn't stroll into a crime-ridden neighborhood at midnight, calling out, "Any gang members around?"

Making sociologists' presence invisible is not always realistic for other reasons. That option is not available to a researcher studying prison behaviors, early education, or the Ku Klux Klan. Researchers can't just stroll into prisons, kindergarten classrooms, or Klan meetings and unobtrusively observe behaviors or attract attention. In situations like these, other methods are needed. Researchers choose methods that best suit their study topics, protect research participants or subjects, and that fit with their overall approaches to research.

Surveys

As a research method, a **survey** collects data from subjects who respond to a series of questions about behaviors and opinions, often in the form of a questionnaire or an interview. The survey is one of the most widely used scientific research methods. The standard survey format allows individuals a level of anonymity in which they can express personal ideas.

FIGURE 2.3 Questionnaires are a common research method. (Credit: CDC Global/flickr)

At some point, most people in the United States respond to some type of survey. The 2020 U.S. Census is an excellent example of a large-scale survey intended to gather sociological data. Since 1790, United States has conducted a survey consisting of six questions to received demographical data pertaining to residents. The questions pertain to the demographics of the residents who live in the United States. Currently, the Census is received by residents in the United Stated and five territories and consists of 12 questions.

Not all surveys are considered sociological research, however, and many surveys people commonly encounter focus on identifying marketing needs and strategies rather than testing a hypothesis or contributing to social science knowledge. Questions such as, "How many hot dogs do you eat in a month?" or "Were the staff helpful?" are not usually designed as scientific research. The Nielsen Ratings determine the popularity of television programming through scientific market research. However, polls conducted by television programs such as *American Idol* or *So You Think You Can Dance* cannot be generalized, because they are administered to an unrepresentative population, a specific show's audience. You might receive polls through your cell phones or emails, from grocery stores, restaurants, and retail stores. They often provide you incentives for completing

the survey.

FIGURE 2.4 Real-time surveys are common in classrooms, live-audience events, and even popular media. Twitter polls have often replaced physical devices such as the one pictured. (Credit: Sam Howzit/flickr)

Sociologists conduct surveys under controlled conditions for specific purposes. Surveys gather different types of information from people. While surveys are not great at capturing the ways people really behave in social situations, they are a great method for discovering how people feel, think, and act—or at least how they say they feel, think, and act. Surveys can track preferences for presidential candidates or reported individual behaviors (such as sleeping, driving, or texting habits) or information such as employment status, income, and education levels.

A survey targets a specific **population**, people who are the focus of a study, such as college athletes, international students, or teenagers living with type 1 (juvenile-onset) diabetes. Most researchers choose to survey a small sector of the population, or a **sample**, a manageable number of subjects who *represent* a larger population. The success of a study depends on how well a population is represented by the sample. In a **random sample**, every person in a population has the same chance of being chosen for the study. As a result, a Gallup Poll, if conducted as a nationwide random sampling, should be able to provide an accurate estimate of public opinion whether it contacts 2,000 or 10,000 people.

After selecting subjects, the researcher develops a specific plan to ask questions and record responses. It is important to inform subjects of the nature and purpose of the survey up front. If they agree to participate, researchers thank subjects and offer them a chance to see the results of the study if they are interested. The researcher presents the subjects with an instrument, which is a means of gathering the information.

A common instrument is a questionnaire. Subjects often answer a series of **closed-ended questions**. The researcher might ask yes-or-no or multiple-choice questions, allowing subjects to choose possible responses to each question. This kind of questionnaire collects **quantitative data**—data in numerical form that can be counted and statistically analyzed. Just count up the number of "yes" and "no" responses or correct answers, and chart them into percentages.

Questionnaires can also ask more complex questions with more complex answers—beyond "yes," "no," or checkbox options. These types of inquiries use **open-ended questions** that require short essay responses. Participants willing to take the time to write those answers might convey personal religious beliefs, political views, goals, or morals. The answers are subjective and vary from person to person. *How do plan to use your college education?*

Some topics that investigate internal thought processes are impossible to observe directly and are difficult to discuss honestly in a public forum. People are more likely to share honest answers if they can respond to questions anonymously. This type of personal explanation is **qualitative data**—conveyed through words. Qualitative information is harder to organize and tabulate. The researcher will end up with a wide range of

responses, some of which may be surprising. The benefit of written opinions, though, is the wealth of in-depth material that they provide.

An **interview** is a one-on-one conversation between the researcher and the subject, and it is a way of conducting surveys on a topic. However, participants are free to respond as they wish, without being limited by predetermined choices. In the back-and-forth conversation of an interview, a researcher can ask for clarification, spend more time on a subtopic, or ask additional questions. In an interview, a subject will ideally feel free to open up and answer questions that are often complex. There are no right or wrong answers. The subject might not even know how to answer the questions honestly.

Questions such as "How does society's view of alcohol consumption influence your decision whether or not to take your first sip of alcohol?" or "Did you feel that the divorce of your parents would put a social stigma on your family?" involve so many factors that the answers are difficult to categorize. A researcher needs to avoid steering or prompting the subject to respond in a specific way; otherwise, the results will prove to be unreliable. The researcher will also benefit from gaining a subject's trust, from empathizing or commiserating with a subject, and from listening without judgment.

Surveys often collect both quantitative and qualitative data. For example, a researcher interviewing prisoners might receive quantitative data, such asdemographics – race, age, sex, that can be analyzed statistically. For example, the researcher might discover that 20 percent of prisoners are above the age of 50. The researcher might also collect qualitative data, such as why prisoners take advantage of educational opportunities while they serve and other explanatory information.

The survey can be carried out online, over the phone, by mail, or face-to-face. When researchers collect data outside a laboratory, library, or workplace setting, they are conducting field research, which is our next topic.

Field Research

The work of sociology rarely happens in limited, confined spaces. Rather, sociologists go out into the world. They meet subjects where they live, work, and play. **Field research** refers to gathering **primary data** from a natural environment. To conduct field research, the sociologist must be willing to step into new environments and observe, participate, or experience those worlds. In field work, the sociologists, rather than the subjects, are the ones out of their element.

The researcher interacts with or observes people and gathers data along the way. The key point in field research is that it takes place in the subject's natural environment, whether it's a coffee shop or tribal village, a homeless shelter or the DMV, a hospital, airport, mall, or beach resort.

FIGURE 2.5 Sociological researchers travel across countries and cultures to interact with and observe subjects in their natural environments. (Credit: IMLS Digital Collections and Content/flickr)

While field research often begins in a specific *setting*, the study's purpose is to observe specific *behaviors* in that setting. Field work is optimal for observing *how* people think and behave. It seeks to understand *why* they behave that way. However, researchers may struggle to narrow down cause and effect when there are so many variables floating around in a natural environment. And while field research looks for correlation, its small sample size does not allow for establishing a causal relationship between two variables. Indeed, much of the data gathered in sociology do not identify a cause and effect but a **correlation**.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Beyoncé and Lady Gaga as Sociological Subjects

FIGURE 2.6 Researchers have used surveys and participant observations to accumulate data on Lady Gaga and Beyonce as multifaceted performers. (Credit a: John Robert Chartlon/flickr, b: Kristopher Harris/flickr.)

Sociologist have studied Lady Gaga and Beyoncé and their impact on music, movies, social media, fan participation,

and social equality. In their studies, researchers have used several research methods including secondary analysis, participant observation, and surveys from concert participants.

In their study, Click, Lee & Holiday (2013) interviewed 45 Lady Gaga fans who utilized social media to communicate with the artist. These fans viewed Lady Gaga as a mirror of themselves and a source of inspiration. Like her, they embrace not being a part of mainstream culture. Many of Lady Gaga's fans are members of the LGBTQ community. They see the "song "Born This Way" as a rallying cry and answer her calls for "Paws Up" with a physical expression of solidarity—outstretched arms and fingers bent and curled to resemble monster claws."

Sascha Buchanan (2019) made use of participant observation to study the relationship between two fan groups, that of Beyoncé and that of Rihanna. She observed award shows sponsored by iHeartRadio, MTV EMA, and BET that pit one group against another as they competed for Best Fan Army, Biggest Fans, and FANdemonium. Buchanan argues that the media thus sustains a myth of rivalry between the two most commercially successful Black women vocal artists.

Participant Observation

In 2000, a comic writer named Rodney Rothman wanted an insider's view of white-collar work. He slipped into the sterile, high-rise offices of a New York "dot com" agency. Every day for two weeks, he pretended to work there. His main purpose was simply to see whether anyone would notice him or challenge his presence. No one did. The receptionist greeted him. The employees smiled and said good morning. Rothman was accepted as part of the team. He even went so far as to claim a desk, inform the receptionist of his whereabouts, and attend a meeting. He published an article about his experience in *The New Yorker* called "My Fake Job" (2000). Later, he was discredited for allegedly fabricating some details of the story and *The New Yorker* issued an apology. However, Rothman's entertaining article still offered fascinating descriptions of the inside workings of a "dot com" company and exemplified the lengths to which a writer, or a sociologist, will go to uncover material.

Rothman had conducted a form of study called **participant observation**, in which researchers join people and participate in a group's routine activities for the purpose of observing them within that context. This method lets researchers experience a specific aspect of social life. A researcher might go to great lengths to get a firsthand look into a trend, institution, or behavior. A researcher might work as a waitress in a diner, live as a homeless person for several weeks, or ride along with police officers as they patrol their regular beat. Often, these researchers try to blend in seamlessly with the population they study, and they may not disclose their true identity or purpose if they feel it would compromise the results of their research.

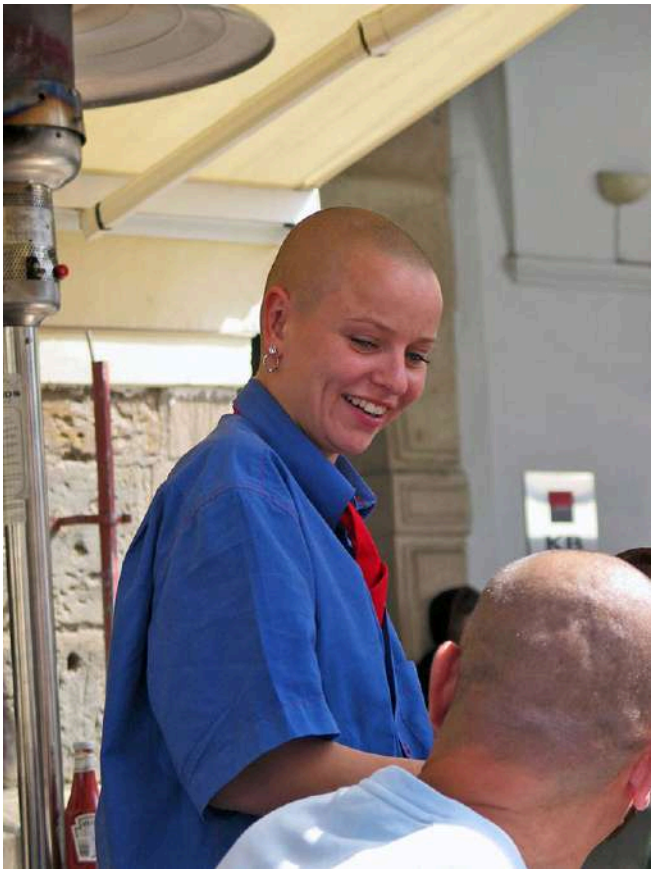

FIGURE 2.7 Is she a working waitress or a sociologist conducting a study using participant observation? A field researcher may take a job or take other steps to get firsthand knowledge of their subjects. (Credit: Gareth Williams/ flickr.)

At the beginning of a field study, researchers might have a question: "What really goes on in the kitchen of the most popular diner on campus?" or "What is it like to be homeless?" Participant observation is a useful method if the researcher wants to explore a certain environment from the inside.

Field researchers simply want to observe and learn. In such a setting, the researcher will be alert and open minded to whatever happens, recording all observations accurately. Soon, as patterns emerge, questions will become more specific, observations will lead to hypotheses, and hypotheses will guide the researcher in analyzing data and generating results.

In a study of small towns in the United States conducted by sociological researchers John S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, the team altered their purpose as they gathered data. They initially planned to focus their study on the role of religion in U.S. towns. As they gathered observations, they realized that the effect of industrialization and urbanization was the more relevant topic of this social group. The Lynds did not change their methods, but they revised the purpose of their study.

This shaped the structure of *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*, their published results (Lynd & Lynd, 1929).

The Lynds were upfront about their mission. The townspeople of Muncie, Indiana, knew why the researchers were in their midst. But some sociologists prefer not to alert people to their presence. The main advantage of covert participant observation is that it allows the researcher access to authentic, natural behaviors of a group's members. The challenge, however, is gaining access to a setting without disrupting the pattern of others' behavior. Becoming an inside member of a group, organization, or subculture takes time and effort. Researchers must pretend to be something they are not. The process could involve role playing, making

contacts, networking, or applying for a job.

Once inside a group, some researchers spend months or even years pretending to be one of the people they are observing. However, as observers, they cannot get too involved. They must keep their purpose in mind and apply the sociological perspective. That way, they illuminate social patterns that are often unrecognized. Because information gathered during participant observation is mostly qualitative, rather than quantitative, the end results are often descriptive or interpretive. The researcher might present findings in an article or book and describe what he or she witnessed and experienced.

This type of research is what journalist Barbara Ehrenreich conducted for her book *Nickel and Dimed*. One day over lunch with her editor, Ehrenreich mentioned an idea. *How can people exist on minimum-wage work? How do low-income workers get by?* she wondered. *Someone should do a study*. To her surprise, her editor responded, *Why don't you do it?*

That's how Ehrenreich found herself joining the ranks of the working class. For several months, she left her comfortable home and lived and worked among people who lacked, for the most part, higher education and marketable job skills. Undercover, she applied for and worked minimum wage jobs as a waitress, a cleaning woman, a nursing home aide, and a retail chain employee. During her participant observation, she used only her income from those jobs to pay for food, clothing, transportation, and shelter.

She discovered the obvious, that it's almost impossible to get by on minimum wage work. She also experienced and observed attitudes many middle and upper-class people never think about. She witnessed firsthand the treatment of working class employees. She saw the extreme measures people take to make ends meet and to survive. She described fellow employees who held two or three jobs, worked seven days a week, lived in cars, could not pay to treat chronic health conditions, got randomly fired, submitted to drug tests, and moved in and out of homeless shelters. She brought aspects of that life to light, describing difficult working conditions and the poor treatment that low-wage workers suffer.

The book she wrote upon her return to her real life as a well-paid writer, has been widely read and used in many college classrooms.

FIGURE 2.8 Field research happens in real locations. What type of environment do work spaces foster? What would a sociologist discover after blending in? (Credit: Lyncconf Games/flickr)

Ethnography

Ethnography is the immersion of the researcher in the natural setting of an entire social community to observe and experience their everyday life and culture. The heart of an ethnographic study focuses on how subjects view their own social standing and how they understand themselves in relation to a social group.

An ethnographic study might observe, for example, a small U.S. fishing town, an Inuit community, a village in Thailand, a Buddhist monastery, a private boarding school, or an amusement park. These places all have borders. People live, work, study, or vacation within those borders. People are there for a certain reason and therefore behave in certain ways and respect certain cultural norms. An ethnographer would commit to spending a determined amount of time studying every aspect of the chosen place, taking in as much as possible.

A sociologist studying a tribe in the Amazon might watch the way villagers go about their daily lives and then write a paper about it. To observe a spiritual retreat center, an ethnographer might sign up for a retreat and attend as a guest for an extended stay, observe and record data, and collate the material into results.

Institutional Ethnography

Institutional ethnography is an extension of basic ethnographic research principles that focuses intentionally on everyday concrete social relationships. Developed by Canadian sociologist Dorothy E. Smith (1990), institutional ethnography is often considered a feminist-inspired approach to social analysis and primarily considers women's experiences within male- dominated societies and power structures. Smith's work is seen to challenge sociology's exclusion of women, both academically and in the study of women's lives (Fenstermaker, n.d.).

Historically, social science research tended to objectify women and ignore their experiences except as viewed from the male perspective. Modern feminists note that describing women, and other marginalized groups, as subordinates helps those in authority maintain their own dominant positions (Social Sciences and Humanities

Research Council of Canada n.d.). Smith's three major works explored what she called "the conceptual practices of power" and are still considered seminal works in feminist theory and ethnography (Fensternmaker n.d.).

SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The Making of Middletown: A Study in Modern U.S. Culture

In 1924, a young married couple named Robert and Helen Lynd undertook an unprecedented ethnography: to apply sociological methods to the study of one U.S. city in order to discover what "ordinary" people in the United States did and believed. Choosing Muncie, Indiana (population about 30,000) as their subject, they moved to the small town and lived there for eighteen months.

Ethnographers had been examining other cultures for decades—groups considered minorities or outsiders—like gangs, immigrants, and the poor. But no one had studied the so-called average American.

Recording interviews and using surveys to gather data, the Lynds objectively described what they observed. Researching existing sources, they compared Muncie in 1890 to the Muncie they observed in 1924. Most Muncie adults, they found, had grown up on farms but now lived in homes inside the city. As a result, the Lynds focused their study on the impact of industrialization and urbanization.

They observed that Muncie was divided into business and working class groups. They defined business class as dealing with abstract concepts and symbols, while working class people used tools to create concrete objects. The two classes led different lives with different goals and hopes. However, the Lynds observed, mass production offered both classes the same amenities. Like wealthy families, the working class was now able to own radios, cars, washing machines, telephones, vacuum cleaners, and refrigerators. This was an emerging material reality of the 1920s.

As the Lynds worked, they divided their manuscript into six chapters: Getting a Living, Making a Home, Training the Young, Using Leisure, Engaging in Religious Practices, and Engaging in Community Activities.

When the study was completed, the Lynds encountered a big problem. The Rockefeller Foundation, which had commissioned the book, claimed it was useless and refused to publish it. The Lynds asked if they could seek a publisher themselves.

Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture was not only published in 1929 but also became an instant bestseller, a status unheard of for a sociological study. The book sold out six printings in its first year of publication, and has never gone out of print (Caplow, Hicks, & Wattenberg. 2000).

Nothing like it had ever been done before. Middletown was reviewed on the front page of the New York Times. Readers in the 1920s and 1930s identified with the citizens of Muncie, Indiana, but they were equally fascinated by the sociological methods and the use of scientific data to define ordinary people in the United States. The book was proof that social data was important—and interesting—to the U.S. public.

FIGURE 2.9 A classroom in Muncie, Indiana, in 1917, five years before John and Helen Lynd began researching this "typical" U.S. community. (Credit: Don O'Brien/flickr)

Case Study

Sometimes a researcher wants to study one specific person or event. A **case study** is an in-depth analysis of a single event, situation, or individual. To conduct a case study, a researcher examines existing sources like documents and archival records, conducts interviews, engages in direct observation and even participant observation, if possible.

Researchers might use this method to study a single case of a foster child, drug lord, cancer patient, criminal, or rape victim. However, a major criticism of the case study as a method is that while offering depth on a topic, it does not provide enough evidence to form a generalized conclusion. In other words, it is difficult to make universal claims based on just one person, since one person does not verify a pattern. This is why most sociologists do not use case studies as a primary research method.

However, case studies are useful when the single case is unique. In these instances, a single case study can contribute tremendous incite. For example, a feral child, also called "wild child," is one who grows up isolated from human beings. Feral children grow up without social contact and language, which are elements crucial to a "civilized" child's development. These children mimic the behaviors and movements of animals, and often invent their own language. There are only about one hundred cases of "feral children" in the world.

As you may imagine, a feral child is a subject of great interest to researchers. Feral children provide unique information about child development because they have grown up outside of the parameters of "normal" growth and nurturing. And since there are very few feral children, the case study is the most appropriate method for researchers to use in studying the subject.

At age three, a Ukranian girl named Oxana Malaya suffered severe parental neglect. She lived in a shed with dogs, and she ate raw meat and scraps. Five years later, a neighbor called authorities and reported seeing a girl who ran on all fours, barking. Officials brought Oxana into society, where she was cared for and taught some human behaviors, but she never became fully socialized. She has been designated as unable to support herself and now lives in a mental institution (Grice 2011). Case studies like this offer a way for sociologists to collect data that may not be obtained by any other method.

Experiments

You have probably tested some of your own personal social theories. "If I study at night and review in the morning, I'll improve my retention skills." Or, "If I stop drinking soda, I'll feel better." Cause and effect. If this, then that. When you test the theory, your results either prove or disprove your hypothesis.

One way researchers test social theories is by conducting an **experiment**, meaning they investigate relationships to test a hypothesis—a scientific approach.

There are two main types of experiments: lab-based experiments and natural or field experiments. In a lab setting, the research can be controlled so that more data can be recorded in a limited amount of time. In a natural or field- based experiment, the time it takes to gather the data cannot be controlled but the information might be considered more accurate since it was collected without interference or intervention by the researcher.

As a research method, either type of sociological experiment is useful for testing *if-then* statements: *if* a particular thing happens (cause), *then* another particular thing will result (effect). To set up a lab-based experiment, sociologists create artificial situations that allow them to manipulate variables.

Classically, the sociologist selects a set of people with similar characteristics, such as age, class, race, or education. Those people are divided into two groups. One is the experimental group and the other is the control group. The **experimental group** is exposed to the independent variable(s) and the **control group** is not. To test the benefits of tutoring, for example, the sociologist might provide tutoring to the experimental group of students but not to the control group. Then both groups would be tested for differences in performance to see if tutoring had an effect on the experimental group of students. As you can imagine, in a case like this, the researcher would not want to jeopardize the accomplishments of either group of students, so the setting would be somewhat artificial. The test would not be for a grade reflected on their permanent record of a student, for example.

And if a researcher told the students they would be observed as part of a study on measuring the effectiveness of tutoring, the students might not behave naturally. This is called the **Hawthorne effect**—which occurs when people change their behavior because they know they are being watched as part of a study. The Hawthorne effect is unavoidable in some research studies because sociologists have to make the purpose of the study known. Subjects must be aware that they are being observed, and a certain amount of artificiality may result (Sonnenfeld 1985).

SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

An Experiment in Action

FIGURE 2.10 Sociologist Frances Heussenstamm conducted an experiment to explore the correlation between traffic stops and race-based bumper stickers. This issue of racial profiling remains a hot-button topic today. (Credit: dwightsghost/flickr)

A real-life example will help illustrate the experiment process. In 1971, Frances Heussenstamm, a sociology professor at California State University at Los Angeles, had a theory about police prejudice. To test her theory, she conducted an experiment. She chose fifteen students from three ethnic backgrounds: Black, White, and Hispanic. She chose students who routinely drove to and from campus along Los Angeles freeway routes, and who had had perfect driving records for longer than a year. Those were her independent variables—students, good driving records, same commute route.

Next, she placed a Black Panther bumper sticker on each car. That sticker, a representation of a social value, was the independent variable. In the 1970s, the Black Panthers were a revolutionary group actively fighting racism. Heussenstamm asked the students to follow their normal driving patterns. She wanted to see whether seeming support for the Black Panthers would change how these good drivers were treated by the police patrolling the highways. The dependent variable would be the number of traffic stops/citations.

The first arrest, for an incorrect lane change, was made two hours after the experiment began. One participant was pulled over three times in three days. He quit the study. After seventeen days, the fifteen drivers had collected a total of thirty-three traffic citations. The experiment was halted. The funding to pay traffic fines had run out, and so had the enthusiasm of the participants (Heussenstamm, 1971).

Secondary Data Analysis

While sociologists often engage in original research studies, they also contribute knowledge to the discipline through **secondary data analysis**. Secondary data does not result from firsthand research collected from primary sources, but are the already completed work of other researchers or data collected by an agency or organization. Sociologists might study works written by historians, economists, teachers, or early sociologists. They might search through periodicals, newspapers, or magazines, or organizational data from any period in history.

Using available information not only saves time and money but can also add depth to a study. Sociologists often interpret findings in a new way, a way that was not part of an author's original purpose or intention. To study how women were encouraged to act and behave in the 1960s, for example, a researcher might watch movies, televisions shows, and situation comedies from that period. Or to research changes in behavior and attitudes due to the emergence of television in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a sociologist would rely on new interpretations of secondary data. Decades from now, researchers will most likely conduct similar studies on the advent of mobile phones, the Internet, or social media.

Social scientists also learn by analyzing the research of a variety of agencies. Governmental departments and global groups, like the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics or the World Health Organization (WHO), publish studies with findings that are useful to sociologists. A public statistic like the foreclosure rate might be useful for studying the effects of a recession. A racial demographic profile might be compared with data on education funding to examine the resources accessible by different groups.

One of the advantages of secondary data like old movies or WHO statistics is that it is **nonreactive research** (or unobtrusive research), meaning that it does not involve direct contact with subjects and will not alter or influence people's behaviors. Unlike studies requiring direct contact with people, using previously published data does not require entering a population and the investment and risks inherent in that research process.

Using available data does have its challenges. Public records are not always easy to access. A researcher will need to do some legwork to track them down and gain access to records. To guide the search through a vast library of materials and avoid wasting time reading unrelated sources, sociologists employ **content analysis**, applying a systematic approach to record and value information gleaned from secondary data as they relate to the study at hand.

Also, in some cases, there is no way to verify the accuracy of existing data. It is easy to count how many drunk

drivers, for example, are pulled over by the police. But how many are not? While it's possible to discover the percentage of teenage students who drop out of high school, it might be more challenging to determine the number who return to school or get their GED later.

Another problem arises when data are unavailable in the exact form needed or do not survey the topic from the precise angle the researcher seeks. For example, the average salaries paid to professors at a public school is public record. But these figures do not necessarily reveal how long it took each professor to reach the salary range, what their educational backgrounds are, or how long they've been teaching.

When conducting content analysis, it is important to consider the date of publication of an existing source and to take into account attitudes and common cultural ideals that may have influenced the research. For example, when Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd gathered research in the 1920s, attitudes and cultural norms were vastly different then than they are now. Beliefs about gender roles, race, education, and work have changed significantly since then. At the time, the study's purpose was to reveal insights about small U.S. communities. Today, it is an illustration of 1920s attitudes and values.

2.3 Ethical Concerns

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Understand why ethical standards exist
- Investigate unethical studies
- Demonstrate awareness of the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics

Sociologists conduct studies to shed light on human behaviors. Knowledge is a powerful tool that can be used to achieve positive change. As a result, conducting a sociological study comes with a tremendous amount of responsibility. Like all researchers, sociologists must consider their ethical obligation to avoid harming human subjects or groups while conducting research.

Pioneer German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) identified another crucial ethical concern. Weber understood that personal values could distort the framework for disclosing study results. While he accepted that some aspects of research design might be influenced by personal values, he declared it was entirely inappropriate to allow personal values to shape the interpretation of the responses. Sociologists, he stated, must establish **value neutrality**, a practice of remaining impartial, without bias or judgment, during the course of a study and in publishing results (Weber, 1949). Sociologists are obligated to disclose research findings without omitting or distorting significant data.

Is value neutrality possible? Many sociologists believe it is impossible to retain complete objectivity. They caution readers, rather, to understand that sociological studies may contain a certain amount of value bias. This does not discredit the results, but allows readers to view them as one form of truth—one fact-based perspective. Some sociologists attempt to remain uncritical and as objective as possible when studying social institutions. They strive to overcome personal biases, particularly subconscious biases, when collecting and analyzing data. They avoid skewing data in order to match a predetermined outcome that aligns with a particular agenda, such as a political or moral point of view. Investigators are ethically obligated to report results, even when they contradict personal views, predicted outcomes, or widely accepted beliefs.

The American Sociological Association, or ASA, is the major professional organization of sociologists in North America. The ASA is a great resource for students of sociology as well. The ASA maintains a **code of ethics**—formal guidelines for conducting sociological research—consisting of principles and ethical standards to be used in the discipline. These formal guidelines were established by practitioners in 1905 at John Hopkins University, and revised in 1997. When working with human subjects, these codes of ethics require researchers' to do the following:

1. Maintain objectivity and integrity in research

2. Respect subjects' rights to privacy and dignity
3. Protect subject from personal harm
4. Preserve confidentially
5. Seek informed consent
6. Acknowledge collaboration and assistance
7. Disclose sources of financial support

Unfortunately, when these codes of ethics are ignored, it creates an unethical environment for humans being involved in a sociological study. Throughout history, there have been numerous unethical studies, some of which are summarized below.

FIGURE 2.11 Participants in the Tuskegee study were denied important information about their diagnosis, leading to significant health issues. (Credit: Centers for Disease Control)

The Tuskegee Experiment: This study was conducted 1932 in Macon County, Alabama, and included 600 African American men, including 399 diagnosed with syphilis. The participants were told they were diagnosed with a disease of "bad blood." Penicillin was distributed in the 1940s as the cure for the disease, but unfortunately, the African American men were not given the treatment because the objective of the study was to see "how untreated syphilis would affect the African American male" (Caplan, 2007)

Henrietta Lacks: Ironically, this study was conducted at the hospital associated with Johns Hopkins University, where codes of the ethics originated. In 1951, Henrietta Lacks was receiving treatment for cervical cancer at John Hopkins Hospital, and doctors discovered that she had "immortal" cells, which could reproduce rapidly and indefinitely, making them extremely valuable for medical research. Without her consent, doctors collected and shared her cells to produce extensive cell lines. Lacks' cells were widely used for experiments and treatments, including the polio vaccine, and were put into mass production. Today, these cells are known worldwide as HeLa cells (Shah, 2010).

Milgram Experiment: In 1961, psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted an experiment at Yale University. Its purpose was to measure the willingness of study subjects to obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform acts that conflicted with their personal conscience. People in the role of teacher believed they were administering electric shocks to students who gave incorrect answers to word-pair questions. No matter how concerned they were about administering the progressively more intense shocks, the teachers were told to keep going. The ethical concerns involve the extreme emotional distress faced by the teachers, who believed they were hurting other people. (Vogel 2014).

Philip Zimbardo and the Stanford prison experiment: In 1971, psychologist Phillip Zimbardo conducted a

study involving students from Stanford University. The students were put in the roles of prisoners and guards, and were required to play their assigned role accordingly. The experiment was intended to last two weeks, but it only last six days due to the negative outcome and treatment of the "prisoners." Beyond the ethical concerns, the study's validity has been questioned after participants revealed they had been coached to behave in specific ways.

Laud Humphrey: In the 1960s, Laud Humphrey conducted an experiment at a restroom in a park known for same-sex sexual encounters. His objective was to understand the diversity of backgrounds and motivations of people seeking same-sex relationships. His ethics were questioned because he misrepresented his identity and intent while observing and questioning the men he interviewed (Nardi, 1995).

Key Terms

accuracy using a tool makes the measuring more precise.
case study in-depth analysis of a single event, situation, or individual
code of ethics a set of guidelines that the American Sociological Association has established to foster ethical research and professionally responsible scholarship in sociology
content analysis applying a systematic approach to record and value information gleaned from secondary data as it relates to the study at hand
correlation when a change in one variable coincides with a change in another variable, but does not necessarily indicate causation
debunking looking beyond the obvious to expose falseness by examining merit, logic, and evidence.
dependent variables a variable changed by other variables
empirical evidence evidence that comes from direct observations, scientifically gathered data, or experimentation
ethnography participating and observing thinking and behavior in a social setting
experiment the testing of a hypothesis under controlled conditions
field research gathering data from a natural environment without doing a lab experiment or a survey
Hawthorne effect when study subjects behave in a certain manner due to their awareness of being observed by a researcher
hypothesis a testable educated guess about predicted outcomes between two or more variables
independent variables variables that cause changes in dependent variables
interpretive framework a sociological research approach that seeks in-depth understanding of a topic or subject through observation or interaction; this approach is not based on hypothesis testing
interview a one-on-one conversation between the researcher and the subject
literature review a scholarly research step that entails identifying and studying all existing studies on a topic to create a basis for new research
nonreactive research using secondary data, does not include direct contact with research subjects and does not alter or influence people's behaviors
operational definitions specific explanations of abstract concepts that a researcher plans to study
participant observation when a researcher immerses herself in a group or social setting in order to make observations from an "insider" perspective
population a defined group serving as the subject of a study
primary data data that are collected directly from firsthand experience
qualitative data non-numerical, descriptive data that is often subjective and based on what is experienced in a natural setting
quantitative data data collected in numerical form that can be counted and analyzed using statistics
random sample a study's participants being randomly selected to serve as a representation of a larger population
reliability a measure of a study's consistency that considers how likely results are to be replicated if a study is reproduced
samples small, manageable number of subjects that represent the population
scientific method an established scholarly research that involves asking a question, researching existing sources, forming a hypothesis, designing a data collection method, gathering data, and drawing conclusions
secondary data analysis using data collected by others and applying new interpretations
surveys collect data from subjects who respond to a series of questions about thinking, behaviors, and opinions, often in the form of a questionnaire
validity the degree to which a sociological measure accurately reflects the topic of study
value neutrality a practice of remaining impartial, without bias or judgment during the course of a study and in publishing results

Section Summary

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

Using the scientific method, a researcher conducts a study in six phases: asking a question, researching existing sources, formulating a hypothesis, research design, collecting & analyzing data, and drawing conclusions. The scientific method is useful in that it provides a clear method of organizing a study. Some sociologists conduct research through an interpretive framework rather than employing the scientific method.

Scientific sociological studies often observe relationships between variables. Researchers study how one variable influences another. Prior to conducting a study, researchers are careful to apply operational definitions to their terms and to establish dependent and independent variables.

2.2 Research Methods

Sociological research is a fairly complex process. As you can see, a lot goes into even a simple research design. There are many steps and much to consider when collecting data on human behavior, as well as in interpreting and analyzing data in order to form conclusive results. Sociologists use the scientific methods for good reasons. The scientific method provides a system of organization to help researchers plan and conduct a study to ensure data and results are reliable, valid, and objective.

The many methods available to researchers—including experiments, surveys, participant observation, ethnography, case study, and secondary data analysis—all come with advantages and disadvantages. The strength of a study can depend on the choice and implementation of the appropriate method of gathering data. Depending on the topic, a study might use a single method or a combination of methods. It is important to plan a research design before undertaking a study. The information gathered may in itself be surprising, and the study design should provide a solid framework in which to analyze predicted and unpredicted data.

Method	Implementation	Advantages	Challenges
Survey	• Questionnaires • Interviews	• Yields many responses • Can survey a large sample • Quantitative data are easy to chart	• Can be time consuming • Can be difficult to encourage participant response • Captures what people think and believe but not necessarily how they behave in real life
Field Work	• Participant observation • Ethnography • Case study	• Yields detailed, accurate real-life information	• Time consuming • Data captures how people behave but not what they think and believe • Qualitative data is difficult to organize
Experiment	• Deliberate manipulation of social customs and mores	• Tests cause and effect relationships	• Hawthorne Effect • Ethical concerns about people's wellbeing

TABLE 2.2 Main Sociological Research Methods Sociological research methods have advantages and disadvantages.

Method	Implementation	Advantages	Challenges
Secondary Data Analysis	• Analysis of government data (census, health, crime statistics) • Research of historic documents	• Makes good use of previous sociological information	• Data could be focused on a purpose other than yours • Data can be hard to find

TABLE 2.2 Main Sociological Research Methods Sociological research methods have advantages and disadvantages.

2.3 Ethical Concerns

Sociologists and sociology students must take ethical responsibility for any study they conduct. They must first and foremost guarantee the safety of their participants. Whenever possible, they must ensure that participants have been fully informed consent before participating ina study.

The American Sociological Association (ASA) establishes parameters for ethical guidelines that sociologists must take into account as they conduct research. The guidelines address conducting studies, properly using existing sources, accepting funding, and publishing results. Unfortunately, the code of ethics were not in existence and in some cases researchers did not adhere to ASA guidelines resulting in unethical practices in which humans were caused either physical or psychological harm.

Sociologists must try to maintain value neutrality. They must gather and analyze data objectively and set aside their personal preferences, beliefs, and opinions. They must report findings accurately, even if they contradict personal values and convictions.

Section Quiz

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

1. The 1st step of the scientific method:
   a. Collect and analyze data
   b. Summarize the articles
   c. Ask a question about a topic
   d. Create a hypothesis

2. A measurement is considered _____ if it actually measures what it is intended to measure, according to the topic of the study.
   a. reliable
   b. sociological
   c. valid
   d. quantitative

3. Sociological studies test relationships in which change in one _____ causes change in another.
   a. test subject
   b. behavior
   c. variable
   d. operational definition

4. In a study, a group of ten-year-old boys are fed doughnuts every morning for a week and then weighed to see how much weight they gained. Which factor is the dependent variable?
   a. The doughnuts
   b. The boys
   c. The duration of a week
   d. The weight gained

5. Which statement provides the best operational definition of "childhood obesity"?
   a. Children who eat unhealthy foods and spend too much time watching television and playing video games
   b. A distressing trend that can lead to health issues including type 2 diabetes and heart disease
   c. Body weight at least 20 percent higher than a healthy weight for a child of that height
   d. The tendency of children today to weigh more than children of earlier generations

2.2 Research Methods

6. Which materials are considered secondary data?
   a. Photos and letters given to you by another person
   b. Books and articles written by other authors about their studies
   c. Information that you have gathered and now have included in your results
   d. Responses from participants whom you both surveyed and interviewed

7. Why is choosing a random sample an effective way to select participants?
   a. Participants do not know they are part of a study
   b. The researcher has no control over who is in the study
   c. It is larger than an ordinary sample
   d. Everyone has the same chance of being part of the study

8. What research method did John S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd mainly use in their *Middletown* study?
   a. Secondary data
   b. Survey
   c. Participant observation
   d. Experiment

9. Which research approach is best suited to the scientific method?
   a. Questionnaire
   b. Case study
   c. Ethnography
   d. Secondary data analysis

10. The main difference between ethnography and other types of participant observation is:
   a. ethnography isn't based on hypothesis testing
   b. ethnography subjects are unaware they're being studied
   c. ethnographic studies always involve minority ethnic groups
   d. ethnography focuses on how subjects view themselves in relationship to the community

11. Which best describes the results of a case study?
   a. It produces more reliable results than other methods because of its depth
   b. Its results are not generally applicable
   c. It relies solely on secondary data analysis
   d. All of the above

12. Using secondary data is considered an unobtrusive or _____ research method.
   a. nonreactive
   b. nonparticipatory
   c. nonrestrictive
   d. nonconfrontive

2.3 Ethical Concerns

13. Which statement illustrates value neutrality?
   a. Obesity in children is obviously a result of parental neglect and, therefore, schools should take a greater role to prevent it
   b. In 2003, states like Arkansas adopted laws requiring elementary schools to remove soft drink vending machines from schools
   c. Merely restricting children's access to junk food at school is not enough to prevent obesity
   d. Physical activity and healthy eating are a fundamental part of a child's education

14. Which person or organization defined the concept of value neutrality?
   a. Institutional Review Board (IRB)
   b. Peter Rossi
   c. American Sociological Association (ASA)
   d. Max Weber

15. To study the effects of fast food on lifestyle, health, and culture, from which group would a researcher ethically be unable to accept funding?
   a. A fast-food restaurant
   b. A nonprofit health organization
   c. A private hospital
   d. A governmental agency like Health and Social Services

Short Answer

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

1. Write down the first three steps of the scientific method. Think of a broad topic that you are interested in and which would make a good sociological study—for example, ethnic diversity in a college, homecoming rituals, athletic scholarships, or teen driving. Now, take that topic through the first steps of the process. For each step, write a few sentences or a paragraph: 1) Develop a research question about the topic. 2) Do some research and write down the titles of some articles or books you'd want to read about the topic. 3) Formulate a hypothesis.

2. Explain the correlation between accuracy, validity, and reliability in the research method.

2.2 Research Methods

3. What type of data do surveys gather? For what topics would surveys be the best research method? What drawbacks might you expect to encounter when using a survey? To explore further, ask a research question and write a hypothesis. Then create a survey of about six questions relevant to the topic. Provide a rationale for each question. Now define your population and create a plan for recruiting a random sample and administering the survey.
4. Imagine you are about to do field research in a specific place for a set time. Instead of thinking about the topic of study itself, consider how you, as the researcher, will have to prepare for the study. What personal, social, and physical sacrifices will you have to make? How will you manage your personal effects? What organizational equipment and systems will you need to collect the data?
5. Create a brief research design about a topic in which you are passionately interested. Now write a letter to a philanthropic or grant organization requesting funding for your study. How can you describe the project in a convincing yet realistic and objective way? Explain how the results of your study will be a relevant contribution to the body of sociological work already in existence.

2.3 Ethical Concerns

6. Why do you think the American Sociological Association (ASA) crafted such a detailed set of ethical principles? What type of study could put human participants at risk? Think of some examples of studies that might be harmful. Do you think that, in the name of sociology, some researchers might be tempted to cross boundaries that threaten human rights? Why?
7. Would you willingly participate in a sociological study that could potentially put your health and safety at risk, but had the potential to help thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people? For example, would you participate in a study of a new drug that could cure diabetes or cancer, even if it meant great inconvenience and physical discomfort for you or possible permanent damage?

Further Research

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

For a historical perspective on the scientific method in sociology, read "The Elements of Scientific Method in Sociology" by F. Stuart Chapin (1914) in the *American Journal of Sociology*. (http://openstax.org/l/Method-in-Sociology)

2.2 Research Methods

For information on current real-world sociology experiments, visit the Everday Sociology Blog. (http://openstax.org/l/Sociology-Experiments)

2.3 Ethical Concerns

Founded in 1905, the American Sociological Association is a nonprofit organization located in Washington, DC, with a membership of 14,000 researchers, faculty members, students, and practitioners of sociology. Its mission is "to articulate policy and implement programs likely to have the broadest possible impact for sociology now and in the future." Learn more about this organization here (http://openstax.org/l/ASA) .

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Culture 3

FIGURE 3.1 Martial arts has a strong tradition of deep respect for one's opponent, as these judo competitors display after a match. Even in other styles and other venues such as professional boxing or mixed martial arts, it is common to see opponents showing extreme courtesy and concern for each other despite the level of vitriol before a fight or the violence during it. While certainly echoed in other competitive arenas, this practice is a significant part of combat sports culture. (Credit: Special Olympics Nationale/flickr)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION If you passed someone in a hallway, joined a video conference, or even called into a radio show, it's likely you and the other people involved would exchange some version of the following question : "How are you?" One of you may ask the other. You may exchange a greeting and the question or one of its variants. Generally, we do not consider our responses to these acquaintances as rules. We simply say, "Hello!" and ask, "How was your weekend?" or some other trivial question meant to be a friendly greeting.

We all adhere to various rules, expectations, and standards that are created and maintained in our specific culture. These rules and expectations have meaning, and there are many ways by which the meanings can be misinterpreted or misunderstood. When we do not meet those expectations, we may receive some form of

disapproval such as a look or comment informing us that we did something unacceptable.

Consider what would happen if you stopped and informed everyone who asked "Hi, how are you?" exactly how you were doing that day, and in detail. In U.S. society, you would violate norms of 'greeting.' Perhaps if you were in a different situation, such as having coffee with a good friend, that question might warrant a detailed response.

These examples are all aspects of **culture**, which is comprised of shared *values* (ideals), *beliefs* which strengthen the values, *norms* and *rules* that maintain the values, *language* so that the values can be taught, *symbols* that form the language people must learn, *arts* and *artifacts,* and the people's collective *identities* and *memories*. Sociologically, we examine in which situation and context a certain behavior is expected and in which it is not. People who interact within a shared culture create and enforce these expectations. Sociologists examine these circumstances and search for patterns.

In everyday conversation, people in the U.S. rarely distinguish between the terms culture and society, but the terms have different meanings, and the distinction is important to a sociologist. A culture represents the values, beliefs, norms, language, symbols, and practices of a group, while society represents the people who share a culture. Neither society or culture could exist without the other.

Within the U.S., many groups of people share a community and a culture. By "community," sociologists refer to a definable region of a society, real *terra firma*—as small as a neighborhood (Brooklyn, or "the east side of town"), as large as a country (Ethiopia, Nepal or the U.S.), or somewhere in between (in the U.S., this might include someone who identifies with Southern or Midwestern society).

In this chapter, we examine the relationship between culture and society in greater detail and pay special attention to the elements and forces that shape culture, including diversity and social changes. A final discussion examines the theoretical perspectives from which sociologists research culture.

3.1 What Is Culture?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between culture and society
- Explain material versus nonmaterial culture
- Discuss the concept of cultural universals as it relates to society
- Compare and contrast ethnocentrism and xenocentrism

Humans are social creatures. According to Smithsonian Institution research, humans have been forming groups for almost 3 million years in order to survive. Living together, people formed common habits and behaviors, from specific methods of childrearing to preferred techniques for obtaining food.

Almost every human behavior, from shopping to marriage, is learned. In the U.S., marriage is generally seen as an individual choice made by two adults, based on mutual feelings of love. In other nations and in other times, marriages have been arranged through an intricate process of interviews and negotiations between entire families. In Papua New Guinea, almost 30 percent of women marry before the age of 18, and 8 percent of men have more than one wife (National Statistical Office, 2019). To people who are not from such a culture, arranged marriages may seem to have risks of incompatibility or the absence of romantic love. But many people from cultures where marriages are arranged, which includes a number of highly populated and modern countries, often prefer the approach because it reduces stress and increases stability (Jankowiak 2021).

Being familiar with unwritten rules helps people feel secure and at ease. Knowing to look left instead of right for oncoming traffic while crossing the street can help avoid serious injury and even death. Knowing unwritten rules is also fundamental in understanding humor in different cultures. Humor is common to all societies, but what makes something funny is not. Americans may laugh at a scene in which an actor falls; in other cultures,

falling is never funny. Most people want to live their daily lives confident that their behaviors will not be challenged or disrupted. But even an action as seemingly simple as commuting to work evidences a great deal of cultural propriety, that is, there are a lot of expected behaviors. And many interpretations of them.

FIGURE 3.2 How would a visitor from a rural region act and feel on this crowded Hong Kong train? (Credit: Eric Chan/flickr)

Take the case of going to work on public transportation. Whether people are commuting in Egypt, Ireland, India, Japan, and the U.S., many behaviors will be the same and may reveal patterns. Others will be different. In many societies that enjoy public transportation, a passenger will find a marked bus stop or station, wait for the bus or train, pay an agent before or after boarding, and quietly take a seat if one is available. But when boarding a bus in Cairo, Egypt, passengers might board while the bus is moving, because buses often do not come to a full stop to take on patrons. In Dublin, Ireland, bus riders would be expected to extend an arm to indicate that they want the bus to stop for them. And when boarding a commuter train in Mumbai, India, passengers must squeeze into overstuffed cars amid a lot of pushing and shoving on the crowded platforms. That kind of behavior might be considered rude in other societies, but in Mumbai it reflects the daily challenges of getting around on a train system that is taxed to capacity.

Culture can be material or nonmaterial. Metro passes and bus tokens are part of material culture, as are the buses, subway cars, and the physical structures of the bus stop. Think of material culture as items you can touch-they are *tangible*. **Nonmaterial culture**, in contrast, consists of the ideas, attitudes, and beliefs of a society. These are things you cannot touch. They are *intangible*. You may *believe* that a line should be formed to enter the subway car or that other passengers should not stand so close to you. Those *beliefs* are intangible because they do not have physical properties and can be touched.

Material and nonmaterial aspects of culture are linked, and physical objects often symbolize cultural ideas. A metro pass is a material object, but it represents a form of nonmaterial culture, namely, capitalism, and the acceptance of paying for transportation. Clothing, hairstyles, and jewelry are part of material culture, but the appropriateness of wearing certain clothing for specific events reflects nonmaterial culture. A school building

belongs to material culture symbolizing education, but the teaching methods and educational standards are part of education's nonmaterial culture.

As people travel from different regions to entirely different parts of the world, certain material and nonmaterial aspects of culture become dramatically unfamiliar. What happens when we encounter different cultures? As we interact with cultures other than our own, we become more aware of the differences and commonalities between others and our own. If we keep our sociological imagination awake, we can begin to understand and accept the differences. Body language and hand gestures vary around the world, but some body language seems to be shared across cultures: When someone arrives home later than permitted, a parent or guardian meeting them at the door with crossed arms and a frown on their face means the same in Russia as it does in the U.S. as it does in Ghana.

Cultural Universals

Although cultures vary, they also share common elements. **Cultural universals** are patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies. One example of a cultural universal is the family unit: every human society recognizes a family structure that regulates sexual reproduction and the care of children. Even so, how that family unit is defined and how it functions vary. In many Asian cultures, for example, family members from all generations commonly live together in one household. In these cultures, young adults continue to live in the extended household family structure until they marry and join their spouse's household, or they may remain and raise their nuclear family within the extended family's homestead. In the U.S., by contrast, individuals are expected to leave home and live independently for a period before forming a family unit that consists of parents and their offspring. Other cultural universals include customs like funeral rites, weddings, and celebrations of births. However, each culture may view and conduct the ceremonies quite differently.

Anthropologist George Murdock first investigated the existence of cultural universals while studying systems of kinship around the world. Murdock found that cultural universals often revolve around basic human survival, such as finding food, clothing, and shelter, or around shared human experiences, such as birth and death or illness and healing. Through his research, Murdock identified other universals including language, the concept of personal names, and, interestingly, jokes. Humor seems to be a universal way to release tensions and create a sense of unity among people (Murdock, 1949). Sociologists consider humor necessary to human interaction because it helps individuals navigate otherwise tense situations.

SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Is Music a Cultural Universal?

Imagine that you are sitting in a theater, watching a film. The movie opens with the protagonist sitting on a park bench with a grim expression on their face. The music starts to come in. The first slow and mournful notes play in a minor key. As the melody continues, the heroine turns her head and sees a man walking toward her. The music gets louder, and the sounds don't seem to go together – as if the orchestra is intentionally playing the wrong notes. You tense up as you watch, almost hoping to stop. The character is clearly in danger.

Now imagine that you are watching the same movie – the exact same footage – but with a different soundtrack. As the scene opens, the music is soft and soothing, with a hint of sadness. You see the protagonist sitting on the park bench with a grim expression. Suddenly, the music swells. The woman looks up and sees a man walking toward her. The notes are high and bright, and the pace is bouncy. You feel your heart rise in your chest. This is a happy moment.

Music has the ability to evoke emotional responses. In television shows, movies, commercials, and even the background music in a store, music has a message and seems to easily draw a response from those who hear it – joy, sadness, fear, victory. Are these types of musical cues cultural universals?

In 2009, a team of psychologists, led by Thomas Fritz of the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig, Germany, studied people's reactions to music that they'd never heard (Fritz et al., 2009). The research team traveled to Cameroon, Africa, and asked Mafa tribal members to listen to Western music. The tribe, isolated from Western culture, had never been exposed to Western culture and had no context or experience within which to interpret its music. Even so, as the tribal members listened to a Western piano piece, they were able to recognize three basic emotions: happiness, sadness, and fear. Music, the study suggested, is a sort of universal language.

Researchers also found that music can foster a sense of wholeness within a group. In fact, scientists who study the evolution of language have concluded that originally language (an established component of group identity) and music were one (Darwin, 1871). Additionally, since music is largely nonverbal, the sounds of music can cross societal boundaries more easily than words. Music allows people to make connections, where language might be a more difficult barricade. As Fritz and his team found, music and the emotions it conveys are cultural universals.

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

Although human societies have much in common, cultural differences are far more prevalent than cultural universals. For example, while all cultures have language, analysis of conversational etiquette reveals tremendous differences. In some Middle Eastern cultures, it is common to stand close to others in conversation. Americans keep more distance and maintain a large "personal space." Additionally, behaviors as simple as eating and drinking vary greatly from culture to culture. Some cultures use tools to put the food in the mouth while others use their fingers. If your professor comes into an early morning class holding a mug of liquid, what do you assume they are drinking? In the U.S., it's most likely filled with coffee, not Earl Grey tea, a favorite in England, or Yak Butter tea, a staple in Tibet.

Some travelers pride themselves on their willingness to try unfamiliar foods, like the late celebrated food writer Anthony Bourdain (1956-2017). Often, however, people express disgust at another culture's cuisine. They might think that it's gross to eat raw meat from a donkey or parts of a rodent, while they don't question their own habit of eating cows or pigs.

Such attitudes are examples of **ethnocentrism**, which means to evaluate and judge another culture based on one's own cultural norms. Ethnocentrism is believing your group is the correct measuring standard and if other cultures do not measure up to it, they are wrong. As sociologist William Graham Sumner (1906) described the term, it is a belief or attitude that one's own culture is better than all others. Almost everyone is a little bit ethnocentric.

A high level of appreciation for one's own culture can be healthy. A shared sense of community pride, for example, connects people in a society. But ethnocentrism can lead to disdain or dislike of other cultures and could cause misunderstanding, stereotyping, and conflict. Individuals, government, non-government, private, and religious institutions with the best intentions sometimes travel to a society to "help" its people, because they see them as uneducated, backward, or even inferior. **Cultural imperialism** is the deliberate imposition of one's own cultural values on another culture.

Colonial expansion by Portugal, Spain, Netherlands, and England grew quickly in the fifteenth century was accompanied by severe cultural imperialism. European colonizers often viewed the people in these new lands as uncultured savages who needed to adopt Catholic governance, Christianity, European dress, and other cultural practices.

A modern example of cultural imperialism may include the work of international aid agencies who introduce agricultural methods and plant species from developed countries into areas that are better served by indigenous varieties and agricultural approaches to the particular region. Another example would be the deforestation of the Amazon Basin as indigenous cultures lose land to timber corporations.

FIGURE 3.3 Experiencing an entirely new practice may lead to a high degree of interest or a level of criticism. The Indegenous people of Sagada, in the Philippines, have for thousands of years placed the bodies of deceased people into coffins hung on the cliffs near their villages. Some visitors may find this practice admirable, while others may think it's inappropriate. (Credit: Arian Zwegers/flickr)

When people find themselves in a new culture, they may experience disorientation and frustration. In sociology, we call this **culture shock**. In addition to the traveler's biological clock being 'off', a traveler from Chicago might find the nightly silence of rural Montana unsettling, not peaceful. Now, imagine that the 'difference' is cultural. An exchange student from China to the U.S. might be annoyed by the constant interruptions in class as other students ask questions—a practice that is considered rude in China. Perhaps the Chicago traveler was initially captivated with Montana's quiet beauty and the Chinese student was originally excited to see a U.S.- style classroom firsthand. But as they experience unanticipated differences from their own culture, they may experience ethnocentrism as their excitement gives way to discomfort and doubts about how to behave appropriately in the new situation. According to many authors, international students studying in the U.S. report that there are personality traits and behaviors expected of them. Black African students report having to learn to 'be Black in the U.S.' and Chinese students report that they are naturally expected to be good at math. In African countries, people are identified by country or kin, not color. Eventually, as people learn more about a culture, they adapt to the new culture for a variety of reasons.

Culture shock may appear because people aren't always expecting cultural differences. Anthropologist Ken Barger (1971) discovered this when he conducted a participatory observation in an Inuit community in the Canadian Arctic. Originally from Indiana, Barger hesitated when invited to join a local snowshoe race. He knew he would never hold his own against these experts. Sure enough, he finished last, to his mortification. But the tribal members congratulated him, saying, "You really tried!" In Barger's own culture, he had learned to value victory. To the Inuit people, winning was enjoyable, but their culture valued survival skills essential to their environment: how hard someone tried could mean the difference between life and death. Over the course of his stay, Barger participated in caribou hunts, learned how to take shelter in winter storms, and sometimes went days with little or no food to share among tribal members. Trying hard and working together, two nonmaterial values, were indeed much more important than winning.

During his time with the Inuit tribe, Barger learned to engage in **cultural relativism**. Cultural relativism is the practice of assessing a culture by its own standards rather than viewing it through the lens of one's own culture. Practicing cultural relativism requires an open mind and a willingness to consider, and even adapt to,

new values, norms, and practices.

However, indiscriminately embracing everything about a new culture is not always possible. Even the most culturally relativist people from egalitarian societies—ones in which women have political rights and control over their own bodies—question whether the widespread practice of female genital mutilation in countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan should be accepted as a part of cultural tradition. Sociologists attempting to engage in cultural relativism, then, may struggle to reconcile aspects of their own culture with aspects of a culture that they are studying. Sociologists may take issue with the practices of female genital mutilation in many countries to ensure virginity at marriage just as some male sociologists might take issue with scarring of the flesh to show membership. Sociologists work diligently to keep personal biases out of research analysis.

Sometimes when people attempt to address feelings of ethnocentrism and develop cultural relativism, they swing too far to the other end of the spectrum. **Xenocentrism** is the opposite of ethnocentrism, and refers to the belief that another culture is superior to one's own. (The Greek root word xeno-, pronounced "ZEE-no," means "stranger" or "foreign guest.") An exchange student who goes home after a semester abroad or a sociologist who returns from the field may find it difficult to associate with the values of their own culture after having experienced what they deem a more upright or nobler way of living. An opposite reaction is xenophobia, an irrational fear or hatred of different cultures.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for sociologists studying different cultures is the matter of keeping a perspective. It is impossible for anyone to overcome all cultural biases. The best we can do is strive to be aware of them. Pride in one's own culture doesn't have to lead to imposing its values or ideas on others. And an appreciation for another culture shouldn't preclude individuals from studying it with a critical eye. This practice is perhaps the most difficult for all social scientists.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Overcoming Culture Shock

During her summer vacation, Caitlin flew from Chicago, Illinois to Madrid, Spain to visit Maria, the exchange student she had befriended the previous semester. In the airport, she heard rapid, musical Spanish being spoken all around her.

Exciting as it was, she felt isolated and disconnected. Maria's mother kissed Caitlin on both cheeks when she greeted her. Her imposing father kept his distance. Caitlin was half asleep by the time supper was served—at 10 p.m. Maria's family sat at the table for hours, speaking loudly, gesturing, and arguing about politics, a taboo dinner subject in Caitlin's house. They served wine and toasted their honored guest. Caitlin had trouble interpreting her hosts' facial expressions, and did not realize she should make the next toast. That night, Caitlin crawled into a strange bed, wishing she had not come. She missed her home and felt overwhelmed by the new customs, language, and surroundings. She'd studied Spanish in school for years—why hadn't it prepared her for this?

What Caitlin did not realize was that people depend not only on spoken words but also on body language, like gestures and facial expressions, to communicate. Cultural norms and practices accompany even the smallest nonverbal signals (DuBois, 1951). They help people know when to shake hands, where to sit, how to converse, and even when to laugh. We relate to others through a shared set of cultural norms, and ordinarily, we take them for granted.

For this reason, culture shock is often associated with traveling abroad, although it can happen in one's own country, state, or even hometown. Anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (1960) is credited with first coining the term "culture shock." In his studies, Oberg found that most people are excited at first to encounter a new culture. But bit by bit, they become stressed by interacting with people from a different culture who speak another language and use different regional expressions. There is new food to digest, new daily schedules to follow, and new rules of etiquette to learn. Living with this constant stress can make people feel incompetent and insecure. People react to frustration

in a new culture, Oberg found, by initially rejecting it and glorifying one's own culture. An American visiting Italy might long for a "real" pizza or complain about the unsafe driving habits of Italians.

It helps to remember that culture is learned. Everyone is ethnocentric to an extent, and identifying with one's own country is natural. Caitlin's shock was minor compared to that of her friends Dayar and Mahlika, a Turkish couple living in married student housing on campus. And it was nothing like that of her classmate Sanai. Sanai had been forced to flee war-torn Bosnia with her family when she was fifteen. After two weeks in Spain, Caitlin had developed more compassion and understanding for what those people had gone through. She understood that adjusting to a new culture takes time. It can take weeks or months to recover from culture shock, and it can take years to fully adjust to living in a new culture.

By the end of Caitlin's trip, she had made new lifelong friends. Caitlin stepped out of her comfort zone. She had learned a lot about Spain, but discovered a lot about herself and her own culture.

FIGURE 3.4 Experiencing new cultures offers an opportunity to practice cultural relativism. (Credit: OledSidorenko/ flickr)

3.2 Elements of Culture

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate values, beliefs, and norms
- Explain the significance of symbols and language to a culture
- Explain the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
- Discuss the role of social control within culture

Values and Beliefs

The first, and perhaps most crucial, elements of culture we will discuss are **values** and **beliefs**. Value does not mean monetary worth in sociology, but rather ideals, or principles and standards members of a culture hold in high regard. Most cultures in any society hold "knowledge" (education) in high regard. *Values* are deeply embedded and are critical for learning a culture's *beliefs*, which are the tenets or convictions that people hold to be true. Individual cultures in a society have personal beliefs, but they also shared collective values. To illustrate the difference, U.S. citizens may believe in the American Dream—that anyone who works hard enough will be successful and wealthy. Underlying this belief is the American value that wealth is important. In other cultures, success may be tied less to wealth and more to having many healthy children. Values shape a society by suggesting what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly, sought or avoided.

Consider the value that the U.S. places upon youth. Children represent innocence and purity, while a youthful adult appearance signifies sexuality. Shaped by this value, individuals spend millions of dollars each year on cosmetic products and surgeries to look young and beautiful. The U.S. also has an individualistic culture, meaning people place a high value on individuality and independence. In contrast, many other cultures are collectivist, meaning the welfare of the group takes priority over that of the individual. Fulfilling a society's values can be difficult. Marital monogamy is valued, but many spouses engage in infidelity. Cultural diversity and equal opportunities for all people are valued in the U.S., yet the country's highest political offices have been dominated by white men.

Values often suggest how people should behave, but they don't accurately reflect how people do behave. Values portray an **ideal culture**, the standards society would like to embrace and live up to. But ideal culture differs from **real culture**. In an ideal culture, there would be no traffic accidents, murders, poverty, or racial tension. But in real culture, police officers, lawmakers, educators, and social workers constantly strive to prevent or address these issues. American teenagers are encouraged to value celibacy. However, the number of unplanned pregnancies among teens reveals that the ideal alone is not enough to spare teenagers the potential consequences of having sex.

One of the ways societies strive to maintain its values is through rewards and punishments. When people observe the norms of society and uphold its values, they are often rewarded. A boy who helps an elderly woman board a bus may receive a smile and a "thank you." A business manager who raises profit margins may receive a quarterly bonus. People sanction unwanted or inappropriate behaviors by withholding support, approval, or permission, or by implementing sanctions. We may think of 'sanction' as a negative term, but **sanctions** are forms of **social control**, ways to encourage conformity to cultural norms or rules. Sometimes people conform to norms in anticipation or expectation of positive sanctions. Receiving good grades, for instance, may mean praise from parents and teachers. Sanctions can also be negative. . A boy who shoves an elderly woman aside to board the bus first may receive frowns or even a scolding from other passengers. A business manager who drives away customers will likely be fired. Breaking norms and rejecting values can lead to cultural sanctions such as earning a negative label like 'lazy' or to legal sanctions, such as traffic tickets, fines, or imprisonment. Utilizing social control encourages most people to conform regardless of whether authority figures (such as law enforcement) are present.

Values are not static. They change across time and between groups as people evaluate, debate, and change

collective social beliefs. Values also vary from culture to culture. For example, cultures differ in their values about what kinds of physical closeness are appropriate in public. It's rare to see two male friends or coworkers holding hands in the U.S. where that behavior often symbolizes romantic feelings. But in many nations, masculine physical intimacy is considered natural in public. This difference in cultural values came to light when people reacted to photos of former president G.W. Bush holding hands with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia in 2005. Simple gestures, such as hand-holding, carry great symbolic differences across cultures.

FIGURE 3.5 In many parts of Africa and the Middle East, it is considered normal for men to hold hands in friendship. How would US citizens react to these two soldiers? (Credit: Geordie Mott/Wikimedia Commons)

Norms

So far, many of the examples in this chapter have described how people are *expected* to behave in certain situations—for example, buying food or boarding a bus. These examples describe the visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured, or what sociologists call **norms**. Norms are behaviors that reflect compliance with what cultures and societies have defined as good, right, and important. Most members adhere to them.

Formal norms are established, written rules existing in all societies. They support many **social institutions**, such as the military, criminal justice and healthcare systems, and public schools. Functionalists may question what *purpose* these norms serve, conflict theorists might be interested in *who* creates, benefits, and suffers under these formal norms, and symbolic interactionists wonder about how a group that benefits interacts. Laws are formal norms, but so are employee manuals, college entrance exam requirements, and "no running" signs at swimming pools. Formal norms are the most specific and clearly stated of the various types of norms, and they are the most strictly enforced. But they are enforced to varying degrees.

For example, private property is highly valued in the U.S. Thieves can be fined, imprisoned, or both. People safeguard valuable possessions by locking their doors, buying a safe, and installing alarm systems on homes and cars. A less strictly enforced social norm is driving while intoxicated. While it's against the law to drive drunk, drinking is for the most part an acceptable social behavior. And though there are laws to punish drunk driving, there are few systems in place to prevent the crime.

There are plenty of formal norms, but the list of informal norms—casual behaviors that are generally and widely conformed to—is longer. People learn informal norms by observation, imitation, and general socialization. Some informal norms are taught directly— "Kiss your Aunt Edna" or "Use your napkin"—while others are learned by observation, including understanding consequences when someone else violates a norm. Informal norms dictate appropriate behaviors without the need of written rules, and so may be difficult to learn when you are new to or not familiar with the culture.

Although informal norms define personal interactions, they extend into other systems as well. In the U.S., there are informal norms regarding behavior at fast food restaurants. Customers line up to order their food and leave when they are done. They don't sit down at a table with strangers, sing loudly as they prepare their condiments, or nap in a booth. Most people don't commit even harmless breaches of informal norms.

SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Breaching Experiments

Sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1917–2011) studied people's customs in order to find out how societal rules and norms not only influence behavior but also shape social order. He believed that members of society together create a social order (Weber, 2011). His resulting book, *Studies in Ethno-methodology* (1967) discusses people's assumptions about the social makeup of their communities.

One of Garfinkel's research methods was known as a "breaching experiment," in which the researcher behaves in a socially awkward manner in order to test the sociological concepts of social norms and conformity. The participants are not aware an experiment is in progress, but their response is recorded. For example, if the experimenter is, say, a man in a business suit, and he skips down the sidewalk or hops on one foot, a passersby is likely to stare at him with surprised expressions. But the experimenter does not simply "act weird" in public. Rather, the point is to deviate from a specific social norm in a small way, to subtly break some form of social etiquette, and see what happens.

For example, he set up a simple game of tic-tac-toe. One player was asked beforehand to mark Xs and Os not in the boxes but on the lines dividing the spaces instead. The other player, in the dark about the study, was flabbergasted and did not know how to continue. The second player's outrage, anger, puzzlement, or other emotion suggested that a cultural norms had been violated.

There are many rules about speaking with strangers in public. It is okay to tell a woman you like her shoes. It is not okay to ask if you can try them on. It is okay to stand in line behind someone at the ATM. It is not okay to look over his shoulder as he makes a transaction. It is okay to sit beside someone on a crowded bus. It's weird to sit beside a stranger in a half-empty bus.

For some breaches, the researcher directly engages with innocent bystanders. An experimenter might strike up a conversation in a public bathroom, where it's common to respect each other's privacy. In a grocery store, an experimenter might take a food item out of another person's grocery cart, saying, "That looks good! I think I'll try it." An experimenter might sit down at a table with others in a fast-food restaurant or follow someone around a museum and study the same paintings. In those cases, the bystanders are pressured to respond, and their discomfort illustrates how much we depend on social norms. Breaching experiments uncover and explore the many unwritten social rules we live by.

Norms may be further classified as either mores or folkways. **Mores** (mor-ays) are norms that embody the moral views and principles of a group. They often have a religious foundation. Violating them can have serious consequences. The strongest mores are protected with laws and other formal sanctions. In most societies, for instance, homicide is considered immoral, and it's punishable by law (a formal norm). But more often, mores are judged and guarded by public sentiment (an informal norm). People who violate mores are seen as shameful. They can even be shunned or banned from some groups.

The mores of the U.S. school system require that a student's writing be in the student's own words or use special forms (such as quotation marks and a whole system of citation) for crediting other writers. Submitting or publishing another person's words as if they are one's own has a name—plagiarism. The consequences for violating this norm are often severe and can result in expulsion from school or termination from employment.

Unlike mores, **folkways** are norms without any moral underpinnings. Rather, folkways direct appropriate

behavior in the day-to-day practices and expressions of a culture. We can think of them as 'traditions'—things we do because we 'always have.' They indicate whether to shake hands or kiss on the cheek when greeting another person. They specify whether to wear a tie and blazer or a T-shirt and sandals to an event. In Canada, women can smile and say hello to men on the street. In Egypt, that's not acceptable. In regions in the southern U.S., bumping into an acquaintance means stopping to chat. It's considered rude not to, no matter how busy one is. In other regions, people guard their privacy and value time efficiency. A simple nod of the head is enough. Other accepted folkways in the U.S. may include holding the door open for a stranger or giving someone a gift on their birthday. The rules regarding these folkways may change from culture to culture. A folkway in one culture could be extremely rude in another.

Folkways are actions that people everywhere take for granted. People need to act without thinking in order to get seamlessly through daily routines. They can't stop and analyze every action (Sumner, 1906). Folkways might be small actions, learned by observation and imitated, but they are by no means trivial. An important folkway in many cultures is kissing Grandmother on the cheek. Fail to do so and you will likely be scolded.

Symbols and Culture

Humans, consciously and subconsciously, are always striving to make sense of their surrounding world. Symbols—such as gestures, signs, objects, signals, and words—help people understand that world. They provide communication methods to understanding experiences by conveying recognizable meanings that are shared by societies.

The world is filled with symbols. Sports uniforms, company logos, and traffic signs are symbols. In some cultures, a gold ring is a symbol of marriage. Some symbols are highly functional; stop signs, for instance, provide useful instruction. As physical objects, they belong to material culture, but because they function as symbols, they also convey nonmaterial cultural meanings. Some symbols are valuable only in what they represent. Trophies, blue ribbons, or gold medals, for example, represent accomplishments. But many objects have both material and nonmaterial symbolic value.

(a) (b)

FIGURE 3.6 Some road signs are universal. But how would you interpret the signage on the right? (Credit: (a) Andrew Bain/flickr; (b) HonzaSoukup/flickr)

Symbols often get noticed when they are out of context. Used unconventionally, they convey strong messages. A stop sign placed on the door of a college building makes a political statement, as does a camouflage military jacket worn in an antiwar protest. Together, the semaphore signals for "N" and "D" represent nuclear disarmament—and form the well-known peace sign (Westcott, 2008). Some college students wear pajamas and bedroom slippers to class, clothing that was formerly associated only with privacy and bedtime. By wearing the outfit, students are defying traditional cultural norms.

Some symbols represent only one side of the story and elicit strong emotions, which can lead to social unrest. Their presence is a reminder of a nation's worst times and not something to celebrate. Many of these symbols are targets of vandalism as the destruction of these representations is symbolic. Effigies representing public figures are burned to demonstrate anger at certain leaders. In 1989, crowds tore down the Berlin Wall, a decades-old symbol of the division between East and West Germany, communism, and capitalism. In the U.S. beginning in 2019, statues associated with slavery and the Civil War were removed from state capitols, college campuses, and public parks. In Germany, any display of Hitler or Nazi memorabilia or to deny the Holocaust is illegal.

While different cultures have varying systems of symbols, one system is common to all: language. Whatever its form, people learn social and cultural norms through it.

Language and Symbols

Language is a system that uses **symbols** with which people communicate and through which culture is transmitted. Letters (which make up words), pictographs, and hand gestures are all symbols that create a language used for communication. Sign language, for example, requires an intimate knowledge not only of an alphabet but also of signs that represent entire words and the meaning indicated by certain facial expressions or postures. Its grammar differs from the spoken language. As spoken language is different across regions, nations and cultures, and can even differ by the age of the person, so too does sign language.

All language systems contain the same basic elements that are effective in communicating ideas - object, subject, action. A written language system consists of symbols that refer to spoken sound. Taken together, these symbols convey specific meanings. The English language uses a combination of twenty-six letters to create words. These twenty-six letters make up over 600,000 recognized words (OED Online, 2011). We can compare the reliance on tone and inflection to Mandarin Chinese. It contains over 8,000 characters, but the same character may symbolize different concepts depending on the tone used.

English today contains an English and French version for the same concept. For example, in the English version, one eats, but in French version, one dines. In the English version, we meet someone. In the French version, we encounter someone. Readers of American English may be surprised by the inclusion of a 'u' in some spellings of words like 'behaviour' or 'flavour.' Americans have dropped that 'u' that writers of British English include. Billions of people speak English, and there are almost as many pronunciations of it.

Rules for speaking and writing vary even within cultures, most notably by region. Do you eat a grinder, a sub, or a hero/gyro? Do you refer to a can of carbonated liquid as "soda" or "pop"? Is a household entertainment room a "family room," "rec room," or "den"? When leaving a restaurant, do you ask your server for a "check," the "ticket," or your "bill"? Language is constantly evolving and adding new words as societies create new ideas. In this age of technology, many cultures have adapted almost instantly to new nouns such as "e-mail" and "Internet," and verbs such as "downloading," "texting," and "blogging." These would have considered nonsense words just the world twenty-five years ago.

Language and Culture

Even while it constantly evolves, language shapes our perception of reality and our behavior. In the 1920s, linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf advanced this idea which became known as **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** or linguistic relativity. It is based on the idea that people experience their world through their

language, and therefore understand their world through the cultural meanings embedded in their language. The hypothesis suggests that language shapes thought and thus behavior (Swoyer, 2003). For example, words have attached meanings beyond their definition that can influence thought and behavior. In the U.S. where the number thirteen is associated with bad luck, many high-rise buildings do not have a 13^{th} floor. In Japan, however, the number four is considered unlucky, since it is pronounced similarly to the Japanese word for "death."

Many sociologists believe that language can have a broad and lasting impact on perception. In 2002, Lera Boroditsky and her colleagues conducted experiments on native German and Spanish speakers in English. Unlike English, these languages assign genders to nouns. In German, for example, the word for sun, die Sonne, is feminine, but the word for moon, der Mond, is masculine. The team chose a set of nouns with opposite genders in German and Spanish and asked participants to provide adjectives to describe them. They found that German speakers used more masculine adjectives than Spanish speakers when describing a noun that was grammatically masculine in German but feminine in Spanish. For example, the word for key is masculine in German and feminine in Spanish. German speakers described keys as hard, heavy, jagged, metal, serrated, and useful, while Spanish speakers used the adjectives, golden, intricate, little, lovely, shiny, and tiny. The team concluded that gender perceptions acquired in a person's native language carry forward to how they see the world even when they switch to a language without grammatical genders (Boroditsky, Schmidt, and Phillips, 2002).

Some sociologists also believe the structure of language can have consequences on both individual and group behavior. For example, a series of studies have found that Finland has a significantly higher rate of workplace accidents than Sweden despite the fact that the languages have similar workplace regulations (Salminen & Johansson, 2000). John A. Lucy explained this discrepancy through differences in the structure of these languages. Swedish places a greater emphasis on the timing of movement in three-dimensional space. Consequently, Lucy argued, the Swedish factories are physically arranged in a manner that supports the smooth running of the product process. Finnish factors experience frequent disruptions, so that workers must rush and have more accidents (Lucy, 1997).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been interpreted to suggest that if a word does not exist in a language then users of that language cannot have the experience. Studies have shown, for instance, that unless people have access to the word "ambivalent," they don't *recognize* having conflicting positive and negative feelings about an issue as 'ambivalence.' However, the hypothesis should not suggest that people do not have conflicting feelings but rather that they interpret the feelings differently.

In addition to using spoken language, people communicate without words. Nonverbal communication is symbolic, and, as in the case of language, is learned through one's culture. Some gestures are nearly universal; some are not. Smiles often indicate positive reinforcement in the U.S., whereas in some cultures it is rude as you do not know the person. A thumbs-up in Russia and Australia is an offensive curse (Passero, 2002). Other gestures vary in meaning depending on the situation and the person. A wave of the hand can mean many things, depending on how it's done and for whom. It may mean "hello," "goodbye," "no thank you," or "I'm royalty." Winks convey a variety of messages, including "We have a secret," "I'm only kidding," or "I'm attracted to you." From a distance, a person may "read" the emotional situation of people just by watching their body language and facial expressions. However, many cultures communicate with lots of physicality, which people outside that culture may interpret as an argument. So, for example, you might believe two people are arguing when, in fact, they are simply having a regular conversation.

SOCIAL POLICY AND DEBATE

Is the U.S. Bilingual?

When she was six, Lucy and her family immigrated to the United States and attended a school that allowed for the

use of both English and Spanish. Lucy's teacher and many staff were bilingual (fluent in English and Spanish), and the district offered books in both languages. While she was being driven to learn English, the dual-language option helped to ensure that she did not become lost and get behind in her learning of all subjects. Having math, science, and computing taught in both languages helped her understand those concepts and skills. Within two years of enrolling in the school, Lucy was getting nearly all of her instruction in English, and rarely used the Spanish-language books or resources. While she still had trouble with some intricacies of English, her math progress was above grade level and she did well in other subjects as well.

Some people might believe that Lucy would have learned faster had she been instructed only in English. But research indicates that is not the case. Johns Hopkins University, researchers conducted a series of studies on the effects of bilingual education across multiple subjects (Slavin et al. 2008). They found that students taught in both their native tongue and English make better progress than those taught only in English.

Legally, the U.S. has no official language. But many believe English to be the rightful language of the U.S., and over thirty states have passed laws specifying English as their official tongue. Proponents of English-only laws suggest that a national ruling will save money on translation, printing, and human resource costs, including funding for bilingual teachers. They argue that setting English as the official language will encourage non-English speakers to learn English faster and adapt to the culture of the U.S. more easily (Mount 2010). Groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) oppose making English the official language and claim that it violates the rights of non-English speakers. English-only laws, they believe, deny the reality of our nation's diversity and unfairly target non-English speakers. They point to the fact that much of the debate on this topic has risen since 1970, a period during which the U.S. has experienced new waves of immigration from Asia and Mexico.

Today, a lot of product information gets written in multiple languages. Enter a store like Home Depot and you'll find signs in both English and Spanish. Buy a children's product and the safety warnings could be presented in multiple languages. While marketers are financially motivated to reach the largest number of consumers possible, this trend also may help people become accustomed to a culture of bilingualism.

Studies show that most US immigrants eventually abandon their native tongues and become fluent in English. Bilingual education helps with that transition. Today, Lucy is an ambitious and high-achieving college student. Fluent in both English and Spanish, Lucy is studying law enforcement—a field that seeks bilingual employees. The same bilingualism that contributed to her success in grade school will help her thrive professionally as a law officer serving her community.

FIGURE 3.7 Many signs—on streets and in stores—include both English and Spanish. What effect does this have on

members of society? What effect does it have on our culture? (Credit: istolethetv/flickr)

3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Discuss the roles of both high culture and pop culture within society
- Differentiate between subculture and counterculture
- Explain the role of innovation, invention, and discovery in culture
- Describe the role of cultural lag and globalization in cultural change

It may seem obvious that there are a multitude of cultural differences between societies in the world. After all, we can easily see that people vary from one society to the next. It's natural to think that a young woman from a village in rural Kenya in Eastern Africa would have a different view of the world from a young woman from urban Mumbai, India—one of the most populated cities in the world.

Additionally, each culture has its own internal variations. Sometimes the differences between cultures are not as large as the differences within cultures. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu wrote about *cultural capital*, which consists of material goods, non-material attitudes, and knowledge that are specific to a certain economic class. Bourdieu grouped cultural capital into three categories: *embodied* (a regional dialect), *objectified* (possessions), and *institutionalized* (academic credentials). In the U.S., some group culture into three categories as well: **high, low, and pop** (for popular).

High, Low, and Popular Culture

Can you identify the Chief Financial Officer of three major corporations? How about the name of the server at three local hangouts? How many books do you own? How many social media sites do you visit? Is your family listed on the Social Register©? Have you ever heard of the Social Register©? In each pair, one type of knowledge is considered **high culture** and the other **low culture**.

This could be considered stereotyping by economic class rather than by race or gender, but sociologists use the term **high culture** to describe the *pattern* of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in the highest or elite class segments of a society. People often associate high culture with intellectualism, political power, and prestige. In America, high culture also tends to be associated with wealth. Events considered high culture can be expensive, formal, and exclusive – attending a ballet, seeing a play, listening to a live symphony performance, or attending a prestigious university. Similarly, **low culture** is associated with the pattern of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in the lowest class segments of a society.

The term **popular culture** refers to the pattern of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in mainstream society. Popular culture events might include a parade, a baseball game, or the season finale of a television show. Music, anime, and cosplay are pieces of popular culture. Popular culture is accessible by most and is expressed and spread via commercial and social media outlets such as radio, television, movies, the music industry, publishers, and corporate-run websites. You can share a discussion of favorite football teams with a new coworker or comment on a reality show when making small talk in line at the grocery store. But if you tried to launch into a deep discussion on the classical Greek play *Antigone*, few members of U.S. society today would be familiar with it. Although high culture may be considered by some as superior to popular culture, the lines between high culture and popular culture vary over time and place. Shakespearean plays, considered to be popular culture when they were written, are now part of our society's high culture. Five hundred years from now, will our descendants consider *Dancing with the Stars* as fine performance art?

Subculture and Counterculture

FIGURE 3.8 Cosplayers are a distinct subculture (a smaller cultural group within the larger culture) in the United States. And within the larger subculture are subgroups, such as this one emulating D.C. Comics characters. (Credit: Pat Loika)

A **subculture** is just what it sounds like—a smaller cultural group within a larger culture. People of a subculture are part of the larger culture but also share a specific identity within a smaller group.*

Thousands of subcultures exist within the U.S. Ethnic and racial groups share the language, food, and customs of their heritage. Other subcultures are formed through shared experiences. Biker culture revolves around an interest in motorcycles. Some subcultures are formed by people who possess traits or preferences that differ from the majority of a society's population. The body modification community embraces aesthetic additions to the human body, such as tattoos, piercings, and certain forms of plastic surgery. But even as members of a subculture band together, they still identify with and participate in the larger society.

Sociologists distinguish subcultures from **countercultures**, which reject some of the larger culture's norms and values. In contrast to subcultures, which operate relatively smoothly within the larger society, countercultures might actively defy larger society by developing their own set of rules and norms to live by, sometimes even creating communities that operate outside of greater society. Counterculture members are 'against' the dominant ruling culture and want to install their own values. Sub-culture members may want to change some things but established procedures are followed.

Cults, a word derived from culture, are also considered counterculture groups. The group "Yearning for Zion" (YFZ) in Eldorado, Texas, existed outside the mainstream and the limelight, until its leader was accused of statutory rape and underage marriage. The sect's formal norms clashed too severely to be tolerated by US law, and in 2008, authorities raided the compound and removed more than two hundred women and children from the property. Many cults claim to be spiritual, often establishing themselves as a religion. When each of the three Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) in the world began, they were treated as cults and suffered much oppression because of it.

Cultural Change

Cultures continually change because new items are added to material culture every day and in turn, meanings are assigned to them (non-material), which affects other cultural components. For example, a new technology, such as railroads or smartphones, might introduce new ways of traveling or communicating. New ideas, such as flash mobs or crowdfunding, enter a culture . Sociologists identify two broad categories of change as

innovation (meaning new) and **diffusion** (to spread out). Material cultural change happens when new items are *discovered* or *invented* or enter a culture as a result of *globalization*.

Innovation: Discovery and Invention

An **innovation** refers to an object or concept's initial appearance in society—it is innovative because it is new. Innovations are discovered or invented. *Discoveries* make known previously unknown but existing aspects of reality. In 1610, when Galileo looked through his telescope and discovered Saturn, the planet was already there, but until then, no one had known about it. When Christopher Columbus encountered Hispaniola, the island was, of course, already well known to its inhabitants. However, his discovery was new knowledge for Europeans, and it opened the way to changes in European culture, as well as to the cultures of the discovered lands. For example, new foods such as potatoes and tomatoes transformed the European diet, and horses brought from Europe changed hunting practices of Great Plains Native Americans.

Inventions result when something new is formed from existing objects or concepts—when things are put together in an entirely new manner. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, electric appliances were invented at an astonishing pace. Cars, airplanes, vacuum cleaners, lamps, radios, telephones, and televisions were all new inventions. Inventions may shape a culture by replacing older ways of carrying out tasks, being integrated into current practices, or creating new activities. Their adoption reflects (and may shape) cultural values, and their use may introduce new norms and practices.

Consider the rise of mobile phones. As more and more people began carrying these devices, phone conversations no longer were restricted to homes, offices, and phone booths. People on trains, in restaurants, and in other public places became annoyed by listening to one-sided conversations. New norms and behaviors were needed for cell phone use. Some people pushed for the idea that those who are out in the world should pay attention to their companions and surroundings. Fortunately, technology found a workaround: texting, which enables quiet communication surpassed phone conversations as the primary way to communicate anywhere, everywhere.

When the pace of innovation increases, it can lead to generation gaps. Technological gadgets that catch on quickly with one generation are sometimes dismissed by an older generation that is skeptical or struggles to adopt them. The older generation might tune into a musician performing on public television while the younger generation prefers a livestream. A culture's objects and ideas can cause not just generational but cultural gaps. Material culture tends to diffuse more quickly than nonmaterial culture; technology can spread through society in a matter of months, but it can take generations for the ideas and beliefs of society to change including methods for researching or learning information (e.g., library versus Internet search).

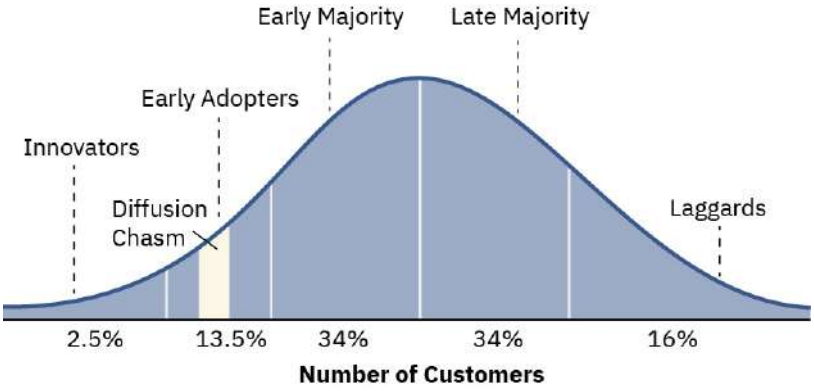

FIGURE 3.9 Technology Adoption Lifecycle — Sociologist Everett Rogers (1962) developed a model of the diffusion of innovations. As consumers gradually adopt a new innovation, the item grows toward 100 percent usage, or complete saturation within a society. This graph is frequently used in business, sales, technology, and cultural innovations. It can be used to describe how quickly different groups adopt (or begin using) a new technology or a new slang word, but note it is just a framework: not every innovation follows this exact pattern, but it provides a

good foundation for discussion and prediction. (Graph attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

Coined by sociologist William F. Ogburn (1957), the term **culture lag** refers to the time that passes between the introduction of a new item of material culture and its social acceptance. Culture lag can also cause tangible problems. The infrastructure of the U.S., built a hundred years ago or more, is having trouble supporting today's more heavily populated and fast-paced life. Yet there is a lag in conceptualizing solutions to infrastructure problems. Municipalities struggle with traffic control, increased air pollution, and limited parking, which are all symptoms of culture lag. Although people are becoming aware of the consequences, overuse, or lack of resources, addressing these needs takes time.

Diffusion and Globalization

Another way material and nonmaterial culture crosses borders is through **diffusion**. Like a gas in a laboratory experiment, the item or idea spreads throughout. Diffusion relates to the process of the integration of cultures into the mainstream while **globalization** refers to the promotion and increase of interactions between different regions and populations around the globe resulting in the integration of markets and interdependence of nations fostered through trade.

Ideas concepts, or artifacts are often diffused, or spread, to individuals and groups, resulting in new social practices. People might develop a new appreciation of Thai noodles or Italian gelato (ice cream). Access to television and the Internet has brought the lifestyles and values portrayed in U.S. sitcoms into homes around the globe and vice versa. Twitter feeds from public demonstrations in one nation have encouraged political protesters in other countries. When this kind of diffusion occurs, ideas from one culture are introduced into another, often before the associated material objects. The graph above displays when diffusion typically occurs, essentially driving an innovation to spread beyond its earliest adopters to the wider majority of people.

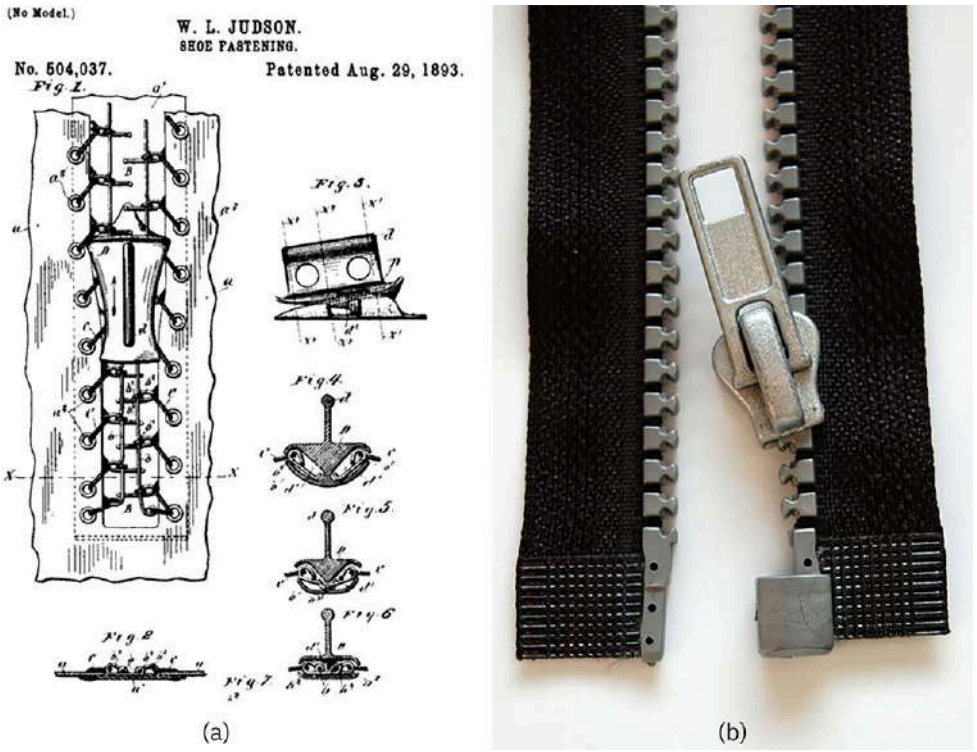

FIGURE 3.10 Officially patented in 1893 as the "clasp locker" (left), the zipper did not diffuse through society for many decades. Today, it is immediately recognizable around the world. (Credit: (a) US Patent Office/Wikimedia Commons; (b) Rabensteiner/Wikimedia Commons).

3.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section you should be able to:

- Discuss the major theoretical approaches to cultural interpretation

Music, fashion, technology, and values—all are products of culture. But what do they mean? How do sociologists perceive and interpret culture based on these material and nonmaterial items? Let's finish our analysis of culture by reviewing them in the context of three theoretical perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Functionalists view society as a system in which all parts work—or function—together to create society as a whole. They often use the human body as an analogy. Looking at life in this way, *societies need culture to exist*. Cultural norms function to support the fluid operation of society, and cultural values guide people in making choices. Just as members of a society work together to fulfill a society's needs, culture exists to meet its members' social and personal needs.

Functionalists also study culture in terms of values. For example, education is highly valued in the U.S. The culture of education—including material culture such as classrooms, textbooks, libraries, educational technology, dormitories and non-material culture such as specific teaching approaches—demonstrates how much emphasis is placed on the value of educating a society's members. In contrast, if education consisted of only providing guidelines and some study material without the other elements, that would demonstrate that the culture places a lower value on education.

FIGURE 3.11 This statue of Superman stands in the center of Metropolis, Illinois. His pedestal reads "Truth—Justice—The American Way." How would a functionalist interpret this statue? What does it reveal about the values of American culture? (Credit: David Wilson/flickr)

Functionalists view the different categories of culture as serving many functions. Having membership in a culture, a subculture, or a counterculture brings camaraderie and social cohesion and benefits the larger society by providing places for people who share similar ideas.

Conflict theorists, however, view social structure as inherently unequal, based on power differentials related to issues like class, gender, race, and age. For a conflict theorist, established educational methods are seen as reinforcing the dominant societal culture and issues of privilege. The historical experiences of certain groups—those based upon race, sex, or class, for instance, or those that portray a negative narrative about the dominant culture—are excluded from history books. For a long time, U.S. History education omitted the assaults on Native American people and society that were part of the colonization of the land that became the United States. A more recent example is the recognition of historical events like race riots and racially based massacres like the Tulsa Massacre, which was widely reported when it occurred in 1921 but was omitted from many national historical accounts of that period of time. When an episode of HBO's *Watchmen* showcased the event in stunning and horrific detail, many people expressed surprise that it had occurred and it hadn't been taught or discussed (Ware 2019).

Historical omission is not restricted to the U.S. North Korean students learn of their benevolent leader without information about his mistreatment of large portions of the population. According to defectors and North Korea experts, while famines and dire economic conditions are obvious, state media and educational agencies work to ensure that North Koreans do not understand how different their country is from others (Jacobs 2019).

Inequities exist within a culture's value system and become embedded in laws, policies, and procedures. This inclusion leads to the oppression of the powerless by the powerful. A society's cultural norms benefit some people but hurt others. Women were not allowed to vote in the U.S. until 1920, making it hard for them to get laws passed that protected their rights in the home and in the workplace. Same-sex couples were denied the right to marry in the U.S. until 2015. Elsewhere around the world, same-sex marriage is only legal in 31 of the planet's 195 countries.

At the core of conflict theory is the effect of economic production and materialism. Dependence on technology in rich nations *versus* a lack of technology and education in poor nations. Conflict theorists believe that a society's system of material production has an effect on the rest of culture. People who have less power also have fewer opportunities to adapt to cultural change. This view contrasts with the perspective of functionalism. Where functionalists would see the purpose of culture—traditions, folkways, values—as helping individuals navigate through life and societies run smoothly, conflict theorists examine socio-cultural struggles, including the power and privilege created for some by using and reinforcing a dominate culture that sustains their position in society

Symbolic interactionism is the sociological perspective that is most concerned with the face-to-face interactions and cultural meanings between members of society. It is considered a micro-level analysis. Instead of looking how access is different between the rich and poor, interactionists see culture as being created and maintained by the ways people interact and in how individuals interpret each other's actions. In this perspective, people perpetuate cultural ways. Proponents of this theory conceptualize human interaction as a continuous process of deriving meaning from both objects in the environment and the actions of others. Every object and action has a symbolic meaning, and language serves as a means for people to represent and communicate interpretations of these meanings to others. Symbolic interactionists perceive culture as highly dynamic and fluid, as it is dependent on how meaning is interpreted and how individuals interact when conveying these meanings. Interactionists research changes in language. They study additions and deletions of words, the changing meaning of words, and the transmission of words in an original language into different ones.

FIGURE 3.12 Sometimes external observers may believe that people from a culture dress a certain way based on images from a parade or special event. In reality, these two people may wear business suits or jeans and T-shirts when they are not participating in a flower parade. While people may not always outwardly express their cultural identity or use items related to their culture, special events often bring out those expressions. (Credit: John Shedrick)

We began this chapter by asking, "What is culture?" Culture is comprised of values, beliefs, norms, language, practices, and artifacts of a society. Because culture is learned, it includes how people think and express themselves. While we may like to consider ourselves individuals, we must acknowledge the impact of culture on us and our way of life. We inherit language that shapes our perceptions and patterned behavior, including those of family, friends, faith, and politics.

To an extent, culture is a social comfort. After all, sharing a similar culture with others is precisely what defines societies. Nations would not exist if people did not coexist culturally. There could be no societies if people did not share heritage and language, and civilization would cease to function if people did not agree on similar values and systems of social control.

Culture is preserved through transmission from one generation to the next, but it also evolves through processes of innovation, discovery, and cultural diffusion. As such, cultures are social constructions. The society approves or disapproves of items or ideas, which are therefore included or not in the culture. We may be restricted by the confines of our own culture, but as humans we have the ability to question values and make conscious decisions. No better evidence of this freedom exists than the amount of cultural diversity around the world. The more we study another culture, the better we become at understanding our own.

Key Terms

alarm reaction first stage of the general adaptation syndrome; characterized as the body's immediate physiological reaction to a threatening situation or some other emergency; analogous to the fight-or-flight response

beliefs tenets or convictions that people hold to be true

cortisol stress hormone released by the adrenal glands when encountering a stressor; helps to provide a boost of energy, thereby preparing the individual to take action

countercultures groups that reject and oppose society's widely accepted cultural patterns

culture shared beliefs, values, and practices

culture lag the gap of time between the introduction of material culture and nonmaterial culture's acceptance of it

diffusion the spread of material and nonmaterial culture from one culture to another

discoveries things and ideas found from what already exists

distress bad form of stress; usually high in intensity; often leads to exhaustion, fatigue, feeling burned out; associated with erosions in performance and health

eustress good form of stress; low to moderate in intensity; associated with positive feelings, as well as optimal health and performance

fight-or-flight response set of physiological reactions (increases in blood pressure, heart rate, respiration rate, and sweat) that occur when an individual encounters a perceived threat; these reactions are produced by activation of the sympathetic nervous system and the endocrine system

folkways direct, appropriate behavior in the day-to-day practices and expressions of a culture

formal norms established, written rules

general adaptation syndrome Hans Selye's three-stage model of the body's physiological reactions to stress and the process of stress adaptation: alarm reaction, stage of resistance, and stage of exhaustion

globalization the integration of international trade and finance markets

health psychology subfield of psychology devoted to studying psychological influences on health, illness, and how people respond when they become ill

high culture the cultural patterns of a society's elite

hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis set of structures found in both the limbic system (hypothalamus) and the endocrine system (pituitary gland and adrenal glands) that regulate many of the body's physiological reactions to stress through the release of hormones

ideal culture the standards a society would like to embrace and live up to

informal norms casual behaviors that are generally and widely conformed to

innovations new objects or ideas introduced to culture for the first time

inventions a combination of pieces of existing reality into new forms

language a symbolic system of communication

mores the moral views and principles of a group

norms the visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured

popular culture mainstream, widespread patterns among a society's population

primary appraisal judgment about the degree of potential harm or threat to well-being that a stressor might entail

real culture the way society really is based on what actually occurs and exists

sanctions a way to authorize or formally disapprove of certain behaviors

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis the way that people understand the world based on their form of language

secondary appraisal judgment of options available to cope with a stressor and their potential effectiveness

social control a way to encourage conformity to cultural norms

society people who live in a definable community and who share a culture

stage of exhaustion third stage of the general adaptation syndrome; the body's ability to resist stress becomes depleted; illness, disease, and even death may occur

stage of resistance second stage of the general adaptation syndrome; the body adapts to a stressor for a period of time

stress process whereby an individual perceives and responds to events that one appraises as overwhelming or threatening to one's well-being

stressors environmental events that may be judged as threatening or demanding; stimuli that initiate the stress process

subcultures groups that share a specific identification, apart from a society's majority, even as the members exist within a larger society

symbols gestures or objects that have meanings associated with them that are recognized by people who share a culture

values a culture's standard for discerning what is good and just in society

Section Summary

3.1 What Is Culture?

Though "society" and "culture" are often used interchangeably, they have different meanings. A **society** is a group of people sharing a community and culture. The term **culture** generally describes the shared values, beliefs, norms, language, practices, and artifacts of these people, and includes material and nonmaterial elements. Our experience of cultural difference is influenced by our ethnocentrism (judging others using your cultural standards) and Xenocentrism (belief that another culture is superior). Sociologists practice cultural relativism (assessing others using their own cultural standards) although it is quite difficult.

3.2 Elements of Culture

A culture consists of many elements, such as the values and beliefs of its society. Culture is also governed by norms, including laws, mores (norms that embody moral views), and folkways (traditions without any moral underpinnings). The symbols and language of a society are key to developing and conveying culture. In a nutshell, the four main components are values, beliefs, norms, language, practices, and artifacts.

3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

Sociologists recognize that there is a dominant culture or cultural practice that is dominant often characterized as the norm in a society as well as different types of cultures within societies. Societies also consist of many subcultures (a smaller cultural group within a larger culture). Some arese as a result of a shared identity or interest. Countercultures reject the dominant culture's values and create their own cultural rules and norms. Cultural change can happen through invention or discovery. Cultures evolve via new ideas and new ways of thinking. In many modern cultures, the cornerstone of innovation is technology, the rapid growth of which can lead to cultural lag (time from creation or introduction to social acceptance). Technology is also responsible for the spread of both material and nonmaterial culture that contributes to globalization (the increase of movement and exchange of goods and ideas all over the planet).

3.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

There are three major theoretical approaches toward the interpretation of culture. A functionalist perspective acknowledges that the many parts of culture work together as a system to fulfill society's needs. Functionalists view culture as a reflection of society's values. Conflict theorists see culture as inherently unequal, reinforcing inequalities in gender, class, race, and age. Symbolic interactionists are primarily interested in culture as experienced in the daily interactions, interpretations, and exchanges between individuals and the symbols that comprise a culture. Various cultural and sociological occurrences can be explained by these theories. Each theory provides a different perspective or lens to help understand culture in societies.

Section Quiz

3.1 What Is Culture?

1. The terms _____ and _____ are often used interchangeably, but have nuances that differentiate them.
   a. imperialism and relativism
   b. culture and society
   c. society and ethnocentrism
   d. ethnocentrism and Xenocentrism

2. The American flag is a material object that denotes the U.S. However, many associate ideas with the flag, like bravery and freedom. In this example, what are bravery and freedom?
   a. Symbols
   b. Language
   c. Material culture
   d. Nonmaterial culture

3. The belief that one's culture is inferior to another culture is called:
   a. ethnocentrism
   b. nationalism
   c. xenocentrism
   d. imperialism

4. The irrational fear or hatred of another culture is called:
   a. ethnocentrism
   b. xenophobia
   c. xenophile
   d. ethnophobia

5. Rodney and Elise are U.S. students studying abroad in Italy. When they are introduced to their host families, the families kiss them on both cheeks. When Rodney's host brother introduces himself and kisses Rodney on both cheeks, Rodney pulls back in surprise. Where he is from, unless they are romantically involved, men do not kiss one another. This is an example of:
   a. culture shock
   b. imperialism
   c. ethnocentrism
   d. xenocentrism

6. Most cultures have been found to identify laughter as a sign of humor, joy, or pleasure. Laughter is an examples of:
   a. relativism
   b. ethnocentrism
   c. xenocentrism
   d. universalism

3.2 Elements of Culture

7. A nation's flag is:
a. A symbol
b. A value
c. A culture
d. A folkway

8. The existence of social norms, both formal and informal, is one of the main things that inform _____, otherwise known as encouraging social conformity.
a. values
b. sanctions
c. social control
d. mores

9. The biggest difference between mores and folkways is that
a. mores are linked to morality, whereas folkways are tied to commonplace behaviors
b. mores are absolute, whereas folkways are temporary
c. mores refer to material culture, whereas folkways refer to nonmaterial culture
d. mores refer to nonmaterial culture, whereas folkways refer to material culture

10. The notion that people cannot feel or experience something that they do not have a word for can be explained by:
a. linguistics
b. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
c. Ethnographic imagery
d. bilingualism

11. Cultural sanctions can also be viewed as ways that society:
a. Establishes leaders
b. Determines language
c. Regulates behavior
d. Determines laws

3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

12. An example of high culture is _____, whereas an example of popular culture would be _____.
a. Dostoevsky style in film; "American Idol" winners
b. medical marijuana; film noir
c. country music; pop music
d. political theory; sociological theory

13. The Ku Klux Klan is an example of what part of culture?
a. Counterculture
b. Subculture
c. Multiculturalism
d. pop culture

14. Modern-day hipsters are an example of:
a. ethnocentricity
b. counterculture
c. subculture
d. high culture

15. Your eighty-three-year-old grandmother has been using a computer for some time now. As a way to keep in touch, you frequently send emails of a few lines to let her know about your day. She calls after every email to respond point by point, but she has never emailed a response back. This can be viewed as an example of:
a. cultural lag
b. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
c. Ethnographic imagery
d. bilingualism

16. Some jobs today advertise in multinational markets and permit telecommuting in lieu of working from a primary location. This broadening of the job market and the way that jobs are performed can be attributed to:
a. cultural lag
b. diffusion
c. discovery
d. globalization

17. The major difference between invention and discovery is:
a. Invention is based on technology, whereas discovery is usually based on culture
b. Discovery involves finding items that already exists, but invention puts things together in a new way
c. Invention refers to material culture, whereas discovery can be material or theoretic, like laws of physics
d. Invention is typically used to refer to prehistoric objects, whereas discovery refers to local culture

18. McDonald's restaurants are found in almost every country around the world. What is this an example of?
a. globalization
b. diffusion
c. culture lag
d. xenocentrism

3.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

19. A sociologist conducts research into the ways that Hispanic American students are historically underprivileged in the U.S. education system. What theoretical approach is the sociologist Using?
a. Symbolic interactionism
b. Functionalism
c. Conflict theory
d. Ethnocentrism

20. Members of a counterculture movement believed that the economic disparity between the highest and the mid to lower economic classes is growing at an exponentially alarming rate. A sociologist who studies that movement by examining the interactions between its members would most likely use what theoretical approach?
   a. Symbolic interactionism
   b. Functionalism
   c. Conflict theory
   d. Ethnocentrism

21. What theoretical perspective views society as having a system of interdependent inherently connected parts?
   a. Sociobiology
   b. Functionalism
   c. Conflict theory
   d. Ethnocentrism

22. The "American Dream"—the notion that anybody can be successful and rich if they work hard enough—is most commonly associated with which sociological theory?
   a. Sociobiology
   b. Functionalism
   c. Conflict theory
   d. Ethnocentrism

Short Answer

3.1 What Is Culture?

1. Examine the difference between material and nonmaterial culture in your world. Identify ten objects that are part of your regular cultural experience. For each, then identify what aspects of nonmaterial culture (values, beliefs, norms, language, and practices) that these objects represent. What has this exercise revealed to you about your culture?

2. Do you believe that feelings of ethnocentricity or xenocentric attitudes and practices are prevalent in U.S. culture? Why do you believe this? What issues or events might influence your ideas about these concepts?

3.2 Elements of Culture

3. What do you think of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis? Do you agree or disagree with it? Cite examples or research to support your point of view.

4. How would the elimination of a social "norm" influence your culture? Describe the positive and negative effects.

3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

5. Identify several examples of popular culture and describe how they form societal culture. How prevalent is the effect of these examples in your everyday life?

6. Consider some of the specific issues or concerns of your generation. Are any ideas or concepts countercultural? What subcultures have emerged from your generation? How have the issues of your generation expressed themselves culturally? How has your generation made its mark on society's collective culture?

7. What are some examples of cultural lag that are present in your life? What influence does technology have on culture? Explain.

3.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

8. Consider a current social trend that you have witnessed, perhaps situated around family, education, transportation, or finances. For example, many veterans of the Armed Forces, after completing tours of duty in the Middle East, are returning to college rather than entering jobs as previous generations did. Choose a sociological approach—functionalism, conflict theory, or symbolic interactionism—to describe, explain, and analyze the social issue you choose. Afterward, determine why you chose the approach you did. Does it suit your own way of thinking? Or does it offer the most relevant method of illuminating the social issue?

Further Research

3.1 What Is Culture?

Ethnocentrism is a problem in many arenas. In the workplace, it can be hurtful and detrimental to an entire organization and especially to those who face mistreatment or feel unwelcome. People who exhibit ethnocentrism in the workplace are not only putting their careers at risk, but missing opportunities to flourish and advance with colleagues and customers of different backgrounds. In other words, curbing ethnocentrism is an important personal and societal goal, and it's important for careers. This guide from an executive leadership academy (http://openstax.org/l/eurac1) discusses ways that multicultural teams can create more success if the people and company undertake the correct practices.

3.2 Elements of Culture

The science-fiction novel, *Babel-17*, by Samuel R. Delaney was based upon the principles of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Read an excerpt from *Babel-17* here (http://openstax.org/l/Babel-17) .

3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

Many people believe that the time of the counterculture is over. Like many aspects of culture, it could come back at any time. In this interview (https://openstax.org/l/counterculture) , Princeton professor German Labrador and director of exhibitions at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona discuss the past, present, and potential future of counterculture.

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Society and Social Interaction 4

FIGURE 4.1 Some aspects of teenage life cross societal boundaries, while others are distinct. (Credit: USAID/flickr)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION It was a school day, and Inayah woke up at 5:15 a.m, checked her phone, and began a few chores. Her aunt had gone to work, but had left a pile of vegetables for be cut for dinner. After taking care of that, Inayah gathered and organized the laundry, then woke up her younger cousin and sister. She led them in prayers, gave them breakfast, and dressed for school. Inayah was running late, so she didn't have time to record a full video. Instead she took a few pictures and posted a good-morning clip, updated her status on another platform, and went to check on the younger girls.

Twenty minutes later, Inayah was fixing her sister's uniform and calling to her cousin to hurry along. She loaded them up with their school bags and one sack of laundry each. The three girls walked the two kilometers to the bus station, dropping the laundry at the cleaner on the way. The ride to school took about thirty minutes.

Inayah had grown up about sixty kilometers away, where her parents still lived. She usually saw them on weekends. She had previously attended a boarding school, but those had become dangerous due to kidnappings or other trouble. Inayah's new school was not quite as good old one, but she was still learning. She did particularly well in math and economics.

After school and the bus ride back, Inayah sent her sister and her cousin to the house while she stayed in town with some friends. The girls sat at the picnic tables near the basketball courts, where groups of other teenagers and some adults usually came to play. She didn't talk to any of the boys there, but she had met several of them at her uncle's store. The girls recorded a few videos together, started on their homework, and after about an hour, headed home to help with dinner.

How does Inayah's day compare with yours? How does it compare to the days of teenagers you know? Inayah interacts with her family and friends based on individual relationships and personalities, but societal norms and acceptable behaviors shape those interactions. Someone from outside of her community might feel that her society's expectations are too challenging, while others may feel they are too lenient. But Inayah may disagree with both perspectives. She might have taken those societal expectations as her own.

4.1 Types of Societies

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the difference between preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial societies
- Explain the role of environment on preindustrial societies
- Interpret the ways that technology impacts societal development

FIGURE 4.2 How does technology influence a society? Here, a NASA engineer is working with samples of a coating typically used in space flight, and which now may play a role in preserving artifacts and scientific specimens on earth. The space program is expensive, but throughout its history it has provided the U.S. significant advantages in scientific innovations. (Credit: NASA Goddard Space Flight Center/flickr)

In sociological terms, **society** refers to a group of people who live in a definable community and share the same culture. On a broader scale, society consists of the people and institutions around us, our shared beliefs, and our cultural ideas. Typically, many societies also share a political authority.

Consider China and the United States. Both are technologically advanced, have dense networks of transportation and communications, rely on foreign trading partners for large portions of their economies,

focus on education as a way to advance their citizens, and have large and expensive militaries. Both countries have citizens that may be largely satisfied with their governments and ways of life, while still holding some degree of distrust or discontent regarding their leaders. And both have a rural versus urban disparity that can cause tension and economic inequality among the population. An individual family or even a whole office full of people in one of the countries may look and act very similarly to families or offices in the other country.

But what is different? In China, a far greater percentage of people may be involved in manufacturing than America. Many of China's cities didn't evolve from ports, transit centers, or river confluences hundreds of years ago, but are newly created urban centers inhabited by recent transplants from other locations. While citizens in the U.S. can openly express their dissatisfaction with their government through social activism in person or, especially, online, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are banned in China, and the press is controlled by the government. Their appearance might be very similar, but the two countries are very different societies.

Sociologist Gerhard Lenski Jr. (1924–2015) defined societies in terms of their technological sophistication. As a society advances, so does its use of technology. Societies with rudimentary technology depend on the fluctuations of their environments, while industrialized societies have more control over the impact of their surroundings and thus develop different cultural features. This distinction is so important that sociologists generally classify societies along a spectrum of their level of industrialization—from preindustrial to industrial to postindustrial.

Preindustrial Societies

Before the Industrial Revolution and the widespread use of machines, societies were small, rural, and dependent largely on local resources. Economic production was limited to the amount of labor a human being could provide, and there were few specialized occupations. The very first occupation was that of hunter-gatherer.

Hunter-Gatherer

Hunter-gatherer societies demonstrate the strongest dependence on the environment of the various types of preindustrial societies. As the basic structure of human society until about 10,000–12,000 years ago, these groups were based around kinship or tribes. Hunter-gatherers relied on their surroundings for survival—they hunted wild animals and foraged for uncultivated plants for food. When resources became scarce, the group moved to a new area to find sustenance, meaning they were nomadic. These societies were common until several hundred years ago, but today only a few hundred remain in existence, such as indigenous Australian tribes sometimes referred to as "aborigines," or the Bambuti, a group of pygmy hunter-gatherers residing in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Hunter-gatherer groups are quickly disappearing as the world's population explodes.

Pastoral

Changing conditions and adaptations led some societies to rely on the domestication of animals where circumstances permitted. Roughly 7,500 years ago, human societies began to recognize their ability to tame and breed animals and to grow and cultivate their own plants. **Pastoral societies**, such as the Maasai villagers, rely on the domestication of animals as a resource for survival. Unlike earlier hunter-gatherers who depended entirely on existing resources to stay alive, pastoral groups were able to breed livestock for food, clothing, and transportation, and they created a surplus of goods. Herding, or pastoral, societies remained nomadic because they were forced to follow their animals to fresh feeding grounds. Around the time that pastoral societies emerged, specialized occupations began to develop, and societies commenced trading with local groups.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Where Societies Meet—The Worst and the Best

When cultures meet, technology can help, hinder, and even destroy. The Exxon Valdez oil spillage in Alaska nearly destroyed the local inhabitants' entire way of life. Oil spills in the Nigerian Delta have forced many of the Ogoni tribe from their land and forced removal has meant that over 100,000 Ogoni have sought refuge in the country of Benin (University of Michigan, n.d.). And the massive Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2006 drew great attention as it occurred in the United States. Environmental disasters continue as Western technology and its need for energy expands into less developed (peripheral) regions of the globe.

Of course not all technology is bad. We take electric light for granted in the United States, Europe, and the rest of the developed world. Such light extends the day and allows us to work, read, and travel at night. It makes us safer and more productive. But regions in India, Africa, and elsewhere are not so fortunate. Meeting the challenge, one particular organization, Barefoot College, located in District Ajmer, Rajasthan, India, works with numerous less developed nations to bring solar electricity, water solutions, and education. The focus for the solar projects is the village elders. The elders agree to select two grandmothers to be trained as solar engineers and choose a village committee composed of men and women to help operate the solar program.

The program has brought light to over 450,000 people in 1,015 villages. The environmental rewards include a large reduction in the use of kerosene and in carbon dioxide emissions. The fact that the villagers are operating the projects themselves helps minimize their sense of dependence.

FIGURE 4.3 Otherwise skeptical or hesitant villagers are more easily convinced of the value of the solar project when they realize that the “solar engineers” are their local grandmothers. (Credit: Abri le Roux/flickr)

Horticultural

Around the same time that pastoral societies were on the rise, another type of society developed, based on the newly developed capacity for people to grow and cultivate plants. Previously, the depletion of a region’s crops or water supply forced pastoral societies to relocate in search of food sources for their livestock. **Horticultural societies** formed in areas where rainfall and other conditions allowed them to grow stable crops. They were

similar to hunter-gatherers in that they largely depended on the environment for survival, but since they didn't have to abandon their location to follow resources, they were able to start permanent settlements. This created more stability and more material goods and became the basis for the first revolution in human survival.

Agricultural

While pastoral and horticultural societies used small, temporary tools such as digging sticks or hoes, **agricultural societies** relied on permanent tools for survival. Around 3000 B.C.E., an explosion of new technology known as the Agricultural Revolution made farming possible—and profitable. Farmers learned to rotate the types of crops grown on their fields and to reuse waste products such as manure as fertilizer, which led to better harvests and bigger surpluses of food. New tools for digging and harvesting were made of metal, and this made them more effective and longer lasting. Human settlements grew into towns and cities, and particularly bountiful regions became centers of trade and commerce.

This is also the age in which people had the time and comfort to engage in more contemplative and thoughtful activities, such as music, poetry, and philosophy. This period became referred to as the "dawn of civilization" by some because of the development of leisure and humanities. Craftspeople were able to support themselves through the production of creative, decorative, or thought-provoking aesthetic objects and writings.

As resources became more plentiful, social classes became more divisive. Those who had more resources could afford better living and developed into a class of nobility. Difference in social standing between men and women increased. As cities expanded, ownership and preservation of resources became a pressing concern.

Feudal

The ninth century gave rise to **feudal societies**. These societies contained a strict hierarchical system of power based around land ownership and protection. The nobility, known as lords, placed vassals in charge of pieces of land. In return for the resources that the land provided, vassals promised to fight for their lords.

These individual pieces of land, known as fiefdoms, were cultivated by the lower class. In return for maintaining the land, peasants were guaranteed a place to live and protection from outside enemies. Power was handed down through family lines, with peasant families serving lords for generations and generations. Ultimately, the social and economic system of feudalism failed and was replaced by capitalism and the technological advances of the industrial era.

Industrial Society

In the eighteenth century, Europe experienced a dramatic rise in technological invention, ushering in an era known as the Industrial Revolution. What made this period remarkable was the number of new inventions that influenced people's daily lives. Within a generation, tasks that had until this point required months of labor became achievable in a matter of days. Before the Industrial Revolution, work was largely person- or animal-based, and relied on human workers or horses to power mills and drive pumps. In 1782, James Watt and Matthew Boulton created a steam engine that could do the work of twelve horses by itself.

Steam power began appearing everywhere. Instead of paying artisans to painstakingly spin wool and weave it into cloth, people turned to textile mills that produced fabric quickly at a better price and often with better quality. Rather than planting and harvesting fields by hand, farmers were able to purchase mechanical seeders and threshing machines that caused agricultural productivity to soar. Products such as paper and glass became available to the average person, and the quality and accessibility of education and health care soared. Gas lights allowed increased visibility in the dark, and towns and cities developed a nightlife.

One of the results of increased productivity and technology was the rise of urban centers. Workers flocked to factories for jobs, and the populations of cities became increasingly diverse. The new generation became less preoccupied with maintaining family land and traditions and more focused on acquiring wealth and achieving upward mobility for themselves and their families. People wanted their children and their children's children to continue to rise to the top, and as capitalism increased, so did social mobility.

It was during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of the Industrial Revolution that sociology was born. Life was changing quickly and the long-established traditions of the agricultural eras did not apply to life in the larger cities. Masses of people were moving to new environments and often found themselves faced with horrendous conditions of filth, overcrowding, and poverty. Social scientists emerged to study the relationship between the individual members of society and society as a whole.

It was during this time that power moved from the hands of the aristocracy and "old money" to business-savvy newcomers who amassed fortunes in their lifetimes. Families such as the Rockefellers and the Vanderbilts became the new power players and used their influence in business to control aspects of government as well. Eventually, concerns over the exploitation of workers led to the formation of labor unions and laws that set mandatory conditions for employees. Although the introduction of new technology at the end of the nineteenth century ended the industrial age, much of our social structure and social ideas—like family, childhood, and time standardization—have a basis in industrial society.

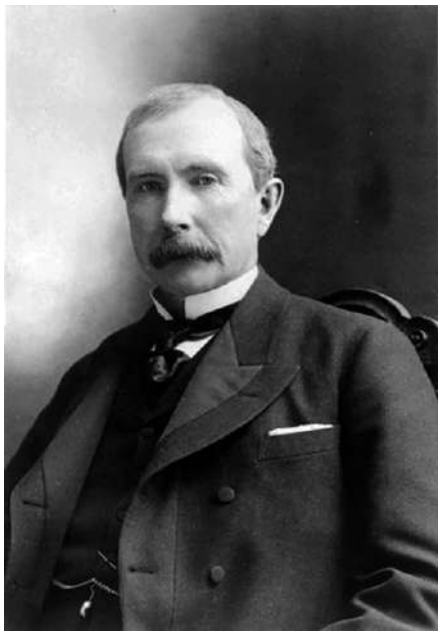

FIGURE 4.4 John D. Rockefeller, cofounder of the Standard Oil Company, came from an unremarkable family of salesmen and menial laborers. By his death at age 98, he was worth $1.4 billion. In industrial societies, business owners such as Rockefeller hold the majority of the power. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

Postindustrial Society

Information societies, sometimes known as postindustrial or digital societies, are a recent development. Unlike **industrial societies** that are rooted in the production of material goods, information societies are based on the production of information and services.

Digital technology is the steam engine of information societies, and computer moguls such as Steve Jobs and Bill Gates are its John D. Rockefellers and Cornelius Vanderbilts. Since the economy of information societies is driven by knowledge and not material goods, power lies with those in charge of storing and distributing information. Members of a postindustrial society are likely to be employed as sellers of services—software programmers or business consultants, for example—instead of producers of goods. Social classes are divided by access to education, since without technical skills, people in an information society lack the means for success.

4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe Durkheim's functionalist view of society
- Summarize the conflict theorist view of society
- Explain Marx's concepts of class and alienation
- Identify how symbolic interactionists understand society

FIGURE 4.5 Warren Buffett's ideas about taxation and spending habits of the very wealthy are controversial, particularly since they raise questions about America's embedded system of class structure and social power. The three major sociological paradigms differ in their perspectives on these issues. (Credit: Medill DC/flickr)

While many sociologists have contributed to research on society and social interaction, three thinkers form the base of modern-day perspectives. Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber developed different theoretical approaches to help us understand the way societies function.

Émile Durkheim and Functionalism

As a functionalist, Émile Durkheim's (1858–1917) perspective on society stressed the necessary interconnectivity of all of its elements. To Durkheim, society was greater than the sum of its parts. He asserted that individual behavior was not the same as collective behavior and that studying collective behavior was quite different from studying an individual's actions. Durkheim called the communal beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society the **collective conscience**. In his quest to understand what causes individuals to act in similar and predictable ways, he wrote, "If I do not submit to the conventions of society, if in my dress I do not

conform to the customs observed in my country and in my class, the ridicule I provoke, the social isolation in which I am kept, produce, although in an attenuated form, the same effects as punishment" (Durkheim 1895). Durkheim also believed that **social integration**, or the strength of ties that people have to their social groups, was a key factor in social life.

Following the ideas of Comte and Spencer, Durkheim likened society to a living organism, in which each organ plays a necessary role in keeping the being alive. Even the socially deviant members of society are necessary, Durkheim argued, as punishments for deviance affirm established cultural values and norms. That is, punishment of a crime reaffirms our moral consciousness. "A crime is a crime because we condemn it," Durkheim wrote in 1893. "An act offends the common consciousness not because it is criminal, but it is criminal because it offends that consciousness" (Durkheim 1893). Durkheim called these elements of society "social facts." By this, he meant that social forces were to be considered real and existed outside the individual.

As an observer of his social world, Durkheim was not entirely satisfied with the direction of society in his day. His primary concern was that the cultural glue that held society together was failing, and people were becoming more divided. In his book *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), Durkheim argued that as society grew more complex, social order made the transition from mechanical to organic.

Preindustrial societies, Durkheim explained, were held together by **mechanical solidarity**, a type of social order maintained by the collective conscience of a culture. Societies with mechanical solidarity act in a mechanical fashion; things are done mostly because they have always been done that way. This type of thinking was common in preindustrial societies where strong bonds of kinship and a low division of labor created shared morals and values among people, such as hunter-gatherer groups. When people tend to do the same type of work, Durkheim argued, they tend to think and act alike.

In industrial societies, mechanical solidarity is replaced with **organic solidarity**, which is social order based around an acceptance of economic and social differences. In capitalist societies, Durkheim wrote, division of labor becomes so specialized that everyone is doing different things. Instead of punishing members of a society for failure to assimilate to common values, organic solidarity allows people with differing values to coexist. Laws exist as formalized morals and are based on restitution rather than revenge.

While the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity is, in the long run, advantageous for a society, Durkheim noted that it can be a time of chaos and "normlessness." One of the outcomes of the transition is something he called social **anomie**. Anomie—literally, "without law"—is a situation in which society no longer has the support of a firm collective consciousness. Collective norms are weakened. People, while more interdependent to accomplish complex tasks, are also alienated from each other. Anomie is experienced in times of social uncertainty, such as war or a great upturn or downturn in the economy. As societies reach an advanced stage of organic solidarity, they avoid anomie by redeveloping a set of shared norms. According to Durkheim, once a society achieves organic solidarity, it has finished its development.

Karl Marx and Conflict Theory

Karl Marx (1818–1883) is certainly among the most significant social thinkers in recent history. While there are many critics of his work, it is still widely respected and influential. For Marx, society's constructions were predicated upon the idea of "base and superstructure." This term refers to the idea that a society's economic character forms its base, upon which rests the culture and social institutions, the superstructure. For Marx, it is the base (economy) that determines what a society will be like.

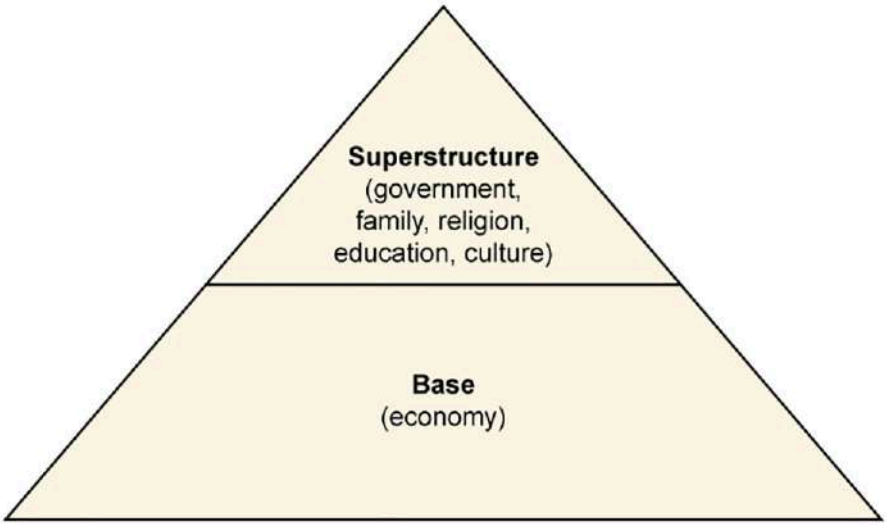

FIGURE 4.6 Karl Marx asserted that all elements of a society's structure depend on its economic structure.

Additionally, Marx saw conflict in society as the primary means of change. Economically, he saw conflict existing between the owners of the means of production—the **bourgeoisie**—and the laborers, called the **proletariat**.

Marx maintained that these conflicts appeared consistently throughout history during times of social revolution. These revolutions or "class antagonisms" as he called them, were a result of one class dominating another. Most recently, with the end of feudalism, a new revolutionary class he called the bourgeoisie dominated the proletariat laborers. The bourgeoisie were revolutionary in the sense that they represented a radical change in the structure of society. In Marx's words, "Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—Bourgeoisie and Proletariat" (Marx and Engels 1848).

In the mid-nineteenth century, as industrialization was booming, industrial employers, the "owners of the means of production" in Marx's terms, became more and more exploitative toward the working class. The large manufacturers of steel were particularly ruthless, and their facilities became popularly dubbed "satanic mills" based on a poem by William Blake. Marx's colleague and friend, Frederick Engels, wrote *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* in 1844, which described in detail the horrid conditions.

"Such is the Old Town of Manchester, and on re-reading my description, I am forced to admit that instead of being exaggerated, it is far from black enough to convey a true impression of the filth, ruin, and uninhabitableness, the defiance of all considerations of cleanliness, ventilation, and health which characterise the construction of this single district, containing at least twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants. And such a district exists in the heart of the second city of England, the first manufacturing city of the world."

Add to that the long hours, the use of child labor, and exposure to extreme conditions of heat, cold, and toxic chemicals, and it is no wonder that Marx and Engels referred to **capitalism**, which is a way of organizing an economy so that the things that are used to make and transport products (such as land, oil, factories, ships, etc.) are owned by individual people and companies rather than by the government, as the "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie."

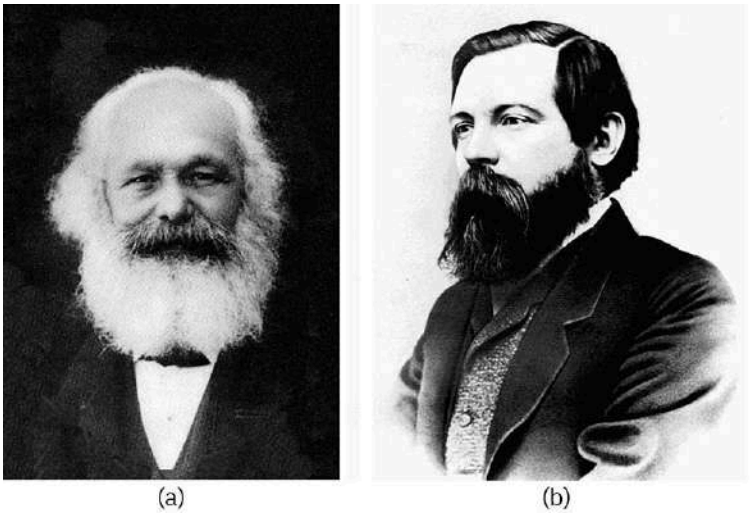

FIGURE 4.7 Karl Marx (left) and Friedrich Engels (right) analyzed differences in social power between "have" and "have-not" groups. (Credit: (a) Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) George Lester/Wikimedia Commons)

For Marx, what we do defines who we are. In historical terms, in spite of the persistent nature of one class dominating another, some element of humanity existed. There was at least some connection between the worker and the product, augmented by the natural conditions of seasons and the rise and fall of the sun, such as we see in an agricultural society. But with the bourgeoisie revolution and the rise of industry and capitalism, the worker now worked for wages alone. His relationship to his efforts was no longer of a human nature, but based on artificial conditions.

Marx described modern society in terms of alienation. **Alienation** refers to the condition in which the individual is isolated and divorced from his or her society, work, or the sense of self. Marx defined four specific types of alienation.

Alienation from the product of one's labor. An industrial worker does not have the opportunity to relate to the product he labors on. Instead of training for years as a watchmaker, an unskilled worker can get a job at a watch factory pressing buttons to seal pieces together. The worker does not care if he is making watches or cars, simply that the job exists. In the same way, a worker may not even know or care what product to which he is contributing. A worker on a Ford assembly line may spend all day installing windows on car doors without ever seeing the rest of the car. A cannery worker can spend a lifetime cleaning fish without ever knowing what product they are used for.

Alienation from the process of one's labor. A worker does not control the conditions of her job because she does not own the means of production. If a person is hired to work in a fast food restaurant, she is expected to make the food the way she is taught. All ingredients must be combined in a particular order and in a particular quantity; there is no room for creativity or change. An employee at Burger King cannot decide to change the spices used on the fries in the same way that an employee on a Ford assembly line cannot decide to place a car's headlights in a different position. Everything is decided by the bourgeoisie who then dictate orders to the laborers.

Alienation from others. Workers compete, rather than cooperate. Employees vie for time slots, bonuses, and job security. Even when a worker clocks out at night and goes home, the competition does not end. As Marx commented in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), "No sooner is the exploitation of the laborer by the manufacturer, so far at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portion of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker."

Alienation from one's self. A final outcome of industrialization is a loss of connectivity between a worker and her occupation. Because there is nothing that ties a worker to her labor, there is no longer a sense of self.

Instead of being able to take pride in an identity such as being a watchmaker, automobile builder, or chef, a person is simply a cog in the machine.

Taken as a whole, then, alienation in modern society means that an individual has no control over his life. Even in feudal societies, a person controlled the manner of his labor as to when and how it was carried out. But why, then, does the modern working class not rise up and rebel? (Indeed, Marx predicted that this would be the ultimate outcome and collapse of capitalism.)

Another idea that Marx developed is the concept of **false consciousness**. False consciousness is a condition in which the beliefs, ideals, or ideology of a person are not in the person's own best interest. In fact, it is the ideology of the dominant class (here, the bourgeoisie capitalists) that is imposed upon the proletariat. Ideas such as the emphasis of competition over cooperation, or of hard work being its own reward, clearly benefit the owners of industry. Therefore, workers are less likely to question their place in society and assume individual responsibility for existing conditions.

In order for society to overcome false consciousness, Marx proposed that it be replaced with **class consciousness**, the awareness of one's rank in society. Instead of existing as a "class in itself," the proletariat must become a "class for itself" in order to produce social change (Marx and Engels 1848), meaning that instead of just being an inert strata of society, the class could become an advocate for social improvements. Only once society entered this state of political consciousness would it be ready for a social revolution.

FIGURE 4.8 An assembly line worker installs car parts with the aid of complex machinery. Has technology made this type of labor more or less alienating? (Credit: Carol Highsmith/Wikimedia Commons)

Max Weber and Symbolic Interactionism

While Karl Marx may be one of the best-known thinkers of the nineteenth century, Max Weber is certainly one of the greatest influences in the field of sociology. Like the other social thinkers discussed here, he was concerned with the important changes taking place in Western society with the advent of industrialization. And, like Marx and Durkheim, he feared that industrialization would have negative effects on individuals.

Weber's primary focus on the structure of society lay in the elements of class, status, and power. Similar to Marx, Weber saw class as economically determined. Society, he believed, was split between owners and laborers. Status, on the other hand, was based on noneconomic factors such as education, kinship, and

religion. Both status and class determined an individual's power, or influence over ideas. Unlike Marx, Weber believed that these ideas formed the base of society.

Weber's analysis of modern society centered on the concept of **rationalization**. A rational society is one built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition. To Weber, capitalism is entirely rational. Although this leads to efficiency and merit-based success, it can have negative effects when taken to the extreme. In some modern societies, this is seen when rigid routines and strict design lead to a mechanized work environment and a focus on producing identical products in every location.

Another example of the extreme conditions of rationality can be found in Charlie Chaplin's classic film *Modern Times* (1936). Chaplin's character performs a routine task to the point where he cannot stop his motions even while away from the job. Indeed, today we even have a recognized medical condition that results from such tasks, known as "repetitive stress syndrome."

Weber was also unlike his predecessors in that he was more interested in how individuals experienced societal divisions than in the divisions themselves. The symbolic interactionism theory, the third of the three most recognized theories of sociology, is based on Weber's early ideas that emphasize the viewpoint of the individual and how that individual relates to society. For Weber, the culmination of industrialization, rationalization, and the like results in what he referred to as the **iron cage**, in which the individual is trapped by institutions and bureaucracy. This leads to a sense of "disenchantment of the world," a phrase Weber used to describe the final condition of humanity. Indeed a dark prediction, but one that has, at least to some degree, been borne out (Gerth and Mills 1918). In a rationalized, modern society, we have supermarkets instead of family-owned stores. We have chain restaurants instead of local eateries. Superstores that offer a multitude of merchandise have replaced independent businesses that focused on one product line, such as hardware, groceries, automotive repair, or clothing. Shopping malls offer retail stores, restaurants, fitness centers, even condominiums. This change may be rational, but is it universally desirable?

FIGURE 4.9 Cubicles are used to maximize individual workspace in an office. Such structures may be rational, but they are also isolating. (Credit: Tim Patterson/flickr)

BIG PICTURE

The Protestant Work Ethic

In a series of essays in 1904, Max Weber presented the idea of the *Protestant work ethic*, a new attitude toward work based on the Calvinist principle of predestination. In the sixteenth century, Europe was shaken by the Protestant Revolution. Religious leaders such as Martin Luther and John Calvin argued against the Catholic Church's belief in salvation through obedience. While Catholic leaders emphasized the importance of religious dogma and performing good deeds as a gateway to Heaven, Protestants believed that inner grace, or faith in God, was enough to achieve salvation.

John Calvin in particular popularized the Christian concept of predestination, the idea that all events—including salvation—have already been decided by God. Because followers were never sure whether they had been chosen to enter Heaven or Hell, they looked for signs in their everyday lives. If a person was hard-working and successful, he was likely to be one of the chosen. If a person was lazy or simply indifferent, he was likely to be one of the damned.

Weber argued that this mentality encouraged people to work hard for personal gain; after all, why should one help the unfortunate if they were already damned? Over time, the Protestant work ethic spread and became the foundation for capitalism.

4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Interpret the sociological concept of reality as a social construct
- Define roles and describe their places in people's daily interactions
- Explain how individuals present themselves and perceive themselves in a social context

FIGURE 4.10 Who are we? What role do we play in society? According to sociologists, we construct reality through our interactions with others. In a way, our day-to-day interactions are like those of actors on a stage. (Credit: Jan Lewandowski/flickr)

Until now, we've primarily discussed the differences between societies. Rather than discuss their problems

and configurations, we'll now explore how society came to be and how sociologists view social interaction.

In 1966 sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann wrote a book called *The Social Construction of Reality*. In it, they argued that society is created by humans and human interaction, which they call **habitualization**. Habitualization describes how "any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be … performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort" (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Not only do we construct our own society but we also accept it as it is because others have created it before us. Society is, in fact, "habit."

For example, your school exists as a school and not just as a building because you and others agree that it is a school. If your school is older than you are, it was created by the agreement of others before you. In a sense, it exists by consensus, both prior and current. This is an example of the process of **institutionalization**, the act of implanting a convention or norm into society. Bear in mind that the institution, while socially constructed, is still quite real.

Another way of looking at this concept is through W.I. Thomas's notable **Thomas theorem** which states, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928). That is, people's behavior can be determined by their subjective construction of reality rather than by objective reality. For example, a teenager who is repeatedly given a label—overachiever, player, bum—might live up to the term even though it initially wasn't a part of his character.

Like Berger and Luckmann in their description of habitualization, Thomas states that our moral codes and social norms are created by "successive definitions of the situation." This concept is defined by sociologist Robert K. Merton as a **self-fulfilling prophecy**. Merton explains that with a self-fulfilling prophecy, even a false idea can become true if it is acted upon. One example he gives is of a "bank run." Say for some reason, a number of people falsely fear that their bank is soon to be bankrupt. Because of this false notion, people run to their bank and demand all of their cash at once. As banks rarely, if ever, have that much money on hand, the bank does indeed run out of money, fulfilling the customers' prophecy. Here, reality is constructed by an idea.

Symbolic interactionists offer another lens through which to analyze the social construction of reality. With a theoretical perspective focused on the symbols (like language, gestures, and artifacts) that people use to interact, this approach is interested in how people interpret those symbols in daily interactions. For example, we might feel fright at seeing a person holding a gun, unless, of course, it turns out to be a police officer. Interactionists also recognize that language and body language reflect our values. One has only to learn a foreign tongue to know that not every English word can be easily translated into another language. The same is true for gestures. While Americans might recognize a "thumbs up" as meaning "great," in Germany it would mean "one" and in Japan it would mean "five." Thus, our construction of reality is influenced by our symbolic interactions.

FIGURE 4.11 The story line of a self-fulfilling prophecy appears in many literary works, perhaps most famously in the story of Oedipus. Oedipus is told by an oracle that he will murder his father and marry his mother. In going out of his way to avoid his fate, Oedipus inadvertently fulfills it. Oedipus's story illustrates one way in which members of society contribute to the social construction of reality. (Credit: Jean-Antoine-Theodore Giroust/Wikimedia Commons)

Roles and Status

As you can imagine, people employ many types of behaviors in day-to-day life. **Roles** are patterns of behavior that we recognize in each other that are representative of a person's social status. Currently, while reading this text, you are playing the role of a student. However, you also play other roles in your life, such as "daughter," "neighbor," or "employee." These various roles are each associated with a different status.

Sociologists use the term **status** to describe the responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to their rank and role in society. Some statuses are **ascribed**—those you do not select, such as son, elderly person, or female. Others, called **achieved statuses**, are obtained by choice, such as a high school dropout, self-made millionaire, or nurse. As a daughter or son, you occupy a different status than as a neighbor or employee. One person can be associated with a multitude of roles and statuses. Even a single status such as "student" has a complex **role-set**, or array of roles, attached to it (Merton 1957). It is important to note that status refers to the rank in social hierarchy, while role is the behavior expected of a person holding a certain status.

If too much is required of a single role, individuals can experience **role strain**. Consider the duties of a parent: cooking, cleaning, driving, problem-solving, acting as a source of moral guidance—the list goes on. Similarly, a person can experience **role conflict** when one or more roles are contradictory. A parent who also has a full-time career can experience role conflict on a daily basis. When there is a deadline at the office but a sick child needs to be picked up from school, which comes first? When you are working toward a promotion but your children want you to come to their school play, which do you choose? Being a college student can conflict with being an employee, being an athlete, or even being a friend. Our roles in life have a great effect on our decisions and who we become.

FIGURE 4.12 Parents often experience role strain or role conflict as they try to balance different and often urgent competing responsibilities. (Credit: Ran Zwigenberg/flickr)

Presentation of Self

Of course, it is impossible to look inside a person's head and study what role they are playing. All we can observe is behavior, or role performance. **Role performance** is how a person expresses his or her role. Sociologist Erving Goffman presented the idea that a person is like an actor on a stage. Calling his theory dramaturgy, Goffman believed that we use "impression management" to present ourselves to others as we hope to be perceived. Each situation is a new scene, and individuals perform different roles depending on who is present (Goffman 1959). Think about the way you behave around your coworkers versus the way you behave around your grandparents versus the way you behave with a blind date. Even if you're not consciously trying to alter your personality, your grandparents, coworkers, and date probably see different sides of you.

As in a play, the setting matters as well. If you have a group of friends over to your house for dinner, you are playing the role of a host. It is agreed upon that you will provide food and seating and probably be stuck with a lot of the cleanup at the end of the night. Similarly, your friends are playing the roles of guests, and they are expected to respect your property and any rules you may set forth ("Don't leave the door open or the cat will get out."). In any scene, there needs to be a shared reality between players. In this case, if you view yourself as a guest and others view you as a host, there are likely to be problems.

Impression management is a critical component of symbolic interactionism. For example, a judge in a courtroom has many "props" to create an impression of fairness, gravity, and control—like their robe and gavel. Those entering the courtroom are expected to adhere to the scene being set. Just imagine the "impression" that can be made by how a person dresses. This is the reason that attorneys frequently select the hairstyle and apparel for witnesses and defendants in courtroom proceedings.

FIGURE 4.13 A judge's gavel is known as a prop designed to add gravity and ceremony to the proceedings. (Credit: Brian Turner/flickr)

Goffman's dramaturgy ideas expand on the ideas of Charles Cooley and the **looking-glass self**. According to Cooley, we base our image on what we think other people see (Cooley 1902). We imagine how we must appear to others, then react to this speculation. We don certain clothes, prepare our hair in a particular manner, wear makeup, use cologne, and the like—all with the notion that our presentation of ourselves is going to affect how others perceive us. We expect a certain reaction, and, if lucky, we get the one we desire and feel good about it. But more than that, Cooley believed that our sense of self is based upon this idea: we imagine how we look to others, draw conclusions based upon their reactions to us, and then we develop our personal sense of self. In other words, people's reactions to us are like a mirror in which we are reflected.

Key Terms

achieved status the status a person chooses, such as a level of education or income
agricultural societies societies that rely on farming as a way of life
alienation an individual's isolation from his society, his work, and his sense of self
anomie a situation in which society no longer has the support of a firm collective consciousness
ascribed status the status outside of an individual's control, such as sex or race
bourgeoisie the owners of the means of production in a society
capitalism a way of organizing an economy so that the things that are used to make and transport products (such as land, oil, factories, ships, etc.) are owned by individual people and companies rather than by the government
class consciousness the awareness of one's rank in society
collective conscience the communal beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society
false consciousness a person's beliefs and ideology that are in conflict with her best interests
feudal societies societies that operate on a strict hierarchical system of power based around land ownership and protection
habitualization the idea that society is constructed by us and those before us, and it is followed like a habit
horticultural societies societies based around the cultivation of plants
hunter-gatherer societies societies that depend on hunting wild animals and gathering uncultivated plants for survival
industrial societies societies characterized by a reliance on mechanized labor to create material goods
information societies societies based on the production of nonmaterial goods and services
institutionalization the act of implanting a convention or norm into society
iron cage a situation in which an individual is trapped by social institutions
looking-glass self our reflection of how we think we appear to others
mechanical solidarity a type of social order maintained by the collective consciousness of a culture
organic solidarity a type of social order based around an acceptance of economic and social differences
pastoral societies societies based around the domestication of animals
proletariat the laborers in a society
rationalization a belief that modern society should be built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition
role conflict a situation when one or more of an individual's roles clash
role performance the expression of a role
role strain stress that occurs when too much is required of a single role
role-set an array of roles attached to a particular status
roles patterns of behavior that are representative of a person's social status
self-fulfilling prophecy an idea that becomes true when acted upon
social integration how strongly a person is connected to his or her social group
society a group of people who live in a definable community and share the same culture
status the responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to his or her rank and role in society
Thomas theorem how a subjective reality can drive events to develop in accordance with that reality, despite being originally unsupported by objective reality

Section Summary

4.1 Types of Societies

Societies are classified according to their development and use of technology. For most of human history, people lived in preindustrial societies characterized by limited technology and low production of goods. After the Industrial Revolution, many societies based their economies around mechanized labor, leading to greater

profits and a trend toward greater social mobility. At the turn of the new millennium, a new type of society emerged. This postindustrial, or information, society is built on digital technology and nonmaterial goods.

4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

Émile Durkheim believed that as societies advance, they make the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity. For Karl Marx, society exists in terms of class conflict. With the rise of capitalism, workers become alienated from themselves and others in society. Sociologist Max Weber noted that the rationalization of society can be taken to unhealthy extremes.

4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

Society is based on the social construction of reality. How we define society influences how society actually is. Likewise, how we see other people influences their actions as well as our actions toward them. We all take on various roles throughout our lives, and our social interactions depend on what types of roles we assume, who we assume them with, and the scene where interaction takes place.

Section Quiz

4.1 Types of Societies

1. Which of the following fictional societies is an example of a pastoral society?
   a. The Deswan people, who live in small tribes and base their economy on the production and trade of textiles
   b. The Rositian Clan, a small community of farmers who have lived on their family's land for centuries
   c. The Hunti, a wandering group of nomads who specialize in breeding and training horses
   d. The Amaganda, an extended family of warriors who serve a single noble family

2. Which of the following occupations is a person of power most likely to have in an information society?
   a. Software engineer
   b. Coal miner
   c. Children's book author
   d. Sharecropper

3. Which of the following societies were the first to have permanent residents?
   a. Industrial
   b. Hunter-gatherer
   c. Horticultural
   d. Feudal

4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

4. Organic solidarity is most likely to exist in which of the following types of societies?
   a. Hunter-gatherer
   b. Industrial
   c. Agricultural
   d. Feudal

5. According to Marx, the _____ own the means of production in a society.
   a. proletariat
   b. vassals
   c. bourgeoisie
   d. anomie

6. Which of the following best depicts Marx's concept of alienation from the process of one's labor?
   a. A supermarket cashier always scans store coupons before company coupons because she was taught to do it that way.
   b. A businessman feels that he deserves a raise, but is nervous to ask his manager for one; instead, he comforts himself with the idea that hard work is its own reward.
   c. An associate professor is afraid that she won't be given tenure and starts spreading rumors about one of her associates to make herself look better.
   d. A construction worker is laid off and takes a job at a fast food restaurant temporarily, although he has never had an interest in preparing food before.

7. The Protestant work ethic is based on the concept of predestination, which states that _____.
   a. performing good deeds in life is the only way to secure a spot in Heaven
   b. salvation is only achievable through obedience to God
   c. no person can be saved before he or she accepts Jesus Christ as his or her savior
   d. God has already chosen those who will be saved and those who will be damned

8. The concept of the iron cage was popularized by which of the following sociological thinkers?
   a. Max Weber
   b. Karl Marx
   c. Émile Durkheim
   d. Friedrich Engels

9. Émile Durkheim's ideas about society can best be described as _____.
   a. functionalist
   b. conflict theorist
   c. symbolic interactionist
   d. rationalist

4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

10. Mary works full-time at an office downtown while her young children stay at a neighbor's house. She's just learned that the childcare provider is leaving the country. Mary has succumbed to pressure to volunteer at her church, plus her ailing mother-in-law will be moving in with her next month. Which of the following is likely to occur as Mary tries to balance her existing and new responsibilities?
   a. Role conflict
   b. Self-fulfilling prophecy
   c. Status conflict
   d. Status strain

11. According to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, society is based on _____.
   a. habitual actions
   b. status
   c. institutionalization
   d. role performance

12. Paco knows that women find him attractive, and he's never found it hard to get a date. But as he ages, he dyes his hair to hide the gray and wears clothes that camouflage the weight he has put on. Paco's behavior can be best explained by the concept of _____.
   a. role strain
   b. the looking-glass self
   c. role performance
   d. habitualization

Short Answer

4.1 Types of Societies

1. In which type or types of societies do the benefits seem to outweigh the costs? Explain your answer, and cite social and economic reasons.

2. Is Gerhard Lenski right in classifying societies based on technological advances? What other criteria might be appropriate, based on what you have read?

4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

3. Choose two of the three sociologists discussed here (Durkheim, Marx, Weber), and use their arguments to explain a current social event such as the Occupy movement. Do their theories hold up under modern scrutiny?

4. Think of the ways workers are alienated from the product and process of their jobs. How can these concepts be applied to students and their educations?

4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

5. Draw a large circle, and then "slice" the circle into pieces like a pie, labeling each piece with a role or status that you occupy. Add as many statuses, ascribed and achieved, that you have. Don't forget things like dog owner, gardener, traveler, student, runner, employee. How many statuses do you have? In which ones are there role conflicts?

6. Think of a self-fulfilling prophecy that you've experienced. Based on this experience, do you agree with the Thomas theorem? Use examples from current events to support your answer as well.

Further Research

4.1 Types of Societies

The Maasai are a modern pastoral society with an economy largely structured around herds of cattle. Read more about the Maasai people and see pictures of their daily lives here (http://openstax.org/l/The-Maasai) .

4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

One of the most influential pieces of writing in modern history was Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*. Visit this site to read the original document that spurred revolutions around the world. (http://openstax.org/l/Communist-Party)

4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

TV Tropes (http://openstax.org/l/tv-tropes) is a website where users identify concepts that are commonly used in literature, film, and other media. Although its tone is for the most part humorous, the site provides a good jumping-off point for research. Browse the list of examples under the entry of "self-fulfilling prophecy." Pay careful attention to the real-life examples. Are there ones that surprised you or that you don't agree with?

References

Introduction

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4.1 Types of Societies

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Socialization 5

FIGURE 5.1 Emergency workers are prepared to treat patients with a wide array of illnesses and injuries. Beyond their medical training, they build skills in decision making, teamwork, communication, and stress management. These abilities can be extremely valuable throughout the workers' life and careers, even if they move into other areas of employment. However, fast and efficient decision making doesn't always translate to less intense environments. (Credit: COD Newsroom/Flickr)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION When Noel was fifteen, they saw a flyer about joining the volunteer ambulance corps. Noel was intrigued: They had an interest in pursuing medicine, and liked volunteering, but ambulance work seemed like something for older people with professional training. At the information session, Noel learned that junior members of the ambulance corps could help with supplies and communications, and were allowed to ride on ambulance calls to assist the Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). Noel was thrilled and signed up right away.

Noel was amazed by how confidently the EMTs—some just a few years older than Noel—made consequential

decisions. The EMTs relied heavily on their training and guidelines, but they did so quickly. And upon arriving at the hospital with a patient, Noel was similarly impacted by the efficiency of the nurses, doctors, and other staff. Noel developed a deep level of respect for that level of decisiveness and the expertise it required.

Over their college years, Noel found themselves drawn toward the more strategic aspects of medicine, and pursued a degree in healthcare administration. Meanwhile, they did get an EMT certification and joined the college emergency services team; later on, while in grad school, Noel was a part-time professional EMT in a small city. With good grades and varied experience, Noel was recruited into a great job several states away.

After interning in an urban hospital and spending years as an EMT, Noel had come to expect a degree of urgency in medicine. Hospital administration was certainly not an ambulance facility, but the slow pace of Noel's job was agonizing. Every inventory list, bill of lading, email reply, and even meeting schedule went through at several people for approval. Noel enjoyed the job, but was used to working more quickly.

One day, Noel was looking over an equipment bill and noticed a serious error that no one else had caught. Nearly $250,000 in overpayment was about to be paid to a supplier. Noel immediately called the accounting department. No answer. Then they sent a group Slack message and fired off an email to their boss and a few other people involved with the billing and payment process. Noel was about to head across the building to address the issue in person, but finally a message popped up: "Good eye, Noel. We'll hold this payment until we clear things up."

Toward the end of the day, Noel received a message from their manager, Tracy, asking them to stop by. Tracy's office was crowded with three other people, including the director of accounting. Expecting to be congratulated, Noel was shocked when Tracy began outlining all the things Noel had done wrong.

"Your frantic messaging and over-the-top language was incredibly disruptive...almost irresponsible," Tracy said.

"But I was right," Noel replied in a louder voice than they intended.

"Right or wrong," Tracy said, "you should have told your contact in accounting and waited to see the outcome. Instead, you panicked."

"I did call accounting, but when I didn't hear back, I needed to take the next step. I wasn't panicking; I was being decisive." As Noel said this, they were thinking of all the times they had saved someone's life by making good decisions.

Tracy sighed. "Decisiveness isn't good when it's disruptive. You caused five people to drop everything and start investigating. A few thought it was their fault." Noel started to protest but Tracy shook her head. "I understand that you are coming from a faster-paced environment, and I can tell you've been frustrated. But if you're going to work here, you're going to have to work within our culture. Instead of pushing against how we do things, try to appreciate them. Otherwise, no one will be happy, least of all you." Tracy told Noel to take the evening to think about it and come back for a talk the next morning.

Who was correct in this situation? Noel saved the hospital hundreds of thousands of dollars, or at least the hours of managing the refund process. Tracy, with broader responsibilities, was considering the long-term impacts of Noel's style, and how Noel, as a talented member of the team, will function within the team.

Tracy was concerned about the organization’s culture. Culture, as discussed in the chapter on the topic, is the shared beliefs, values and practices of a group. Countries, societies, religions, and sports teams all have culture, and companies do, too. When you interview for a job, it will likely come up. Researchers who study organizations find that when workers aren't properly incorporated into the corporate culture, they begin a cycle of mutual disappointment, where workers are likely to reject company values and ultimately leave or be fired (Cebollero 2019).

Why didn't Noel enjoy the job, and why were people put off by Noel's approach? For the most part, Noel wasn't

prepared for the pacing and style; their previous experience was in opposition to the culture of the hospital. Company culture is easier to learn if someone is predisposed to it, while others might need time to unlearn past behaviors (Schein 1988). Experts indicate that the responsibility for such adaptation is shared between the new employee and the company.

How could Noel have learned, and what could Tracy have done to help? Company culture is learned the same way that other types of culture are learned: through observing and adapting to the norms and values, understanding and applying beliefs, and, in general, seeking to be productive as a member of the group. Just like a child learns how to behave during a play-date or school day, people learn to be productive partners through an ongoing process called socialization.

Socialization is the process through which people are taught to be proficient members of a society. It describes the ways that people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society's beliefs, and to be aware of societal values. *Socialization* is not the same as *socializing* (interacting with others, like family and friends); to be precise, it is a sociological process that occurs through socializing.

While Noel's story is about a relatively advanced stage of life, socialization is crucial for early childhood. Even the most basic of human activities are learned. Learning to crawl and then walk are major milestones, but as any parent, guardian, or family member of a toddler knows, other minor accomplishments can be life-altering for the child: climbing stairs, safely getting out of bed, sitting in a regular chair, and drinking from a regular cup. Likewise, family behaviors and values must be learned, sometimes through observation and sometimes through active instruction.

In the following sections, we will examine the importance of the complex process of socialization and how it takes place through interaction with many individuals, groups, and social institutions. We will explore how socialization is not only critical to children as they develop but how it is also a lifelong process through which we become prepared for new social environments and expectations in every stage of our lives. But first, we will turn to scholarship about self-development, the process of coming to recognize a sense of self, a "self" that is then able to be socialized.

5.1 Theories of Self-Development

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate psychological and sociological theories of self-development
- Explain the process of moral development

When we are born, we have a genetic makeup and biological traits. However, who we are as human beings develops through social interaction. Many scholars, both in the fields of psychology and in sociology, have described the process of self-development as a precursor to understanding how that "self" becomes socialized.

Psychological Perspectives on Self-Development

Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was one of the most influential modern scientists to put forth a theory about how people develop a sense of self. He divided the maturation process into stages, and posited that people's self-development is closely linked to their early stages of development.

According to Freud, failure to properly engage in or disengage from a specific stage results in emotional and psychological consequences throughout adulthood.

Psychologist Erik Erikson (1902–1994) created a theory of personality development based, in part, on the work of Freud. However, Erikson believed the personality continued to change over time and was never truly finished. His theory includes eight stages of development, beginning with birth and ending with death. According to Erikson, people move through these stages throughout their lives. In contrast to Freud's focus on psychosexual stages and basic human urges, Erikson's view of self-development gave credit to more social aspects, like the way we negotiate between our own base desires and what is socially accepted (Erikson 1982).

Jean Piaget (1896–1980) was a psychologist who focused on the role of social interactions in child development. He recognized that the development of self evolved through a negotiation between the world as it exists in one's mind and the world that exists as it is experienced socially (Piaget 1954). All three of these thinkers have contributed to our modern understanding of self-development.

SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Sociology or Psychology: What's the Difference?

You might be wondering: if sociologists and psychologists are both interested in people and their behavior, how are these two disciplines different? What do they agree on, and where do their ideas diverge? The answers are complicated, but the distinction is important to scholars in both fields.

As a general difference, we might say that while both disciplines are interested in human behavior, psychologists are focused on how the mind influences that behavior, while sociologists study the role of society in shaping behavior. Psychologists are interested in people's mental development and how their minds process their world. Sociologists are more likely to focus on how different aspects of society contribute to an individual's relationship with his world. Another way to think of the difference is that psychologists tend to look inward (mental health, emotional processes), while sociologists tend to look outward (social institutions, cultural norms, interactions with others) to understand human behavior.

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) was the first to make this distinction in research, when he attributed differences in suicide rates among people to social causes (religious differences) rather than to psychological causes (like their mental wellbeing) (Durkheim 1897). Today, we see this same distinction. For example, a sociologist studying how a couple gets to the point of their first kiss on a date might focus her research on cultural norms for dating, social patterns of sexual activity over time, or how this process is different for seniors than for teens. A psychologist would more likely be interested in the person's earliest sexual awareness or the mental processing of sexual desire.

Sometimes sociologists and psychologists have collaborated to increase knowledge. In recent decades, however, their fields have become more clearly separated as sociologists increasingly focus on large societal issues and patterns, while psychologists remain honed in on the human mind. Both disciplines make valuable contributions through different approaches that provide us with different types of useful insights.

Sociological Theories of Self-Development

One of the pioneering contributors to sociological perspectives was Charles Cooley (1864–1929). He asserted that people's self understanding is constructed, in part, by their perception of how others view them—a process termed "the looking glass self" (Cooley 1902).

Later, George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) studied the **self**, a person's distinct identity that is developed through social interaction. In order to engage in this process of "self," an individual has to be able to view him or herself through the eyes of others. That's not an ability that we are born with (Mead 1934). Through socialization we learn to put ourselves in someone else's shoes and look at the world through their perspective. This assists us in becoming self-aware, as we look at ourselves from the perspective of the "other." The case of Danielle, for example, illustrates what happens when social interaction is absent from early experience: Danielle had no ability to see herself as others would see her. From Mead's point of view, she had no "self."

How do we go from being newborns to being humans with "selves?" Mead believed that there is a specific path of development that all people go through. During the preparatory stage, children are only capable of imitation: they have no ability to imagine how others see things. They copy the actions of people with whom they regularly interact, such as their caregivers. This is followed by the play stage, during which children begin to take on the role that one other person might have. Thus, children might try on a parent's point of view by

acting out "grownup" behavior, like playing dress-up and acting out the "mom" role, or talking on a toy telephone the way they see adults do.

During the game stage, children learn to consider several roles at the same time and how those roles interact with each other. They learn to understand interactions involving different people with a variety of purposes. For example, a child at this stage is likely to be aware of the different responsibilities of people in a restaurant who together make for a smooth dining experience (someone seats you, another takes your order, someone else cooks the food, while yet another clears away dirty dishes).

Finally, children develop, understand, and learn the idea of the **generalized other**, the common behavioral expectations of general society. By this stage of development, an individual is able to imagine how he or she is viewed by one or many others—and thus, from a sociological perspective, to have a "self" (Mead 1934; Mead 1964).

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Moral development is an important part of the socialization process. The term refers to the way people learn what society considered to be "good" and "bad," which is important for a smoothly functioning society. Moral development prevents people from acting on unchecked urges, instead considering what is right for society and good for others. Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) was interested in how people learn to decide what is right and what is wrong. To understand this topic, he developed a theory of moral development that includes three levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional.

In the preconventional stage, young children, who lack a higher level of cognitive ability, experience the world around them only through their senses. It isn't until the teen years that the conventional theory develops, when youngsters become increasingly aware of others' feelings and take those into consideration when determining what's "good" and "bad." The final stage, called postconventional, is when people begin to think of morality in abstract terms, such as Americans believing that everyone has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. At this stage, people also recognize that legality and morality do not always match up evenly (Kohlberg 1981). When hundreds of thousands of Egyptians turned out in 2011 to protest government corruption, they were using postconventional morality. They understood that although their government was legal, it was not morally correct.

Gilligan's Theory of Moral Development and Gender

Another sociologist, Carol Gilligan (1936–), recognized that Kohlberg's theory might show gender bias since his research was only conducted on male subjects. Would females study subjects have responded differently? Would a female social scientist notice different patterns when analyzing the research? To answer the first question, she set out to study differences between how boys and girls developed morality. Gilligan's research suggested that boys and girls do have different understandings of morality. Boys appeared to have a justice perspective, by placing emphasis on rules and laws. Girls, on the other hand, seem to have a care and responsibility perspective; they consider people's reasons behind behavior that seems morally wrong.

While Gilligan is correct that Kohlberg's research should have included both male and female subjects, her study has been scientifically discredited due to its small sample size. The results Gilligan noted in this study also have not been replicated by subsequent researchers. The differences Gilligan observed were not an issue of the development of morality, but an issue of socialization. Differences in behavior between males and females is the result of gender socialization that teaches boys and girls societal norms and behaviors expected of them based on their sex (see "What a Pretty Little Lady").

Gilligan also recognized that Kohlberg's theory rested on the assumption that the justice perspective was the right, or better, perspective. Gilligan, in contrast, theorized that neither perspective was "better": the two norms of justice served different purposes. Ultimately, she explained that boys are socialized for a work environment where rules make operations run smoothly, while girls are socialized for a home environment

where flexibility allows for harmony in caretaking and nurturing (Gilligan 1982; Gilligan 1990).

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

What a Pretty Little Lady!

"What a cute dress!" "I like the ribbons in your hair." "Wow, you look so pretty today."

According to Lisa Bloom, author of *Think: Straight Talk for Women to Stay Smart in a Dumbed Down World*, most of us use pleasantries like these when we first meet little girls. "So what?" you might ask.

Bloom asserts that we are too focused on the appearance of young girls, and as a result, our society is socializing them to believe that how they look is of vital importance. And Bloom may be on to something. How often do you tell a little boy how attractive his outfit is, how nice looking his shoes are, or how handsome he looks today? To support her assertions, Bloom cites, as one example, that about 50 percent of girls ages three to six worry about being fat (Bloom 2011). We're talking about kindergarteners who are concerned about their body image. Sociologists are acutely interested in of this type of gender socialization, by which societal expectations of how boys and girls should *be*—how they should behave, what toys and colors they should like, and how important their attire is—are reinforced.

One solution to this type of gender socialization is being experimented with at the Egalia preschool in Sweden, where children develop in a genderless environment. All the children at Egalia are referred to with neutral terms like "friend" instead of "he" or "she." Play areas and toys are consciously set up to eliminate any reinforcement of gender expectations (Haney 2011). Egalia strives to eliminate all societal gender norms from these children's preschool world.

Extreme? Perhaps. So what is the middle ground? Bloom suggests that we start with simple steps: when introduced to a young girl, ask about her favorite book or what she likes. In short, engage with her mind ... not her outward appearance (Bloom 2011).

5.2 Why Socialization Matters

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the importance of socialization both for individuals and society
- Explain the nature versus nurture debate

Socialization is critical both to individuals and to the societies in which they live. It illustrates how completely intertwined human beings and their social worlds are. First, it is through teaching culture to new members that a society perpetuates itself. If new generations of a society don't learn its way of life, it ceases to exist. Whatever is distinctive about a culture must be transmitted to those who join it in order for a society to survive. For U.S. culture to continue, for example, children in the United States must learn about cultural values related to democracy: they have to learn the norms of voting, as well as how to use material objects such as voting machines. They may learn these through watching their parents or guardians vote, or, in some schools, by using real machines in student government elections. Of course, some would argue that it's just as important in U.S. culture for the younger generation to learn the etiquette of eating in a restaurant or the rituals of tailgate parties at football games. In fact, there are many ideas and objects that people in the United States teach children about in hopes of keeping the society's way of life going through another generation.

FIGURE 5.2 Can you use your hands to eat? Who should pay? Do you stand when someone else gets up, and is that dependent on their gender? The dining manners and customs of different cultures are learned by socialization. (Credit: Kurman Communications/flickr)

Socialization is just as essential to us as individuals. Social interaction provides the means via which we gradually become able to see ourselves through the eyes of others, and how we learn who we are and how we fit into the world around us. In addition, to function successfully in society, we have to learn the basics of both material and nonmaterial culture, everything from how to dress ourselves to what's suitable attire for a specific occasion; from when we sleep to what we sleep on; and from what's considered appropriate to eat for dinner to how to use the stove to prepare it. Most importantly, we have to learn language—whether it's the dominant language or one common in a subculture, whether it's verbal or through signs—in order to communicate and to think. As we saw with Danielle, without socialization we literally have no self.

Nature versus Nurture

Some experts assert that who we are is a result of **nurture**—the relationships and caring that surround us. Others argue that who we are is based entirely in genetics. According to this belief, our temperaments, interests, and talents are set before birth. From this perspective, then, who we are depends on **nature**.

One way researchers attempt to measure the impact of nature is by studying twins. Some studies have followed identical twins who were raised separately. The pairs shared the same genetics but in some cases were socialized in different ways. Instances of this type of situation are rare, but studying the degree to which identical twins raised apart are the same and different can give researchers insight into the way our temperaments, preferences, and abilities are shaped by our genetic makeup versus our social environment.

For example, in 1968, twin girls were put up for adoption, separated from each other, and raised in different households. The adoptive parents, and certainly the babies, did not realize the girls were one of five pairs of twins who were made subjects of a scientific study (Flam 2007).

In 2003, the two women, then age thirty-five, were reunited. Elyse Schein and Paula Bernstein sat together in awe, feeling like they were looking into a mirror. Not only did they look alike but they also behaved alike, using

the same hand gestures and facial expressions (Spratling 2007). Studies like these point to the genetic roots of our temperament and behavior.

Though genetics and hormones play an important role in human behavior, sociology's larger concern is the effect society has on human behavior, the "nurture" side of the nature versus nurture debate. What race were the twins? From what social class were their parents? What about gender? Religion? All these factors affected the lives of the twins as much as their genetic makeup and are critical to consider as we look at life through the sociological lens.

BIG PICTURE

The Life of Chris Langan, the Smartest Man You've Never Heard Of

Bouncer. Firefighter. Factory worker. Cowboy. Chris Langan spent the majority of his adult life just getting by with jobs like these. He had no college degree, few resources, and a past filled with much disappointment. Chris Langan also had an IQ of over 195, nearly 100 points higher than the average person (Brabham 2001). So why didn't Chris become a neurosurgeon, professor, or aeronautical engineer? According to Macolm Gladwell (2008) in his book *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Chris didn't possess the set of social skills necessary to succeed on such a high level—skills that aren't innate but learned.

Gladwell looked to a recent study conducted by sociologist Annette Lareau in which she closely shadowed 12 families from various economic backgrounds and examined their parenting techniques. Parents from lower income families followed a strategy of "accomplishment of natural growth," which is to say they let their children develop on their own with a large amount of independence; parents from higher-income families, however, "actively fostered and accessed a child's talents, opinions, and skills" (Gladwell 2008). These parents were more likely to engage in analytical conversation, encourage active questioning of the establishment, and foster development of negotiation skills. The parents were also able to introduce their children to a wide range of activities, from sports to music to accelerated academic programs. When one middle-class child was denied entry to a gifted and talented program, the mother petitioned the school and arranged additional testing until her daughter was admitted. Lower-income parents, however, were more likely to unquestioningly obey authorities such as school boards. Their children were not being socialized to comfortably confront the system and speak up (Gladwell 2008).

What does this have to do with Chris Langan, deemed by some the smartest man in the world (Brabham 2001)? Chris was born in severe poverty, moving across the country with an abusive and alcoholic stepfather. His genius went largely unnoticed. After accepting a full scholarship to Reed College, he lost his funding after his mother failed to fill out necessary paperwork. Unable to successfully make his case to the administration, Chris, who had received straight A's the previous semester, was given F's on his transcript and forced to drop out. After he enrolled in Montana State, an administrator's refusal to rearrange his class schedule left him unable to find the means necessary to travel the 16 miles to attend classes. What Chris had in brilliance, he lacked in practical intelligence, or what psychologist Robert Sternberg defines as "knowing what to say to whom, knowing when to say it, and knowing how to say it for maximum effect" (Sternberg et al. 2000). Such knowledge was never part of his socialization.

Chris gave up on school and began working an array of blue-collar jobs, pursuing his intellectual interests on the side. Though he's recently garnered attention for his "Cognitive Theoretic Model of the Universe," he remains weary of and resistant to the educational system.

As Gladwell concluded, "He'd had to make his way alone, and no one—not rock stars, not professional athletes, not software billionaires, and not even geniuses—ever makes it alone" (2008).

FIGURE 5.3 Identical twins may look alike, but their differences can give us clues to the effects of socialization. These twins chose the same career path, but many twins do not. (Credit: Senior Airman Lauren Douglas/U.S. Air Force)

Sociologists all recognize the importance of socialization for healthy individual and societal development. But how do scholars working in the three major theoretical paradigms approach this topic? Structural functionalists would say that socialization is essential to society, both because it trains members to operate successfully within it and because it perpetuates culture by transmitting it to new generations. Without socialization, a society's culture would perish as members died off. A conflict theorist might argue that socialization reproduces inequality from generation to generation by conveying different expectations and norms to those with different social characteristics. For example, individuals are socialized differently by gender, social class, and race. As in Chris Langan's case, this creates different (unequal) opportunities. An interactionist studying socialization is concerned with face-to-face exchanges and symbolic communication. For example, dressing baby boys in blue and baby girls in pink is one small way we convey messages about differences in gender roles.

5.3 Agents of Socialization

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Evaluate the roles of families and peer groups in socialization
- Describe how people are socialized through institutions like schools, workplaces, and the government

Socialization helps people learn to function successfully in their social worlds. How does the process of socialization occur? How do we learn to use the objects of our society's material culture? How do we come to adopt the beliefs, values, and norms that represent its nonmaterial culture? This learning takes place through interaction with various agents of socialization, like peer groups and families, plus both formal and informal social institutions.

Social Group Agents

Social groups often provide the first experiences of socialization. Families, and later peer groups, communicate expectations and reinforce norms. People first learn to use the tangible objects of material

culture in these settings, as well as being introduced to the beliefs and values of society.

Family

Family is the first agent of socialization. Mothers and fathers, siblings and grandparents, plus members of an extended family, all teach a child what he or she needs to know. For example, they show the child how to use objects (such as clothes, computers, eating utensils, books, bikes); how to relate to others (some as "family," others as "friends," still others as "strangers" or "teachers" or "neighbors"); and how the world works (what is "real" and what is "imagined"). As you are aware, either from your own experience as a child or from your role in helping to raise one, socialization includes teaching and learning about an unending array of objects and ideas.

Keep in mind, however, that families do not socialize children in a vacuum. Many social factors affect the way a family raises its children. For example, we can use sociological imagination to recognize that individual behaviors are affected by the historical period in which they take place. Sixty years ago, it would not have been considered especially strict for a father to hit his son with a wooden spoon or a belt if he misbehaved, but today that same action might be considered child abuse.

Sociologists recognize that race, social class, religion, and other societal factors play an important role in socialization. For example, poor families usually emphasize obedience and conformity when raising their children, while wealthy families emphasize judgment and creativity (National Opinion Research Center 2008). This may occur because working-class parents have less education and more repetitive-task jobs for which it is helpful to be able to follow rules and conform. Wealthy parents tend to have better educations and often work in managerial positions or careers that require creative problem solving, so they teach their children behaviors that are beneficial in these positions. This means children are effectively socialized and raised to take the types of jobs their parents already have, thus reproducing the class system (Kohn 1977). Likewise, children are socialized to abide by gender norms, perceptions of race, and class-related behaviors.

In Sweden, for instance, stay-at-home fathers are an accepted part of the social landscape. A government policy provides subsidized time off work—480 days for families with newborns—with the option of the paid leave being shared between mothers and fathers. As one stay-at-home dad says, being home to take care of his baby son "is a real fatherly thing to do. I think that's very masculine" (Associated Press 2011). Close to 90 percent of Swedish fathers use their paternity leave (about 340,000 dads); on average they take seven weeks per birth (The Economist, 2014). How do U.S. policies—and our society's expected gender roles—compare? How will Swedish children raised this way be socialized to parental gender norms? How might that be different from parental gender norms in the United States?

FIGURE 5.4 The socialized roles of parents and guardians vary by society. (Credit: Quaries.com/flickr)

Peer Groups

A **peer group** is made up of people who are similar in age and social status and who share interests. Peer group socialization begins in the earliest years, such as when kids on a playground teach younger children the norms about taking turns, the rules of a game, or how to shoot a basket. As children grow into teenagers, this process continues. Peer groups are important to adolescents in a new way, as they begin to develop an identity separate from their parents and exert independence. Additionally, peer groups provide their own opportunities for socialization since kids usually engage in different types of activities with their peers than they do with their families. Peer groups provide adolescents' first major socialization experience outside the realm of their families. Interestingly, studies have shown that although friendships rank high in adolescents' priorities, this is balanced by parental influence.

Institutional Agents

The social institutions of our culture also inform our socialization. Formal institutions—like schools, workplaces, and the government—teach people how to behave in and navigate these systems. Other institutions, like the media, contribute to socialization by inundating us with messages about norms and expectations.

School

Most U.S. children spend about seven hours a day, 180 days a year, in school, which makes it hard to deny the importance school has on their socialization (U.S. Department of Education 2004). Students are not in school only to study math, reading, science, and other subjects—the manifest function of this system. Schools also serve a latent function in society by socializing children into behaviors like practicing teamwork, following a schedule, and using textbooks.

FIGURE 5.5 These kindergarteners aren't just learning to read and write; they are being socialized to norms like keeping their hands to themselves, standing in line, and playing together. (Credit: woodleywonderworks/flickr)

School and classroom rituals, led by teachers serving as role models and leaders, regularly reinforce what society expects from children. Sociologists describe this aspect of schools as the **hidden curriculum**, the informal teaching done by schools.

For example, in the United States, schools have built a sense of competition into the way grades are awarded and the way teachers evaluate students (Bowles and Gintis 1976). When children participate in a relay race or a math contest, they learn there are winners and losers in society. When children are required to work together on a project, they practice teamwork with other people in cooperative situations. The hidden curriculum prepares children for the adult world. Children learn how to deal with bureaucracy, rules, expectations, waiting their turn, and sitting still for hours during the day. Schools in different cultures socialize children differently in order to prepare them to function well in those cultures. The latent functions of teamwork and dealing with bureaucracy are features of U.S. culture.

Schools also socialize children by teaching them about citizenship and national pride. In the United States, children are taught to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Most districts require classes about U.S. history and geography. As academic understanding of history evolves, textbooks in the United States have been scrutinized and revised to update attitudes toward other cultures as well as perspectives on historical events; thus, children are socialized to a different national or world history than earlier textbooks may have done. For example, information about the mistreatment of African Americans and Native American Indians more accurately reflects those events than in textbooks of the past.

BIG PICTURE

Controversial Textbooks

On August 13, 2001, twenty South Korean men gathered in Seoul. Each chopped off one of his own fingers because of textbooks. These men took drastic measures to protest eight middle school textbooks approved by Tokyo for use in Japanese middle schools. According to the Korean government (and other East Asian nations),

the textbooks glossed over negative events in Japan's history at the expense of other Asian countries.

In the early 1900s, Japan was one of Asia's more aggressive nations. For instance, it held Korea as a colony between 1910 and 1945. Today, Koreans argue that the Japanese are whitewashing that colonial history through these textbooks. One major criticism is that they do not mention that, during World War II, the Japanese forced Korean women into sexual slavery. The textbooks describe the women as having been "drafted" to work, a euphemism that downplays the brutality of what actually occurred. Some Japanese textbooks dismiss an important Korean independence demonstration in 1919 as a "riot." In reality, Japanese soldiers attacked peaceful demonstrators, leaving roughly 6,000 dead and 15,000 wounded (Crampton 2002).

The protest affirms that textbooks are a significant tool of socialization in state-run education systems.

The Workplace

FIGURE 5.6 Workplace socialization occurs informally and formally, and may include material and non-material culture (Credit: U.S. Department of Agriculture/flickr).

Just as children spend much of their day at school, many U.S. adults at some point invest a significant amount of time at a place of employment. Although socialized into their culture since birth, workers require new socialization into a workplace, in terms of both material culture (such as how to operate the copy machine) and nonmaterial culture (such as whether it's okay to speak directly to the boss or how to share the refrigerator). In the chapter introduction, Noel did not fully embrace the culture of their new company. Importantly, the obligation of such socialization is not simply on the worker: Organizational behavior and other business experts place responsibility on companies; organizations must have strong onboarding and socialization programs in order to build satisfaction, productivity, and workplace retention (Cebollero 2019).

Different jobs require different types of socialization. In the past, many people worked a single job until retirement. Today, the trend is to switch jobs at least once a decade. Between the ages of eighteen and forty-six, the average Baby Boomer of the younger set held 11.3 different jobs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). This means that people must become socialized to, and socialized by, a variety of work environments.

Religion

While some religions are informal institutions, here we focus on practices followed by formal institutions. Religion is an important avenue of socialization for many people. The United States is full of synagogues, temples, churches, mosques, and similar religious communities where people gather to worship and learn. Like other institutions, these places teach participants how to interact with the religion's material culture (like a mezuzah, a prayer rug, or a communion wafer). For some people, important ceremonies related to family

structure—like marriage and birth—are connected to religious celebrations. Many religious institutions also uphold gender norms and contribute to their enforcement through socialization. From ceremonial rites of passage that reinforce the family unit to power dynamics that reinforce gender roles, organized religion fosters a shared set of socialized values that are passed on through society.

Government

Although we do not think about it, many of the rites of passage people go through today are based on age norms established by the government. To be defined as an "adult" usually means being eighteen years old, the age at which a person becomes legally responsible for him- or herself. And sixty-five years old is the start of "old age" since most people become eligible for senior benefits at that point.

Each time we embark on one of these new categories—senior, adult, taxpayer—we must be socialized into our new role. Seniors must learn the ropes of Medicare, Social Security benefits, and senior shopping discounts. When U.S. males turn eighteen, they must register with the Selective Service System within thirty days to be entered into a database for possible military service. These government dictates mark the points at which we require socialization into a new category.

Mass Media

Mass media distribute impersonal information to a wide audience, via television, newspapers, radio, and the Internet. With the average person spending over four hours a day in front of the television (and children averaging even more screen time), media greatly influences social norms (Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout 2005). People learn about objects of material culture (like new technology and transportation options), as well as nonmaterial culture—what is true (beliefs), what is important (values), and what is expected (norms).

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Girls and Movies

FIGURE 5.7 Some researchers, parents, and children's advocates are concerned about the effects of raising girls within what they call "princess culture." Many place blame on entertainment companies, such as Disney, for its

portrayals of girls in its movies.

Movies aimed at young people have featured a host of girls and women leads. *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* gave way to *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast, and Mulan*. In many of those cases, if the character is not a princess to begin with, she typically ends the movie by marrying a prince or, in the case of Mulan, a military general. Although not all "princesses" in Disney movies play a passive role in their lives, they typically find themselves needing to be rescued by a man, and the happy ending they all search for includes marriage.

Alongside this prevalence of princesses, many parents are expressing concern about the culture of princesses that Disney has created. Peggy Orenstein addresses this problem in her popular book, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*. Orenstein wonders why every little girl is expected to be a "princess" and why pink has become an all-consuming obsession for many young girls. Another mother wondered what she did wrong when her three-year-old daughter refused to do "nonprincessy" things, including running and jumping. The effects of this princess culture can have negative consequences for girls throughout life. An early emphasis on beauty and can lead to reduced interest in math and science among girls, as well as avoiding educational scenarios that are "typically feminine" (Coyne 2016).

Others acknowledge these issues, but find princess movies and "princess culture" less alarming. Some remind concerned parents that children have an array of media and activities around them, and the children may be happy wearing their princess outfit while digging for worms or going to hockey practice, which run counter to feminine stereotypes (Wagner 2019). Others indicate that rather than disallowing princess movies and merchandise, engaging with the children as they enjoy them might be more effective. And many people acknowledge that girls and women are often currently portrayed differently than they were in years past.

Disney seems to have gotten the message about the concerns. Its 2009 *Tiana and the Frog* was specifically billed as "a princess movie for people who don't like princess movies," and features a talented chef and business owner—who didn't need a man to rescue her—as its main character. *Brave*'s Merida and the title character in *Moana* seem to go out of their way to separate themselves from traditional princesses, and undertake great acts of bravery to help others. *Frozen* focuses on sisterly love rather than romantic love. And though she was never meant to be a princess, *Star Wars*' Rey was the go-to girls Halloween costume for years after she was introduced in the movies.

5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain how socialization occurs and recurs throughout life
- Apply socialization to age-related transition points
- Describe when and how resocialization occurs

Socialization isn't a one-time or even a short-term event. We aren't "stamped" by some socialization machine as we move along a conveyor belt and thereby socialized once and for all. In fact, socialization is a lifelong process.

In the United States, socialization throughout the life course is determined greatly by age norms and "time-related rules and regulations" (Settersten 2002). As we grow older, we encounter age-related transition points that require socialization into a new role, such as becoming school age, entering the workforce, or retiring. For example, the U.S. government mandates that all children attend school. Child labor laws, enacted in the early twentieth century, nationally declared that childhood be a time of learning, not of labor. In countries such as Niger and Sierra Leone, however, child labor remains common and socially acceptable, with little legislation to regulate such practices (UNICEF 2012).

BIG PICTURE

Life After High School Around the World

In the United States, recent high school graduates have increasingly been focusing on college attendance. In recent years, about two-thirds of high school graduates are enrolled in college between their teen years and age twenty-four. About one-third of the same population primarly participates in the work force, meaning that they are employed or are looking for employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). Of those who attend college, most (about 69 percent) are considered immediate enrollers, meaning that they begin college in the first fall academic term immediately after their high school graduation (NCES 2020).

Other countries, especially high-income nations in Western Europe, have similar trends in college education, but fewer students start immediately. Gap years, overseas experiences, or mandatory wait times all lead students to a wide array of pre-college destinations. In Denmark, for example numbers of students who take a "year out" are so high that the government has sought to give students cash bonuses for attending immediately (Anderson 2009). For several decades, only about 25 percent of Denmark's high school graduates enrolled in college right away, and that number continued to drop in the 2010s, with a record low of only 15 percent in 2018 (Ritzau 2019). Compare that to the U.S. numbers mentioned above, where over two thirds of the students enroll in college immediately. And note that in Denmark, college is almost universally free.

In the United States, this life transition point is socialized quite differently. Taking a year off much less common than some other countries, but has certainly picked up in recent years. In most cases, U.S. youth are encouraged to select a few target colleges or potential workforce options by their late teens, and to get started on those pathways soon after high school. As mentioned above, many U.S. students do not attend college, but most of those students are in the workforce (including the military).

Other nations have entirely different approaches based on available educational institutions, financial circumstances, and family needs. In some nations, students often go to college soon after high school, but do so in other countries (including the U.S.). Dozens of nations require military conscription—military service—for men, and a few (such as Sweden, Israel, Norway, Eritrea, and Venezuela) for women as well.

How might your life be different if you lived in one of these other countries? Can you think of similar social norms—related to life age-transition points—that vary from country to country?

Many of life's social expectations are made clear and enforced on a cultural level. Through interacting with others and watching others interact, the expectation to fulfill roles becomes clear. While in elementary or middle school, the prospect of having a boyfriend or girlfriend may have been considered undesirable. The socialization that takes place in high school changes the expectation. By observing the excitement and importance attached to dating and relationships within the high school social scene, it quickly becomes apparent that one is now expected not only to be a child and a student, but also a significant other. Graduation from formal education—high school, vocational school, or college—involves socialization into a new set of expectations.

Educational expectations vary not only from culture to culture, but also from class to class. While middle- or upper-class families may expect their daughter or son to attend a four-year university after graduating from high school, other families may expect their child to immediately begin working full-time, as many within their family have done before.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

The Long Road to Adulthood for Millennials

Socialization differences also vary by generation. As you will see in the chapter on Aging and the Elderly, Millennials (those born from the early 1980's to the middle 1990's) have very different attitudes about when childhood ends, the prime of life begins, and when people become "old." (Preview: Millennials thought childhood ended later and people became old earlier than did Baby Boomers and Gen Xers at the same age.)

Millennials were deeply affected by the financial Recession in 2008. While the recession was in full swing, many were in the process of entering, attending, or graduating from high school and college. With employment prospects at historical lows, large numbers of graduates were unable to find work, sometimes moving back in with their parents and struggling to pay back student loans.

According to the *New York Times*, this economic stall caused the Millennials to postpone what most Americans consider to be adulthood: “The traditional cycle seems to have gone off course, as young people remain untethered to romantic partners or to permanent homes, going back to school for lack of better options, traveling, avoiding commitments, competing ferociously for unpaid internships or temporary (and often grueling) Teach for America jobs, forestalling the beginning of adult life” (Henig 2010). The term Boomerang Generation describes recent college graduates, for whom lack of adequate employment upon college graduation often leads to a return to the parental home (Davidson, 2014).

The five milestones that define adulthood, Henig writes, are “completing school, leaving home, becoming financially independent, marrying, and having a child” (Henig 2010). These social milestones are taking longer for Millennials to attain, if they’re attained at all. Sociologists wonder what long-term impact this generation’s situation may have on society as a whole.

In the process of socialization, adulthood brings a new set of challenges and expectations, as well as new roles to fill. As the aging process moves forward, social roles continue to evolve. Pleasures of youth, such as wild nights out and serial dating, become less acceptable in the eyes of society. Responsibility and commitment are emphasized as pillars of adulthood, and men and women are expected to “settle down.” During this period, many people enter into marriage or a civil union, bring children into their families, and focus on a career path. They become partners or parents instead of students or significant others.

Just as young children pretend to be doctors or lawyers, play house, and dress up, adults also engage in **anticipatory socialization**, the preparation for future life roles. Examples would include a couple who cohabitate before marriage or soon-to-be parents who read infant care books and prepare their home for the new arrival. As part of anticipatory socialization, adults who are financially able begin planning for their retirement, saving money, and looking into future healthcare options. The transition into any new life role, despite the social structure that supports it, can be difficult.

About a decade after the nation began to recover from the Recession, it was hit by another. Millennials, who had entered a very challenging employment situation, were saddled with debt and had very little in savings. By July 2020, the Millennial unemployment rate was 11.5 percent, which was actually higher than their unemployment rate during the 2008 Recession. Gen Z, the group of people born after the Millennials, fared even worse—with an 18 percent unemployment rate (Hoffower 2020). The cycle of financial insecurity and the potential socialization impacts may happen again in this decade.

Resocialization

In the process of **resocialization**, old behaviors that were helpful in a previous role are removed because they are no longer of use. Resocialization is necessary when a person moves to a senior care center, goes to boarding school, or serves a sentence in the prison system. In the new environment, the old rules no longer

apply. The process of resocialization is typically more stressful than normal socialization because people have to unlearn behaviors that have become customary to them. While resocialization has a specific meaning, many organizations consider their training or retraining processes to embody elements of resocialization.

The most common way resocialization occurs is in a total institution where people are isolated from society and are forced to follow someone else's rules. A ship at sea is a total institution, as are religious convents, prisons, or some cult organizations. They are places cut off from a larger society. The 6.9 million Americans who lived in prisons and penitentiaries at the end of 2012 are also members of this type of institution (U.S. Department of Justice 2012).

Many individuals are resocialized into an institution through a two-part process. First, members entering an institution must leave behind their old identity through what is known as a degradation ceremony. In a **degradation ceremony**, new members lose the aspects of their old identity and are given new identities. The process is sometimes gentle. To enter a senior care home, an elderly person often must leave a family home and give up many belongings which were part of his or her long-standing identity. Though caretakers guide the elderly compassionately, the process can still be one of loss. In many cults, this process is also gentle and happens in an environment of support and caring.

In other situations, the degradation ceremony can be more extreme. New prisoners lose freedom, rights (including the right to privacy), and personal belongings. When entering the military, soldiers have their hair cut short. Their old clothes are removed, and they wear matching uniforms. These individuals must give up any markers of their former identity in order to be resocialized into an identity as a "soldier."

FIGURE 5.8 In basic training, members of the Air Force are taught to walk, move, and look like each other. (Credit: Staff Sergeant Desiree N. Palacios, U.S. Air Force/Wikimedia Commons)

After new members of an institution are stripped of their old identity, they build a new one that matches the new society. In the military, soldiers go through basic training together, where they learn new rules and bond with one another. They follow structured schedules set by their leaders. Soldiers must keep their areas clean for inspection, learn to march in correct formations, and salute when in the presence of superiors.

Learning to deal with life after having lived in a total institution requires yet another process of resocialization. In the U.S. military, soldiers learn discipline and a capacity for hard work. They set aside personal goals to

achieve a mission, and they take pride in the accomplishments of their units. Many soldiers who leave the military transition these skills into excellent careers. Others have significant challenges upon leaving, uncertain about the outside world and what to do next. The process of resocialization to civilian life is not a simple one.

Other types of organizations may utilize or extend the concept of resocialization with regard to changing people's behaviors. Corporate trainers (and training researchers) sometimes emphasize the need for trainees to shed their old behaviors and adopt entirely new ones. When the people return to their jobs after training, they may be called to leave their old behaviors behind. Similarly, if an entire team goes for training, they may be called to leave their culture behind (Weinbauer-Heidel 2019). Not all such training would apply the resocialization metaphor, but behavioral or personal-professional areas such as stress management or priority/project management might borrow from resocialization principles in order to make the training effective.

Key Terms

anticipatory socialization the way we prepare for future life roles
degradation ceremony the process by which new members of a total institution lose aspects of their old identities and are given new ones
generalized other the common behavioral expectations of general society
hidden curriculum the informal teaching done in schools that socializes children to societal norms
moral development the way people learn what is "good" and "bad" in society
nature the influence of our genetic makeup on self-development
nurture the role that our social environment plays in self-development
peer group a group made up of people who are similar in age and social status and who share interests
resocialization the process by which old behaviors are removed and new behaviors are learned in their place
self a person's distinct sense of identity as developed through social interaction
socialization the process wherein people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society's beliefs, and to be aware of societal values

Section Summary

5.1 Theories of Self-Development

Psychological theories of self-development have been broadened by sociologists who explicitly study the role of society and social interaction in self-development. Charles Cooley and George Mead both contributed significantly to the sociological understanding of the development of self. Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan developed their ideas further and researched how our sense of morality develops. Gilligan added the dimension of gender differences to Kohlberg's theory.

5.2 Why Socialization Matters

Socialization is important because it helps uphold societies and cultures; it is also a key part of individual development. Research demonstrates that who we are is affected by both nature (our genetic and hormonal makeup) and nurture (the social environment in which we are raised). Sociology is most concerned with the way that society's influence affects our behavior patterns, made clear by the way behavior varies across class and gender.

5.3 Agents of Socialization

Our direct interactions with social groups, like families and peers, teach us how others expect us to behave. Likewise, a society's formal and informal institutions socialize its population. Schools, workplaces, and the media communicate and reinforce cultural norms and values.

5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

Socialization is a lifelong process that reoccurs as we enter new phases of life, such as adulthood or senior age. Resocialization is a process that removes the socialization we have developed over time and replaces it with newly learned rules and roles. Because it involves removing old habits that have been built up, resocialization can be a stressful and difficult process.

Section Quiz

5.1 Theories of Self-Development

1. Socialization, as a sociological term, describes:
   a. how people interact during social situations
   b. how people learn societal norms, beliefs, and values
   c. a person's internal mental state when in a group setting
   d. the difference between introverts and extroverts

2. The Harlows' study on rhesus monkeys showed that:
   a. rhesus monkeys raised by other primate species are poorly socialized
   b. monkeys can be adequately socialized by imitating humans
   c. food is more important than social comfort
   d. social comfort is more important than food

3. What occurs in Lawrence Kohlberg's conventional level?
   a. Children develop the ability to have abstract thoughts.
   b. Morality is developed by pain and pleasure.
   c. Children begin to consider what society considers moral and immoral.
   d. Parental beliefs have no influence on children's morality.

4. What did Carol Gilligan believe earlier researchers into morality had overlooked?
   a. The justice perspective
   b. Sympathetic reactions to moral situations
   c. The perspective of females
   d. How social environment affects how morality develops

5. What is one way to distinguish between psychology and sociology?
   a. Psychology focuses on the mind, while sociology focuses on society.
   b. Psychologists are interested in mental health, while sociologists are interested in societal functions.
   c. Psychologists look inward to understand behavior while sociologists look outward.
   d. All of the above

6. How did nearly complete isolation as a child affect Danielle's verbal abilities?
   a. She could not communicate at all.
   b. She never learned words, but she did learn signs.
   c. She could not understand much, but she could use gestures.
   d. She could understand and use basic language like "yes" and "no."

5.2 Why Socialization Matters

7. Why do sociologists need to be careful when drawing conclusions from twin studies?
   a. The results do not apply to singletons.
   b. The twins were often raised in different ways.
   c. The twins may turn out to actually be fraternal.
   d. The sample sizes are often small.

8. From a sociological perspective, which factor does not greatly influence a person's socialization?
a. Gender
b. Class
c. Blood type
d. Race

9. Chris Langan's story illustrates that:
a. children raised in one-parent households tend to have higher IQs.
b. intelligence is more important than socialization.
c. socialization can be more important than intelligence.
d. neither socialization nor intelligence affects college admissions.

5.3 Agents of Socialization

10. Why are wealthy parents more likely than poor parents to socialize their children toward creativity and problem solving?
a. Wealthy parents are socializing their children toward the skills of white-collar employment.
b. Wealthy parents are not concerned about their children rebelling against their rules.
c. Wealthy parents never engage in repetitive tasks.
d. Wealthy parents are more concerned with money than with a good education.

11. How do schools prepare children to one day enter the workforce?
a. With a standardized curriculum
b. Through the hidden curriculum
c. By socializing them in teamwork
d. All of the above

12. Which one of the following is *not* a way people are socialized by religion?
a. People learn the material culture of their religion.
b. Life stages and roles are connected to religious celebration.
c. An individual's personal internal experience of a divine being leads to their faith.
d. Places of worship provide a space for shared group experiences.

13. Which of the following is a manifest function of schools?
a. Understanding when to speak up and when to be silent
b. Learning to read and write
c. Following a schedule
d. Knowing locker room etiquette

14. Which of the following is typically the earliest agent of socialization?
a. School
b. Family
c. Mass media
d. Workplace

5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

15. Which of the following is *not* an age-related transition point when Americans must be socialized to new roles?
   a. Infancy
   b. School age
   c. Adulthood
   d. Senior citizen

16. Which of the following is true regarding U.S. socialization of recent high school graduates?
   a. They are expected to take a year "off" before college.
   b. They are required to serve in the military for one year.
   c. They are expected to enter college, trade school, or the workforce shortly after graduation.
   d. They are required to move away from their parents.

Short Answer

5.1 Theories of Self-Development

1. Think of a current issue or pattern that a sociologist might study. What types of questions would the sociologist ask, and what research methods might he employ? Now consider the questions and methods a psychologist might use to study the same issue. Comment on their different approaches.

2. Explain why it's important to conduct research using both male and female participants. What sociological topics might show gender differences? Provide some examples to illustrate your ideas.

5.2 Why Socialization Matters

3. Why are twin studies an important way to learn about the relative effects of genetics and socialization on children? What questions about human development do you believe twin studies are best for answering? For what types of questions would twin studies not be as helpful?

4. Why do you think that people like Chris Langan continue to have difficulty even after they are helped through societal systems? What is it they've missed that prevents them from functioning successfully in the social world?

5.3 Agents of Socialization

5. Do you think it is important that parents discuss gender roles with their young children, or is gender a topic better left for later? How do parents consider gender norms when buying their children books, movies, and toys? How do you believe they *should* consider it?

6. Based on your observations, when are adolescents more likely to listen to their parents or to their peer groups when making decisions? What types of dilemmas lend themselves toward one social agent over another?

5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

7. Consider a person who is joining a sorority or fraternity, attending college or boarding school, or even a child beginning kindergarten. How is the process the student goes through a form of socialization? What new cultural behaviors must the student adapt to?

8. Do you think resocialization requires a total institution? Why, or why not? Can you think of any other ways someone could be resocialized?

Further Research

5.1 Theories of Self-Development

Lawrence Kohlberg was most famous for his research using moral dilemmas. He presented dilemmas to boys and asked them how they would judge the situations. Visit this site to read about Kohlberg's most famous moral dilemma, known as the Heinz dilemma. (http://openstax.org/l/Dilemma) .

5.2 Why Socialization Matters

Check out this article about other sets of twins who grew up apart and discovered each other later in life (http://openstax.org/l/twins) .

5.3 Agents of Socialization

Glassdoor.com provides reviews of companies and also articles on finding the correct fit. Take a look at what Glassdoor.com's blog (https://openstax.org/l/company_culture) has to say on these topics and explore some companies you might like in order to learn about their corporate culture and worker experience.

5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

Homelessness is an endemic problem among veterans. Many soldiers leave the military or return from war and have difficulty resocializing into civilian life. Learn more about this problem at the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans' website (http://openstax.org/l/NCHV) .

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Groups and Organization 6

FIGURE 6.1 The national tour of the Tea Party Express visited Minnesota and held a rally outside the state capitol building. Tarana Burke, who originated the term "me too" in the context of supporting or acknowledging sexual harassment or assault victims, has spoken frequently on the evolution and issues regarding the MeToo movement. (Credit: a. Fibonacci Blue/flickr; b Marco Verch)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION Throughout the history of the United States, individuals have formed groups in order to achieve goals and bring about change. Some groups are loosely defined, while others have highly organized structure and mission. And in some cases, groups can have significant influence on culture, society, the economy, and government.

In 2009, people protesting government spending held a series of "tea parties," referencing the Boston Tea Party, an anti-taxation event that led up to the Revolutionary War. Tea Party activists also opposed big government, high taxes, and political corruption and supported gun rights and traditional family values. They called for "awareness to any issue which challenges the security, sovereignty, or domestic tranquility of our beloved nation, the United States of America" (Tea Party, Inc. 2021). The movement grew into a major political force, with chapters popping up in nearly every community across the country.

By 2010, Tea Party candidates had won seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, demonstrating the political power of the group and its message. As grassroots activism faded, the Tea Party gained influence within the Republican Party. Many of its ideas have been assimilated into the mainstream conservative movement and Republican Party platform.

In 2016, highly successful Fox News host Gretchen Carlson filed a lawsuit against Fox chairman, Roger Ailes, for sexual harassment. The suit led other women to come forward with similar allegations against Ailes and others in the entertainment industry. Soon after, actress Alyssa Milano posted this statement on Twitter: “If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too’ as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.” The phrase, “Me Too” had been first used in this context in 2006 by activist Tarana Burke, in an effort to empower women of color. Within a day of Milano’s post, the “Me Too” phrase or hashtag was used over 500,000 times on Twitter, and was used in over 12 million posts by 4.7 million people on Facebook. Thousands of people, including other celebrities, shared their own stories of sexual harassment, abuse, or assault. (MeTooMvmt.org, 2020) The “MeToo” movement became the lead story on many newscasts and talk shows. Over the months that followed, the movement sparked reforms within companies and governments to combat sexual harassment and better support women. The movement inspired abuse victims to come forward and led to the sanction or removal of prominent individuals accused of serial harassment or abuse in academia, media, government, and other industries.

The Tea Party evolved into an organization. From a loosely associated set of local chapters, it developed into several closely affiliated nonprofits (filed with the IRS), a political faction within the Republican Party, and a caucus within Congress. What about the MeToo movement? Burke started it in 2006 and was working to enact change long before the hashtag sparked more awareness and new policies. The MeToo has brought together people to work in groups, but it has yet to form into a permanent MeToo organization.

As enduring social units, groups help foster shared value systems and are key to the structure of society as we know it. There are three primary sociological perspectives for studying groups: Functionalist, Conflict, and Interactionist. We can look at the Tea Party and the MeToo movements through the lenses of these methods to better understand the roles and challenges that they offer.

The Functionalist perspective is a big-picture, macro-level view that looks at how different aspects of society are intertwined. This perspective is based on the idea that society is a well-balanced system with all parts necessary to the whole, and it studies the roles these parts play in relation to the whole. A Functionalist might look at the macro-level needs that each movement serves. For example, a Structural Functionalist might ask how the Tea Party arose to voice the concerns of a large sector of society that felt politically underrepresented, or how MeToo drove people to pay attention to sexual harassment and gender inequality. This approach might look at how each group enabled the voicing of discontent and so stabilized society.

The Conflict perspective is another macroanalytical view, one that focuses on the genesis and growth of inequality. A conflict theorist studying the Tea Party Movement might look at how it checked interests that have manipulated the political system over the last 30 years. Or this perspective might explore how MeToo challenged organizations that have allowed sexual harassment to persist in order to protect those in power.

A third perspective is the Symbolic Interaction or Interactionist perspective. This method of analyzing groups takes a micro-level view. Instead of studying the big picture, these researchers look at the day-to-day interactions of groups. Studying these details, the Interactionist looks at issues like leadership style and group dynamics. In the case of the Tea Party Movement, Interactionists might ask, “How does the Tea Party dynamic in New York differ from that in Atlanta?” Or, in the case of the MeToo, researchers may seek to learn about who defines the agenda and approach within the movement.

6.1 Types of Groups

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between primary and secondary groups.
- Recognize in-groups and out-groups as subtypes of primary and secondary groups
- Define reference groups

Most of us feel comfortable using the word “group” without giving it much thought. Often, we mean different

things when using that word. We might say that a group of kids all saw the dog, and it could mean 250 students in a lecture hall or four siblings playing on a front lawn. In everyday use, it can be a generic term, although it carries important clinical and scientific meanings. Moreover, the concept of a group is central to much of how we think about society and human interaction. So how can we hone the meaning more precisely for sociological purposes?

Defining a Group

The term **group** is an amorphous one and can refer to a wide variety of gatherings, from just two people (think about a "group project" in school when you partner with another student), a club, a regular gathering of friends, or people who work together or share a hobby. In short, the term refers to any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share a sense that their identity is somehow aligned with the group. Of course, every time people are gathered, it is not necessarily a group. A rally is usually a one-time event, for instance, and belonging to a political party doesn't imply interaction with others. People who happen to be in the same place at the same time but who do not interact or share a sense of identity—such as a bunch of people standing in line at Starbucks—are considered an **aggregate**, or a crowd.

Another example of a nongroup is people who share similar characteristics but are not tied to one another in any way. These people are considered a **category**, and as an example all children born from approximately 1980–2000 are referred to as "Millennials." Why are Millennials a category and not a group? Because while some of them may share a sense of identity, they do not, as a whole, interact frequently with each other.

Interestingly, people within an aggregate or category can become a group. During disasters, people in a neighborhood (an aggregate) who did not know each other might become friendly and depend on each other at the local shelter. After the disaster when people go back to simply living near each other, the feeling of cohesiveness may last since they have all shared an experience. They might remain a group, practicing emergency readiness, coordinating supplies for next time, or taking turns caring for neighbors who need extra help.

Similarly, there may be many groups within a single category. Consider teachers, for example. Within this category, groups may exist like teachers' unions, teachers who coach, or staff members who are involved with the PTA.

Types of Groups

Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) suggested that groups can broadly be divided into two categories: **primary groups** and **secondary groups** (Cooley 1909). According to Cooley, primary groups play the most critical role in our lives. The primary group is usually fairly small and is made up of individuals who generally engage face-to-face in long-term emotional ways. This group serves emotional needs: **expressive functions** rather than pragmatic ones. The primary group is usually made up of significant others, those individuals who have the most impact on our socialization. The best example of a primary group is the family.

Secondary groups are often larger and impersonal. They may also be task-focused and time-limited. These groups serve an **instrumental function** rather than an expressive one, meaning that their role is more goal- or task-oriented than emotional. A classroom or office can be an example of a secondary group.

Neither primary nor secondary groups are bound by strict definitions or set limits. In fact, people can move from one group to another. A group of coworkers, for example, can start as a secondary group, but as the employees work together over the years, they may find common interests and strong ties that transform them into a primary group. As we will discuss in the chapter on Media and Technology, even online networks of people with common interests can sometimes move from secondary to primary group status.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Best Friends She's Never Met

Writer Allison Levy worked alone. While she liked the freedom and flexibility of working from home, she sometimes missed having a community of coworkers, both for the practical purpose of brainstorming and socializing. Levy did what many do in the Internet age: she found a group of other writers online through a web forum. Over time, a group of approximately twenty writers, who all wrote for a similar audience, broke off from the larger group and started a private invitation-only forum. While writers in general represent all genders, ages, and interests, this group ended up being a collection of twenty- and thirty-something women who all wrote fiction for children and young adults.

At first, the writers' forum was clearly a secondary group united by the members' professions and work situations. As Levy explained, "On the Internet, you can be present or absent as often as you want. No one is expecting you to show up." It was a useful place to research information about publishers, recently-published books and authors, and industry trends. But as time passed, Levy found it served a different purpose. Since the group shared other characteristics beyond their writing (such as age and gender), their conversation naturally turned to matters such as child-rearing, aging parents, health, and exercise. Levy found it was a sympathetic place to talk about any number of subjects, not just writing. Further, when people didn't post for several days, others expressed concern, asking whether anyone had heard from the missing writers. It reached a point where most members would tell the group if they were traveling or needed to be offline for awhile.

The group continued to share. One member on the site who was going through a difficult family illness wrote, "I don't know where I'd be without you women. It is so great to have a place to vent that I know isn't hurting anyone." Others shared similar sentiments.

So is this a primary group? Most of these people have never met each other. They live in Hawaii, Australia, Minnesota, and across the world. They may never meet. Levy wrote recently to the group, saying, "Most of my 'real-life' friends and even my husband don't really get the writing thing. I don't know what I'd do without you." Despite the distance and the lack of physical contact, the group clearly fills an expressive need.

FIGURE 6.2 Engineering and construction students gather around a job site. How do your academic interests define

your in- and out-groups? (Credit: USACEpublicaffairs/flickr)

In-Groups and Out-Groups

One of the ways that groups can be powerful is through inclusion, and its inverse, exclusion. The feeling that we belong in an elite or select group is a heady one, while the feeling of not being allowed in, or of being in competition with a group, can be motivating in a different way. Sociologist William Sumner (1840–1910) developed the concepts of **in-group** and **out-group** to explain this phenomenon (Sumner 1906). In short, an in-group is the group that an individual feels she belongs to, and she believes it to be an integral part of who she is. An out-group, conversely, is a group someone doesn't belong to; often we may feel disdain or competition in relationship to an out-group. Sports teams, unions, and sororities are examples of in-groups and out-groups. Primary groups consist of both in-groups and out-groups, as do secondary groups.

While group affiliations can be neutral or positive, the concept of in-groups and out-groups can also explain some negative human behavior, such as white supremacist movements. By defining others as "not like us" and inferior, in-groups can end up practicing ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, ageism, and heterosexism—manners of judging others negatively based on their culture, race, sex, age, or sexuality.

Often, in-groups can form within a secondary group. For instance, a workplace can have cliques of people, from senior executives who play golf together, to engineers who write code together, to young singles who socialize after hours. While these in-groups might show favoritism and affinity for other in-group members, the overall organization may be unable or unwilling to acknowledge it. Therefore, it pays to be wary of the politics of in-groups, since members may exclude others as a form of gaining status within the group.

BIG PICTURE

Bullying and Cyberbullying: How Technology Has Changed the Game

Most of us know that the old rhyme "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" is inaccurate. Words can hurt, and never is that more apparent than in instances of bullying. Bullying often reaches extreme levels of cruelty in children and young adults. People at these stages of life are especially vulnerable to opinions of others and deeply invested in their peer groups. Today, cyberbullying is on the rise. Cyberbullying can involve sending threatening texts, harassing someone in a public forum (such as Facebook), hacking someone's account and pretending to be him or her, posting embarrassing images online, and so on. A study by the Cyberbullying Research Center found that 28 percent of teens have been a victim of cyberbullying (Hinduja and Patchin, 2019). Severe bullying can lead students to commit or contemplate suicide. A 2010 study found that 20 percent of middle school students admitted to "seriously thinking about committing suicide" as a result of online bullying (Hinduja and Patchin 2010). Whereas bullying face-to-face requires willingness to interact with your victim, cyberbullying allows bullies to harass others from the privacy of their homes without witnessing the damage firsthand. This form of bullying is particularly dangerous because it's widely accessible and therefore easier to carry out.

Cyberbullying first made international headlines in 2010 when a fifteen-year-old girl, Phoebe Prince, in South Hadley, Massachusetts, committed suicide after being relentlessly bullied by girls at her school. In the aftermath of her death, the bullies were prosecuted and the state passed anti-bullying legislation. This marked a significant change in how bullying, including cyberbullying, is viewed in the United States. Now there are numerous resources for schools, families, and communities to provide education and prevention on this issue. The White House hosted a Bullying Prevention summit in March 2011, and President and First Lady Obama have used Facebook and other social media sites to discuss the importance of the issue.

According to a report released in 2013 by the National Center for Educational Statistics, close to 1 in every 3 (27.8 percent) students report being bullied by their school peers. Seventeen percent of students reported being the victims of cyberbullying.

Will legislation change the behavior of would-be cyberbullies? That remains to be seen. But we can hope communities will work to protect victims before they feel they must resort to extreme measures.

Reference Groups

FIGURE 6.3 Athletes are often viewed as a reference group for young people. (Credit: nonorganical/ flickr)

A **reference group** is a group that people compare themselves to—it provides a standard of measurement. In U.S. society, peer groups are common reference groups. Kids and adults pay attention to what their peers wear, what music they like, what they do with their free time—and they compare themselves to what they see. Most people have more than one reference group, so a middle school boy might look not just at his classmates but also at his older brother's friends and see a different set of norms. And he might observe the behaviors of his favorite athletes for yet another point of reference.

Some other examples of reference groups can be one's cultural center, workplace, family gathering, and even parents. Often, reference groups convey competing messages. For instance, on television and in movies, young adults often have wonderful apartments and cars and lively social lives despite not holding a job. In music videos, young women might dance and sing in a sexually aggressive way that suggests experience beyond their years. At all ages, we use reference groups to help guide our behavior and establish our social norms. So how important is it to surround yourself with positive reference groups? You may not recognize a reference group, but it still influences the way you act. Identifying your reference groups can help you understand the source of the social identities you aspire to or want to distance yourself from.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

College: A World of In-Groups, Out-Groups, and Reference Groups

FIGURE 6.4 Which fraternity or sorority would you fit into, if any? Sorority recruitment day offers students an opportunity to learn about these different groups. (Credit: Texas A&M/flickr)

For a student entering college, the sociological study of groups takes on an immediate and practical meaning. After all, when we arrive someplace new, most of us glance around to see how well we fit in or stand out in the ways we want. This is a natural response to a reference group, and on a large campus, there can be many competing groups. Say you are a strong athlete who wants to play intramural sports, and your favorite musicians are a local punk band. You may find yourself engaged with two very different reference groups.

These reference groups can also become your in-groups or out-groups. For instance, different groups on campus might solicit you to join. Are there fraternities and sororities at your school? If so, chances are they will try to convince students—that is, students they deem worthy—to join them. And if you love playing soccer and want to play on a campus team, but you're wearing shredded jeans, combat boots, and a local band T-shirt, you might have a hard time convincing the soccer team to give you a chance. While most campus groups refrain from insulting competing groups, there is a definite sense of an in-group versus an out-group. "Them?" a member might say. "They're all right, but their parties are nowhere near as cool as ours." Or, "Only serious engineering geeks join that group." This immediate categorization into in-groups and out-groups means that students must choose carefully, since whatever group they associate with might define their friends for several years to come.

6.2 Group Size and Structure

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the ways that size influences group dynamics
- Differentiate among styles of leadership
- Interpret the impact of groups on individual behavior

FIGURE 6.5 Cadets illustrate how strongly conformity can define groups. (Credit: West Point — The U.S. Military Academy/flickr)

Dyads, Triads, and Large Groups

A small group is typically one where the collection of people is small enough that all members of the group know each other and share simultaneous interaction, such as a nuclear family, a dyad, or a triad. Georg Simmel (1858–1915) wrote extensively about the difference between a **dyad**, or two-member group, and a **triad**, which is a three-member group (Simmel 1902). In the former, if one person withdraws, the group can no longer exist. We can think of a divorce, which effectively ends the "group" of the married couple or of two best friends never speaking again. In a triad, however, the dynamic is quite different. If one person withdraws, the group lives on. A triad has a different set of relationships. If there are three in the group, two-against-one dynamics can develop, and a majority opinion may form on any issue.

Small groups generally have strong internal cohesiveness and a sense of connection. Small groups may face challenges when trying to achieve large goals. They can struggle to be heard or to be a force for change if they are pushing against larger groups.

It is difficult to define exactly when a small group becomes a large group. Perhaps it occurs when one group grows so large that there are too many people to join in a simultaneous discussion. Sometimes it occurs when a group joins with other groups as part of a movement. These larger groups may share a geographic space, such as a fraternity or sorority on the same campus, or they might be spread out around the globe. The larger the group, the more attention it can garner, and the more pressure members can put toward whatever goal they wish to achieve. At the same time, the larger the group becomes, the more the risk grows for division and lack of cohesion.

Group Leadership

Often, larger groups require some kind of leadership. In small, primary groups, leadership tends to be informal. After all, most families don't take a vote on who will rule the group, nor do most groups of friends. This is not to say that *de facto* leaders don't emerge, but formal leadership is rare. In secondary groups, leadership is usually more overt. They often outline roles and responsibilities, with a chain of command to follow. Some secondary groups, like the military, have highly structured and clearly understood chains of command, and sometimes lives depend on those. After all, how well could soldiers function in a battle if different people were calling out orders and if they had no idea whom to listen to? Other secondary groups, like a workplace or a classroom, also have formal leaders, but the styles and functions of leadership can vary significantly.

Leadership function refers to the main goal of the leader, which may be instrumental or expressive. An **instrumental leader** is one who is goal-oriented and largely concerned with accomplishing set tasks. We can imagine that an army general or a Fortune 500 CEO would be an instrumental leader. In contrast, **expressive leaders** are more concerned with promoting emotional strength and health, and ensuring that people feel supported. Social and religious leaders—rabbis, priests, imams, directors of youth homes and social service programs—are often perceived as expressive leaders. Sometimes people expect men to take on instrumental roles and women to assume expressive roles. Women and men who exhibit the other-gender manner can be seen as deviants and can encounter resistance. Yet, both men and women prefer leaders who use a combination of expressive and instrumental leadership (Boatwright and Forrest, 2000).

Sociologists recognize three **leadership styles**. **Democratic leaders** encourage group participation in all decision making. They work hard to build consensus before choosing a course of action and moving forward. This type of leader is particularly common, for example, in a club where the members vote on which activities or projects to pursue. Democratic leaders can be well liked, but there is often a danger that decisions will proceed slowly since consensus building is time-consuming. A further risk is that group members might pick sides and entrench themselves into opposing factions rather than reaching a solution.

In contrast, a **laissez-faire** (French for "leave it alone") leader is hands-off, allowing group members to self-manage and make their own decisions. An example of this kind of leader might be an art teacher who opens the art cupboard, leaves materials on the shelves, and tells students to help themselves and make some art. While this style can work well with highly motivated and mature participants who have clear goals and guidelines, it risks group dissolution and a lack of progress.

Finally, **authoritarian leaders** issue orders and assign tasks with little to no feedback from group members. These leaders are often instrumental leaders with a strong focus on meeting goals. Often, entrepreneurs fall into this mold, like Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. Not surprisingly, authoritarian leaders risk alienating the workers. When decisions need to made quickly or informed by a high level of expertise, however, this style of leadership can be required.

In different circumstances, each of these leadership styles can be effective and successful. Consider what leadership style you prefer. Why? Do you like the same style in different areas of your life, such as a classroom, a workplace, and a sports team?

BIG PICTURE

Women Political Candidates

FIGURE 6.6 Kamala Harris, like many other women leaders, faces unique and sometimes conflicting expectations. She may want to lead, but some care more about whether she is liked. (Credit: California National Guard/flickr)

Kamala Harris broke a significant barrier when she became the first woman and first person of Black and South Asian descent to be elected vice president of the United States. A prominent presidential candidate in her own right during the 2020 primary election, Harris was asked by then-candidate Joe Biden to be his running mate in order to secure his electoral victory.

You may be surprised, however, to learn that more than ten other women were on the ballot for president or vice president on November 3, 2020. Many were not on the ballot in every state, and at least one (Ricki Sue King) actually encouraged people not to vote for her. Shirley Chisholm, Lenora Fulani, Jill Stein, Hillary Clinton and many other women have been candidates, but the United States has yet to elect a woman to the presidency.

Researchers and political analysts have long established that gender plays a significant role in how political leaders (both candidates and elected officials) are perceived. As a starting point, research indicates that, even among women, the public prefer masculine qualities in presidents. For example, a study in which subjects completed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory and Implicit Leadership Inventory found that the hypothetical "Ideal" president possessed more masculine qualities than feminine qualities (Powell and Butterfield 2011).

Beyond the implicit preference toward masculine qualities, women candidates face what is sometimes referred to the "likability trap." Essentially, the public expects and prefers certain qualities from its leaders, and also expects and prefers certain qualities based on the candidates' gender. For women presidential candidates, these expectations often conflict. For example, when a male candidate ranks low on feminine qualities, their likeability is not significantly affected. But when a female candidate, like Hillary Clinton, ranks low on feminine qualities, their likability is significantly impacted. Interestingly, the same survey found that Kamala Harris had a much more balanced gender quality rating than Clinton did. The researchers qualified that since Kamala Harris ran for vice president, rather than president, the ratings cannot be directly compared to Clinton's. This difference, though, may indicate why many women are elected to legislative and gubernatorial roles, but not to the presidency

(Conroy, Martin, and Nadler, 2020).

These same perceptions present themselves in the workplace. Prescriptive stereotypes—that is, ideas about how men or women should behave—limit women's advancement to leadership positions. Men are often appreciated for being ambitious, while women who exhibit assertive behavior are generally perceived as selfish or overly competitive (Baldoni, 2020). Furthermore, when men help out in the workplace, their contribution is appreciated while the same task carried out by women goes unacknowledged. Scholars observe that women are underrepresented in the top levels of U.S. businesses and Fortune 500 companies (Heilman 2012).

FIGURE 6.7 This gag gift demonstrates how female leaders may be viewed if they violate social norms. (Credit: istolethetv/flickr)

Conformity

We all like to fit in to some degree. Likewise, if we want to stand out, then we want to choose how we stand out and for what reasons. For example, a person who loves cutting-edge fashion might dress in thought-provoking new styles to set a new trend.

Conformity is the extent to which an individual complies with group norms or expectations. As you might recall, we use reference groups to assess and understand how to act, to dress, and to behave. Not surprisingly, young people are particularly aware of who conforms and who does not. A high school boy whose mother makes him wear ironed button-down shirts might protest that everyone else wears T-shirts and he will look stupid. Another high school boy might like wearing those shirts as a way of standing out. How much do you

enjoy being noticed? Do you consciously prefer to conform to group norms so as not to be singled out? Are there people in your class who immediately come to mind when you think about those who don't want to conform?

Psychologist Solomon Asch (1907–1996) conducted experiments that illustrated how great the pressure to conform is, specifically within a small group (1956). Read about his work in the Sociological Research feature and consider what you would do in Asch's experiment. Would you speak up? What would help you speak up and what would discourage it?

SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Conforming to Expectations

In 1951, psychologist Solomon Asch sat a small group of about eight people around a table. Only one of the people sitting there was the true subject; the rest were associates of the experimenter. However, the subject was led to believe that the others were all, like him, people brought in for an experiment in visual judgments. The group was shown two cards, the first card with a single vertical line, and the second card with three vertical lines differing in length. The experimenter polled the group and asked each participant one at a time which line on the second card matched up with the line on the first card.

However, this was not really a test of visual judgment. Rather, it was Asch's study on the pressures of conformity. He was curious to see what the effect of multiple wrong answers would be on the subject, who presumably was able to tell which lines matched. In order to test this, Asch had each planted respondent answer in a specific way. The subject was seated in such a way that he had to hear almost everyone else's answers before it was his turn. Sometimes the nonsubject members would unanimously choose an answer that was clearly wrong.

So what was the conclusion? Asch found that thirty-seven out of fifty test subjects responded with an "obviously erroneous" answer at least once. When faced by a unanimous wrong answer from the rest of the group, the subject conformed to a mean of four of the staged answers. Asch revised the study and repeated it, wherein the subject still heard the staged wrong answers, but was allowed to write down his answer rather than speak it aloud. In this version, the number of examples of conformity––giving an incorrect answer so as not to contradict the group––fell by two thirds. He also found that group size had an impact on how much pressure the subject felt to conform.

The results showed that speaking up when only one other person gave an erroneous answer was far more common than when five or six people defended the incorrect position. Finally, Asch discovered that people were far more likely to give the correct answer in the face of near-unanimous consent if they had a single ally. If even one person in the group also dissented, the subject conformed only a quarter as often. Clearly, it was easier to be a minority of two than a minority of one.

Asch concluded that there are two main causes for conformity: people want to be liked by the group or they believe the group is better informed than they are. He found his study results disturbing. To him, they revealed that intelligent, well-educated people would, with very little coaxing, go along with an untruth. He believed this result highlighted real problems with the education system and values in our society (Asch 1956).

Stanley Milgram, a Yale psychologist, had similar results in his experiment that is now known simply as the Milgram Experiment. In 1962, Milgram found that research subjects were overwhelmingly willing to perform acts that directly conflicted with their consciences when directed by a person of authority. In the experiment, subjects were willing to administer painful, even supposedly deadly, shocks to others who answered questions incorrectly.

To learn more about similar research, visit http://www.prisonexp.org/

The Bystander Effect and Diffusion of Responsibility

Social psychologists have recognized that other people's presence influences our behavior, whether we are aware of it or not. One example is the **bystander effect**, a situation in which people are less likely to interfere during an emergency or when a social norm is being violated if there are others around. They feel less responsible because of the presence of other bystanders (Beyer et al., 2017). This is known as diffusion of responsibility.

Most of the time people report that they don't want to get involved and that's why they don't respond when they see something wrong. They assume someone else will step up and help. Researchers have found that people are less likely to help if they don't know the victim (Cherry 2020).

Think about it this way, you're walking to class and there are several students around. Someone falls on the ground having a seizure. What would you do? The bystander effect suggests that unless you know the person who has fallen, you are more likely to walk away than help. However, social psychologists believe that you are much more likely to help, or at least stop and check, if you are the only one around.

6.3 Formal Organizations

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Distinguish the types of formal organizations
- Recognize the characteristics of bureaucracies
- Identify the impact of the McDonaldization of society

A complaint of modern life is that society is dominated by large and impersonal secondary organizations. From schools to businesses to healthcare to government, these organizations, referred to as **formal organizations**, are highly bureaucratized. Indeed, all formal organizations are, or likely will become, **bureaucracies**. We will discuss the purpose of formal organizations and the structure of their bureaucracies.

Types of Formal Organizations

(a) (b)

FIGURE 6.8 Girl Scout troops and correctional facilities are both formal organizations. (Credit: (a) moonlightbulb/flickr; (b) CxOxS/flickr)

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1975) posited that formal organizations fall into three categories. **Normative organizations**, also called **voluntary organizations**, are based on shared interests. As the name suggests, joining them is voluntary. People find membership rewarding in an intangible way. They receive non-material benefits. The Audubon Society and a ski club are examples of normative organizations.

Coercive organizations are groups that we must be coerced, or pushed, to join. These may include prison or a rehabilitation center. Symbolic interactionist Erving Goffman states that most coercive organizations are **total institutions** (1961). A total institution is one in which inmates or military soldiers live a controlled lifestyle and

in which total resocialization takes place.

The third type is **utilitarian organizations**, which, as the name suggests, are joined because of the need for a specific material reward. High school and the workplace fall into this category—one joined in pursuit of a diploma, the other in order to make money.

	Normative or Voluntary	Coercive	Utilitarian
Benefit of Membership	Intangible benefit	Corrective benefit	Tangible benefit
Type of Membership	Volunteer basis	Required	Contractual basis
Feeling of Connectedness	Shared affinity	No affinity	Some affinity

TABLE 6.1 Table of Formal Organizations This table shows Etzioni's three types of formal organizations. (Credit: Etzioni 1975)

The Structure of Bureaucracies

Bureaucracies are an ideal type of formal organization. By ideal, sociologists don't mean "best." Rather, bureaucracies have a collection of characteristics that most of them exhibit. Pioneer sociologist Max Weber characterized a bureaucracy as having a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonality (1922). People often complain about bureaucracies––declaring them slow, rule-bound, difficult to navigate, and unfriendly. Let's take a look at terms that define a bureaucracy to understand what they mean.

Hierarchy of authority refers to the chain of command that places one individual or office in charge of another, who in turn must answer to her own superiors. For example, as an employee at Walmart, your shift manager assigns you tasks. Your shift manager answers to his store manager, who must answer to her regional manager, and so on, up to the CEO who must answer to the board members, who in turn answer to the stockholders. Everyone in this bureaucracy follows the chain of command.

Bureaucracies have a **clear division of labor**: each individual has a specialized task to perform. For example, at a university, psychology professors teach psychology, but they do not attempt to provide students with financial aid forms. The Office of Admissions often takes on this task. In this case, it is a clear and commonsense division. But what about in a restaurant where food is backed up in the kitchen and a hostess is standing nearby texting on her phone? Her job is to seat customers, not to deliver food. Is this a smart division of labor?

Bureaucracies have **explicit rules**, rules that are outlined, written down, and standardized. For example, at your college or university, the student guidelines are contained within the Student Handbook. As technology changes and campuses encounter new concerns like cyberbullying, identity theft, and other problems that arise, organizations scramble to ensure their explicit rules cover these emerging issues.

Finally, bureaucracies are also characterized by **impersonality**, which takes personal feelings out of professional situations. This characteristic grew, to some extent, out of a desire to avoid nepotism, backroom deals, and other types of favoritism, while simultaneously protecting customers and others served by the organization. Impersonality Bureaucracies can effectively and efficiently serve volumes of customers quickly. However, explicit rules, clear division of labor, and a strict hierarchy of authority does not allow them to easily adjust to unique or new situations. As a result, customers frequently complain that stores with bureaucratic structures, like Walmart, care little about individuals, other businesses, and the community at large.

Bureaucracies are often **meritocracies**, meaning that hiring and promotion is based on proven and documented skills, rather than on nepotism or random choice. In order to get into a prestigious college, you

need to perform well on the SAT and have an impressive transcript. In order to become a lawyer and represent clients, you must graduate law school and pass the state bar exam. Of course, there are many well-documented examples of success by those who did not proceed through traditional meritocracies. Think about technology companies with founders who dropped out of college, or performers who became famous after a YouTube video went viral.

In addition, organizations that aspire to become meritocracies encounter challenges. How well do you think established meritocracies identify talent? Wealthy families hire tutors, interview coaches, test-prep services, and consultants to help their kids get into the best schools. This starts as early as kindergarten in New York City, where competition for the most highly-regarded schools is especially fierce. Are these schools, many of which have copious scholarship funds that are intended to make the school more democratic, really offering all applicants a fair shake?

There are several positive aspects of bureaucracies. They are intended to improve efficiency, ensure equal opportunities, and serve a large population. And there are times when rigid hierarchies are needed. But remember that many of our bureaucracies grew large at the same time that our school model was developed––during the Industrial Revolution. Young workers were trained, and organizations were built for mass production, assembly line work, and factory jobs. In these scenarios, a clear chain of command was critical. Now, in the information age, this kind of rigid training and adherence to protocol can actually decrease both productivity and efficiency.

Today's workplace requires a faster pace, more problem solving, and a flexible approach to work. Too much adherence to explicit rules and a division of labor can leave an organization behind. And unfortunately, once established, bureaucracies can take on a life of their own. Maybe you have heard the expression "trying to turn a tanker around mid-ocean," which refers to the difficulties of changing direction with something large and set in its ways. State governments and current budget crises are examples of this challenge. It is almost impossible to make quick changes, leading states to fail, year after year, to address increasingly unbalanced budgets. Finally, bureaucracies, grew as institutions at a time when privileged white males held all the power. While ostensibly based on meritocracy, bureaucracies can perpetuate the existing balance of power by only recognizing the merit in traditionally male and privileged paths.

Michels (1911) suggested that all large organizations are characterized by the **Iron Rule of Oligarchy,** wherein an entire organization is ruled by a few elites. Do you think this is true? Can a large organization be collaborative?

FIGURE 6.9 This McDonald's storefront in Egypt shows the McDonaldization of society. (Credit: s_w_ellis/flickr)

The McDonaldization of Society

The **McDonaldization of Society** (Ritzer 1993) refers to the increasing presence of the fast food business model in common social institutions, including government, education, and even relationships. The term itself isn't widely used in publications, research, or common conversation, but its effects are very familiar, even commonplace. The McDonald's model includes efficiency (the division of labor), predictability, calculability, and control (monitoring). For example, in your average chain grocery store, people at the register check out customers while stockers keep the shelves full of goods and deli workers slice meats and cheese to order (efficiency). Whenever you enter a store within that grocery chain, you receive the same type of goods, see the same store organization, and find the same brands at the same prices (predictability). You will find that goods are sold by the pound, so that you can weigh your fruit and vegetable purchase rather than simply guessing at the price for that bag of onions. The employees use a timecard to calculate their hours and receive overtime pay (calculability). Finally, you will notice that all store employees are wearing a uniform, and usually a name tag, so that they can be easily identified. There are security cameras to monitor the store, and some parts of the store, such as the stockroom, are generally considered off-limits to customers (control). This approach is so common in chain stores that you might not even notice it; in fact, if you went to a large-chain resturant or a store like Walmart, seeing a worker or a process that didn't have these uniform characteristics would seem odd.

While McDonaldization has resulted in improved profits and an increased availability of various goods and services to more people worldwide, it has also reduced the variety of goods available in the marketplace while rendering available products uniform, generic, and bland. Think of the difference between a mass-produced shoe and one made by a local cobbler, between a chicken from a family-owned farm and a corporate grower, or between a cup of coffee from the local diner and one from Starbucks. Some more contemporary efforts can be referred to as "de-McDonaldization": farmers markets, microbreweries, and various do-it-yourself trends. And with recent advertising and products emphasizing individuality, even McDonald's seems to be de-McDonaldizing itself.

The corporate impact of this phenomenon is interesting on its own, but sociologists and ordinary citizens are often more concerned about its echoes in other areas of society. A primary example, discussed extensively later on in this text, is education. Curricula and teaching practices were long the domain of local districts under state guidance. Some experts felt that this led to both inefficiency and underperformance. Starting in the 1990s and especially in the early 2000s with the No Child Left Behind law, national standards began to override local approaches. But the desired outcome (improved education) is difficult to measure and far more difficult to achieve. Due to funding gaps, difficult standards, and intense public and local government opposition, the law was largely seen as having limited impact and was eventually phased out.

Healthcare has also gone to a mass production and efficiency model. As you will explore later in the text, U.S. healthcare providers and insurers faced overwhelming increases in demand, partly the result of America's aging and less healthy population. In the 1990s, providers consolidated in what was called hospital "merger mania." Local hospitals and even small doctors' offices were merged or acquired by larger systems (Fuchs 1997). The trend continued with new growth in providers like urgent care offices. Other efficiency and standardization methods include telemedicine, new types of healthcare professionals, insurance mandates, and artificial intelligence.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Secrets of the McJob

We often talk about bureaucracies disparagingly, and no organization takes more heat than fast food restaurants. Several books and movies, such as *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* by Eric Schossler, paint an ugly picture of what goes in, what goes on, and what comes out of fast food chains. From their environmental

impact to their role in the U.S. obesity epidemic, fast food chains are connected to numerous societal ills. Furthermore, working at a fast food restaurant is often disparaged, and even referred to dismissively, as having a McJob rather than a real job.

But business school professor Jerry Newman went undercover and worked behind the counter at seven fast food restaurants to discover what really goes on there. His book, *My Secret Life on the McJob*, documents his experience. Unlike Schossler, Newman found that these restaurants offer much good alongside the bad. Specifically, he asserted that the employees were honest and hardworking, that management was often impressive, and that the jobs required a lot more skill and effort than most people imagined. In the book, Newman cites a pharmaceutical executive who says a fast-food service job on an applicant's résumé is a plus because it indicates the employee is reliable and can handle pressure.

Businesses like Chipotle, Panera, and Costco attempt to combat many of the effects of McDonaldization. In fact, Costco is known for paying its employees an average of $20 per hour, or slightly more than $40,000 per year. Nearly 90% of their employees receive health insurance from Costco, a number that is unheard of in the retail sector.

While Chipotle is not known for the high wages of its employees, it is known for attempting to sell high-quality foods from responsibly sourced providers. This is a different approach from what Schossler describes among burger chains like McDonalds.

So, what do you think? Are these McJobs and the organizations that offer them still serving an important role in the economy and people's careers? Or are they dead-end jobs that typify all that is negative about large bureaucracies? Have you ever worked in one? Would you?

Key Terms

aggregate a collection of people who exist in the same place at the same time, but who don't interact or share a sense of identity
authoritarian leader a leader who issues orders and assigns tasks
bureaucracies formal organizations characterized by a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonality.
category people who share similar characteristics but who are not connected in any way
clear division of labor the fact that each individual in a bureaucracy has a specialized task to perform
coercive organizations organizations that people do not voluntarily join, such as prison or a mental hospital
conformity the extent to which an individual complies with group or societal norms
democratic leader a leader who encourages group participation and consensus-building before moving into action
dyad a two-member group
explicit rules the types of rules in a bureaucracy; rules that are outlined, recorded, and standardized
expressive function a group function that serves an emotional need
expressive leader a leader who is concerned with process and with ensuring everyone's emotional wellbeing
formal organizations large, impersonal organizations
group any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share some sense of aligned identity
hierarchy of authority a clear chain of command found in a bureaucracy
impersonality the removal of personal feelings from a professional situation
in-group a group a person belongs to and feels is an integral part of his identity
instrumental function being oriented toward a task or goal
instrumental leader a leader who is goal oriented with a primary focus on accomplishing tasks
Iron Rule of Oligarchy the theory that an organization is ruled by a few elites rather than through collaboration
laissez-faire leader a hands-off leader who allows members of the group to make their own decisions
leadership function the main focus or goal of a leader
leadership style the style a leader uses to achieve goals or elicit action from group members
McDonaldization of Society the increasing presence of the fast food business model in common social institutions
meritocracy a bureaucracy where membership and advancement is based on merit—proven and documented skills
normative or voluntary organizations organizations that people join to pursue shared interests or because they provide some intangible rewards
out-group a group that an individual is not a member of, and may even compete with
primary groups small, informal groups of people who are closest to us
reference groups groups to which an individual compares herself
secondary groups larger and more impersonal groups that are task-focused and time limited
total institution an organization in which participants live a controlled lifestyle and in which total resocialization occurs
triad a three-member group
utilitarian organizations organizations that are joined to fill a specific material need

Section Summary

6.1 Types of Groups

Groups largely define how we think of ourselves. There are two main types of groups: primary and secondary. As the names suggest, the primary group is the long-term, complex one. People use groups as standards of comparison to define themselves—both who they are and who they are not. Sometimes groups can be used to exclude people or as a tool that strengthens prejudice.

6.2 Group Size and Structure

The size and dynamic of a group greatly affects how members act. Primary groups rarely have formal leaders, although there can be informal leadership. Groups generally are considered large when there are too many members for a simultaneous discussion. In secondary groups there are two types of leadership functions, with expressive leaders focused on emotional health and wellness, and instrumental leaders more focused on results. Further, there are different leadership styles: democratic leaders, authoritarian leaders, and laissez-faire leaders.

Within a group, conformity is the extent to which people want to go along with the norm. A number of experiments have illustrated how strong the drive to conform can be. It is worth considering real-life examples of how conformity and obedience can lead people to ethically and morally suspect acts.

6.3 Formal Organizations

Large organizations fall into three main categories: normative/voluntary, coercive, and utilitarian. We live in a time of contradiction: while the pace of change and technology are requiring people to be more nimble and less bureaucratic in their thinking, large bureaucracies like hospitals, schools, and governments are more hampered than ever by their organizational format. At the same time, the past few decades have seen the development of a trend to bureaucratize and conventionalize local institutions. Increasingly, Main Streets across the country resemble each other; instead of a Bob's Coffee Shop and Jane's Hair Salon there is a Dunkin Donuts and a Supercuts. This trend has been referred to as the McDonaldization of society.

Section Quiz

6.1 Types of Groups

1. What does a Functionalist consider when studying a phenomenon like the Tea Party movement?
   a. The minute functions that every person at the protests plays in the whole
   b. The internal conflicts that play out within such a diverse and leaderless group
   c. How the movement contributes to the stability of society by offering the discontented a safe, controlled outlet for dissension
   d. The factions and divisions that form within the movement

2. What is the largest difference between the Functionalist and Conflict perspectives and the Interactionist perspective?
   a. The former two consider long-term repercussions of the group or situation, while the latter focuses on the present.
   b. The first two are the more common sociological perspective, while the latter is a newer sociological model.
   c. The first two focus on hierarchical roles within an organization, while the last takes a more holistic view.
   d. The first two perspectives address large-scale issues facing groups, while the last examines more detailed aspects.

3. What role do secondary groups play in society?
   a. They are transactional, task-based, and short-term, filling practical needs.
   b. They provide a social network that allows people to compare themselves to others.
   c. The members give and receive emotional support.
   d. They allow individuals to challenge their beliefs and prejudices.

4. When a high school student gets teased by her basketball team for receiving an academic award, she is dealing with competing _____.
   a. primary groups
   b. out-groups
   c. reference groups
   d. secondary groups

5. Which of the following is *not* an example of an in-group?
   a. The Ku Klux Klan
   b. A fraternity
   c. A synagogue
   d. A high school

6. What is a group whose values, norms, and beliefs come to serve as a standard for one's own behavior?
   a. Secondary group
   b. Formal organization
   c. Reference group
   d. Primary group

7. A parent who is worrying over her teenager's dangerous and self-destructive behavior and low self-esteem may wish to look at her child's:
   a. reference group
   b. in-group
   c. out-group
   d. All of the above

6.2 Group Size and Structure

8. Two people who have just had a baby have turned from a _____ to a _____.
   a. primary group; secondary group
   b. dyad; triad
   c. couple; family
   d. de facto group; nuclear family

9. Who is more likely to be an expressive leader?
   a. The sales manager of a fast-growing cosmetics company
   b. A high school teacher at a reform school
   c. The director of a summer camp for chronically ill children
   d. A manager at a fast-food restaurant

10. Which of the following is *not* an appropriate group for democratic leadership?
a. A fire station
b. A college classroom
c. A high school prom committee
d. A homeless shelter

11. In Asch's study on conformity, what contributed to the ability of subjects to resist conforming?
a. A very small group of witnesses
b. The presence of an ally
c. The ability to keep one's answer private
d. All of the above

12. Which type of group leadership has a communication pattern that flows from the top down?
a. Authoritarian
b. Democratic
c. Laissez-faire
d. Expressive

6.3 Formal Organizations

13. Which is *not* an example of a normative organization?
a. A book club
b. A church youth group
c. A People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) protest group
d. A study hall

14. Which of these is an example of a total institution?
a. Jail
b. High school
c. Political party
d. A gym

15. Why do people join utilitarian organizations?
a. Because they feel an affinity with others there
b. Because they receive a tangible benefit from joining
c. Because they have no choice
d. Because they feel pressured to do so

16. Which of the following is *not* a characteristic of bureaucracies?
a. Coercion to join
b. Hierarchy of authority
c. Explicit rules
d. Division of labor

17. What are some of the intended positive aspects of bureaucracies?
a. Increased productivity
b. Increased efficiency
c. Equal treatment for all
d. All of the above

18. What is an advantage of the McDonaldization of society?
   a. There is more variety of goods.
   b. There is less theft.
   c. There is more worldwide availability of goods.
   d. There is more opportunity for businesses.

19. What is a disadvantage of the McDonaldization of society?
   a. There is less variety of goods.
   b. There is an increased need for employees with postgraduate degrees.
   c. There is less competition so prices are higher.
   d. There are fewer jobs so unemployment increases.

Short Answer

6.1 Types of Groups

1. How has technology changed your primary groups and secondary groups? Do you have more (and separate) primary groups due to online connectivity? Do you believe that someone, like Levy, can have a true primary group made up of people she has never met? Why, or why not?

2. Compare and contrast two different political groups or organizations, such as the MeToo and Tea Party movements. How do the groups differ in terms of leadership, membership, and activities? How do the group's goals influence participants? Are any of them in-groups (and have they created out-groups)? Explain your answer.

3. The concept of hate crimes has been linked to in-groups and out-groups. Can you think of an example where people have been excluded or tormented due to this kind of group dynamic?

6.2 Group Size and Structure

4. Think of a scenario where an authoritarian leadership style would be beneficial. Explain. What are the reasons it would work well? What are the risks?

5. Describe a time you were led by a leader using, in your opinion, a leadership style that didn't suit the situation. When and where was it? What could she or he have done better?

6. Imagine you are in Asch's study. Would you find it difficult to give the correct answer in that scenario? Why or why not? How would you change the study now to improve it?

7. What kind of leader do you tend to be? Do you embrace different leadership styles and functions as the situation changes? Give an example of a time you were in a position of leadership and what function and style you expressed.

6.3 Formal Organizations

8. What do you think about the recent spotlight on fast food restaurants? Do you think they contribute to society's ills? Do you believe they provide a needed service? Have you ever worked a job like this? What did you learn?

9. Do you consider today's large companies like General Motors, Amazon, or Facebook to be bureaucracies? Why, or why not? Which of the main characteristics of bureaucracies do you see in them? Which are absent?

10. Where do you prefer to shop, eat out, or grab a cup of coffee? Large chains like Walmart or smaller retailers? Starbucks or a local restaurant? What do you base your decisions on? Does this section change how you think about these choices? Why, or why not?

Further Research

6.1 Types of Groups

For more information about cyberbullying causes and statistics, check out this website on cyberbullying research (http://openstax.org/l/Cyberbullying) .

6.2 Group Size and Structure

What is your leadership style? This leadership style quiz (http://openstax.org/l/Leadership) helps you find out.

6.3 Formal Organizations

As mentioned above, the concept of McDonaldization is a growing one. Check out this article discussing the phenomenon of McDonaldization further (http://openstax.org/l/McDonaldization) .

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Deviance, Crime, and Social Control 7

FIGURE 7.1 In their push for marijuana legalization, advocates worked to change the notion that cannabis users were associated with criminal behavior. (Credit: Cannabis Culture/flickr)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION After decades of classification as an illegal substance, marijuana is now legal in some form in nearly every state in the country. Most of the others have decriminalized the drug and/or have made it available for medical use. Considering public opinion and the policy stances of governors and legislators just ten or fifteen years ago, this is a remarkable turn of events.

In 2013, the Pew Research Center found for the first time that a majority of people in the United States (52 percent) favored legalizing marijuana. Until that point, most people were in favor of retaining the drug's status as illegal. (The question about marijuana's legal status was first asked in a 1969 Gallup poll, and only 12 percent of U.S. adults favored legalization at that time.) Marijuana had for years been seen as a danger to society, especially to youth, and many people applied stereotypes to users, often considering them lazy or burdens on society, and often conflating marijuana use with negative stereotypes about race. In essence, marijuana users were considered deviants.

Public opinion has certainly changed. That 2013 study showed support for legalization had just gone over the 50 percent mark. By 2019, the number was up to 67 percent. Fully two-thirds of Americans favored permitting some types of legal usage, as well as decriminalization and elimination of jail time for users of the drug

(Daniller 2019). Government officials took note, and states began changing their policies. Now, many people who had once shunned cannabis users are finding benefits of the substance, and perhaps rethinking their past opinions.

As in many aspects of sociology, there are no absolute answers about deviance. What people agree is deviant differs in various societies and subcultures, and it may change over time.

Tattoos, vegan lifestyles, single parenthood, breast implants, and even jogging were once considered deviant but are now widely accepted. The change process usually takes some time and may be accompanied by significant disagreement, especially for social norms that are viewed as essential. For example, divorce affects the social institution of family, and so divorce carried a deviant and stigmatized status at one time. Marijuana use was once seen as deviant and criminal, but U.S. social norms on this issue are changing.

7.1 Deviance and Control

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Define deviance, and explain the nature of deviant behavior
- Differentiate between methods of social control

FIGURE 7.2 Are financial crimes deviant? Why do we consider them less harmful than other types of crimes, even though they may impact many more victims? (Credit: Justin Ruckman/flickr)

Wells Fargo CEO John Stumpf was forced to resign after his company enrolled customers in unnecessary auto insurance programs, while also fraudulently creating bank accounts without client consent. Both of these actions are prohibited by a range of laws and regulations. Over a million victims were charged improper fees or overcharged for insurance; some suffered reductions in their credit scores, and an estimated 25,000 people had their cars improperly repossessed. Even though these actions were found to be criminal, no one from Wells Fargo faced jail time, as is common in financial crimes. Deviance does not always align with punishment, and perceptions of its impact vary greatly.

What, exactly, is deviance? And what is the relationship between deviance and crime? According to sociologist William Graham Sumner, **deviance** is a violation of established contextual, cultural, or social norms, whether folkways, mores, or codified law (1906). It can be as minor as picking your nose in public or as major as committing murder. Although the word “deviance” has a negative connotation in everyday language, sociologists recognize that deviance is not necessarily bad (Schoepflin 2011). In fact, from a structural functionalist perspective, one of the positive contributions of deviance is that it fosters social change. For

example, during the U.S. civil rights movement, Rosa Parks violated social norms when she refused to move to the "Black section" of the bus, and the Little Rock Nine broke customs of segregation to attend an Arkansas public school.

"What is deviant behavior?" cannot be answered in a straightforward manner. Whether an act is labeled deviant or not depends on many factors, including location, audience, and the individual committing the act (Becker 1963). Listening to music on your phone on the way to class is considered acceptable behavior. Listening to music during your 2 p.m. sociology lecture is considered rude. Listening to music when on the witness stand before a judge may cause you to be held in contempt of court and consequently fined or jailed.

As norms vary across cultures and time, it also makes sense that notions of deviance change. Sixty years ago, public schools in the United States had dress codes that often banned women from wearing pants to class. Today, it's socially acceptable for women to wear pants, but less so for men to wear skirts. And more recently, the act of wearing or not wearing a mask became a matter of deviance, and in some cases, political affiliation and legality. Whether an act is deviant or not depends on society's response to that act.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Why I Drive a Hearse

When sociologist Todd Schoepflin ran into his childhood friend Bill, he was shocked to see him driving a hearse for everyday tasks, instead of an ordinary car. A professionally trained researcher, Schoepflin wondered what effect driving a hearse had on his friend and what effect it might have on others on the road. Would using such a vehicle for everyday errands be considered deviant by most people?

Schoepflin interviewed Bill, curious first to know why he drove such an unconventional car. Bill had simply been on the lookout for a reliable winter car; on a tight budget, he searched used car ads and stumbled upon one for the hearse. The car ran well, and the price was right, so he bought it.

Bill admitted that others' reactions to the car had been mixed. His parents were appalled, and he received odd stares from his coworkers. A mechanic once refused to work on it, and stated that it was "a dead person machine." On the whole, however, Bill received mostly positive reactions. Strangers gave him a thumbs-up on the highway and stopped him in parking lots to chat about his car. His girlfriend loved it, his friends wanted to take it tailgating, and people offered to buy it. Could it be that driving a hearse isn't really so deviant after all?

Schoepflin theorized that, although viewed as outside conventional norms, driving a hearse is such a mild form of deviance that it actually becomes a mark of distinction. Conformists find the choice of vehicle intriguing or appealing, while nonconformists see a fellow oddball to whom they can relate. As one of Bill's friends remarked, "Every guy wants to own a unique car like this, and *you* can certainly pull it off." Such anecdotes remind us that although deviance is often viewed as a violation of norms, it's not always viewed in a negative light (Schoepflin 2011).

FIGURE 7.3 A hearse with the license plate "LASTRYD." How would you view the owner of this car? (Credit: Brian Teutsch/flickr)

Deviance, Crime, and Society

Deviance is a more encompassing term than crime, meaning that it includes a range of activities, some of which are crimes and some of which are not. Sociologists may study both with equal interest, but, as a whole, society views crime as far more significant. Crime preoccupies several levels of government, and it drives concerns among families and communities.

Deviance may be considered relative: Behaviors may be considered deviant based mostly on the circumstances in which they occurred; those circumstances may drive the perception of deviance more than the behavior itself. Relatively minor acts of deviance can have long-term impacts on the person and the people around them. For example, if an adult, who should "know better," spoke loudly or told jokes at a funeral, they may be chastised and forever marked as disrespectful or unusual. But in many cultures, funerals are followed by social gatherings – some taking on a party-like atmosphere – so those same jovial behaviors would be perfectly acceptable, and even encouraged, just an hour later.

As discussed earlier, we typically learn these social norms as children and evolve them with experience. But the relativity of deviance can have significant societal impacts, including perceptions and prosecutions of crime. They may often be based on racial, ethnic, or related prejudices. When 15-year-old Elizabeth Eckford of the Little Rock Nine attempted to enter her legally desegregated high school, she was abiding by the law; but she was considered deviant by the crowd of White people that harassed and insulted her. (These events are discussed in more detail in the Education chapter.)

Consider the example of marijuana legalization mentioned earlier. Why was marijuana illegal in the first place? In fact, it wasn't. Humans have used cannabis openly in their societies for thousands of years. While it was not a widely used substance in the United States, it had been accepted as a medicinal and recreational option, and was neither prohibited nor significantly regulated until the early 1900s. What changed?

In the early 1900s, an influx of immigrants began entering the country from Mexico. These newcomers took up residence in White communities, spoke a different language, and began competing for jobs and resources. They used marijuana more frequently than most Americans. Police and others began to circulate rumors regarding the substance's link to violence and immorality. Newspapers and lawmakers spoke about the "Marijuana Menace" and the "evil weed," and articles and images began to portray it as a corrupting force on America's youth. Beginning in 1916, state after state began passing laws prohibiting marijuana use, and in 1937 Congress passed a federal law banning it (White 2012). Penalties for its usage increased over time,

spiking during the War on Drugs, with racially and ethnically disparate applications. But more recently, as discussed in the introduction, marijuana is once again seen as an important medical treatment and an acceptable recreational pursuit. What changed this time?

Perceptions and proclamations of deviance have long been a means to oppress people by labeling their private behavior as criminal. Until the 1970s and 1980s, same-sex acts were prohibited by state laws. It was illegal to be gay or lesbian, and the restrictions extended to simple displays like holding hands. Other laws prohibited clothing deemed "inappropriate" for one's biological sex. As a result, military service members and even war veterans were dishonorably discharged (losing all benefits) if they were discovered to be gay. Police harassed and humiliated LGBTQ people and regularly raided gay bars. And anti-LGBTQ street violence or hate crimes were tacitly permitted because they were rarely prosecuted and often lightly punished. While most states had eliminated their anti-LGBTQ laws by the time the Supreme Court struck them down in 2003, 14 states still had some version of them on the books.

To further explore the relativity of deviance and its relationship to perceptions of crime, consider gambling. Excessive or high-risk gambling is usually seen as deviant, but more moderate gambling is generally accepted. Still, gambling has long been limited in most of the United States, making it a crime to participate in certain types of gambling or to do so outside of specified locations. For example, a state may allow betting on horse races but not on sports. Changes to these laws are occurring, but for decades, a generally non-deviant behavior has been made criminal: When otherwise law-abiding people decided to engage in low-stakes and non-excessive gambling, they were breaking the law. Sociologists may study the essential question arising from this situation: Are these gamblers being deviant by breaking the law, even when the actual behavior at hand is not generally considered deviant?

Social Control

When a person violates a social norm, what happens? A driver caught speeding can receive a speeding ticket. A student who wears a bathrobe to class gets a warning from a professor. An adult belching loudly is avoided. All societies practice **social control**, the regulation and enforcement of norms. The underlying goal of social control is to maintain **social order**, an arrangement of practices and behaviors on which society's members base their daily lives. Think of social order as an employee handbook and social control as a manager. When a worker violates a workplace guideline, the manager steps in to enforce the rules; when an employee is doing an exceptionally good job at following the rules, the manager may praise or promote the employee.

The means of enforcing rules are known as **sanctions**. Sanctions can be positive as well as negative. **Positive sanctions** are rewards given for conforming to norms. A promotion at work is a positive sanction for working hard. **Negative sanctions** are punishments for violating norms. Being arrested is a punishment for shoplifting. Both types of sanctions play a role in social control.

Sociologists also classify sanctions as formal or informal. Although shoplifting, a form of social deviance, may be illegal, there are no laws dictating the proper way to scratch your nose. That doesn't mean picking your nose in public won't be punished; instead, you will encounter **informal sanctions**. Informal sanctions emerge in face-to-face social interactions. For example, wearing flip-flops to an opera or swearing loudly in church may draw disapproving looks or even verbal reprimands, whereas behavior that is seen as positive—such as helping an elderly person carry grocery bags across the street—may receive positive informal reactions, such as a smile or pat on the back.

Formal sanctions, on the other hand, are ways to officially recognize and enforce norm violations. If a student violates a college's code of conduct, for example, the student might be expelled. Someone who speaks inappropriately to the boss could be fired. Someone who commits a crime may be arrested or imprisoned. On the positive side, a soldier who saves a life may receive an official commendation.

The table below shows the relationship between different types of sanctions.

	Informal	Formal
Positive	An expression of thanks	A promotion at work
Negative	An angry comment	A parking fine

TABLE 7.1 Informal/Formal Sanctions Formal and informal sanctions may be positive or negative. Informal sanctions arise in social interactions, whereas formal sanctions officially enforce norms.

7.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the functionalist view of deviance in society through four sociologist's theories
- Explain how conflict theory understands deviance and crime in society
- Describe the symbolic interactionist approach to deviance, including labeling and other theories

FIGURE 7.4 Functionalists believe that deviance plays an important role in society and can be used to challenge people's views. Protesters, such as these PETA members, often use this method to draw attention to their cause. (Credit: David Shankbone/flickr)

Why does deviance occur? How does it affect a society? Since the early days of sociology, scholars have developed theories that attempt to explain what deviance and crime mean to society. These theories can be grouped according to the three major sociological paradigms: functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory.

Functionalism

Sociologists who follow the functionalist approach are concerned with the way the different elements of a society contribute to the whole. They view deviance as a key component of a functioning society. Strain theory, social disorganization theory, and cultural deviance theory represent three functionalist perspectives on deviance in society.

Émile Durkheim: The Essential Nature of Deviance

Émile Durkheim believed that deviance is a necessary part of a successful society. One way deviance is functional, he argued, is that it challenges people's present views (1893). For instance, when Black students across the United States participated in sit-ins during the civil rights movement, they challenged society's notions of segregation. Moreover, Durkheim noted, when deviance is punished, it reaffirms currently held social norms, which also contributes to society (1893). Seeing a student given detention for skipping class reminds other high schoolers that playing hooky isn't allowed and that they, too, could get detention.

Durkheim's point regarding the impact of punishing deviance speaks to his arguments about law. Durkheim saw laws as an expression of the "collective conscience," which are the beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society. "A crime is a crime because we condemn it," he said (1893). He discussed the impact of societal size and complexity as contributors to the collective conscience and the development of justice systems and punishments. For example, in large, industrialized societies that were largely bound together by the interdependence of work (the division of labor), punishments for deviance were generally less severe. In smaller, more homogeneous societies, deviance might be punished more severely.

Robert Merton: Strain Theory

Sociologist Robert Merton agreed that deviance is an inherent part of a functioning society, but he expanded on Durkheim's ideas by developing **strain theory**, which notes that access to socially acceptable goals plays a part in determining whether a person conforms or deviates. From birth, we're encouraged to achieve the "American Dream" of financial success. A person who attends business school, receives an MBA, and goes on to make a million-dollar income as CEO of a company is said to be a success. However, not everyone in our society stands on equal footing. That MBA-turned-CEO may have grown up in the best school district and had means to hire tutors. Another person may grow up in a neighborhood with lower-quality schools, and may not be able to pay for extra help. A person may have the socially acceptable goal of financial success but lack a socially acceptable way to reach that goal. According to Merton's theory, an entrepreneur who can't afford to launch their own company may be tempted to embezzle from their employer for start-up funds.

Merton defined five ways people respond to this gap between having a socially accepted goal and having no socially accepted way to pursue it.

1. *Conformity*: Those who conform choose not to deviate. They pursue their goals to the extent that they can through socially accepted means.
2. *Innovation*: Those who innovate pursue goals they cannot reach through legitimate means by instead using criminal or deviant means.
3. *Ritualism*: People who ritualize lower their goals until they can reach them through socially acceptable ways. These members of society focus on conformity rather than attaining a distant dream.
4. *Retreatism*: Others retreat and reject society's goals and means. Some people who beg and people who are homeless have withdrawn from society's goal of financial success.
5. *Rebellion*: A handful of people rebel and replace a society's goals and means with their own. Terrorists or freedom fighters look to overthrow a society's goals through socially unacceptable means.

Social Disorganization Theory

Developed by researchers at the University of Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s, **social disorganization theory** asserts that crime is most likely to occur in communities with weak social ties and the absence of social control. An individual who grows up in a poor neighborhood with high rates of drug use, violence, teenage delinquency, and deprived parenting is more likely to become engaged in crime than an individual from a wealthy neighborhood with a good school system and families who are involved positively in the community.

FIGURE 7.5 Proponents of social disorganization theory believe that individuals who grow up in impoverished areas are more likely to participate in deviant or criminal behaviors. (Credit: Apollo 1758/Wikimedia Commons)

Social disorganization theory points to broad social factors as the cause of deviance. A person isn't born as someone who will commit crimes but becomes one over time, often based on factors in their social environment. Robert Sampson and Byron Groves (1989) found that poverty and family disruption in given localities had a strong positive correlation with social disorganization. They also determined that social disorganization was, in turn, associated with high rates of crime and delinquency—or deviance. Recent studies Sampson conducted with Lydia Bean (2006) revealed similar findings. High rates of poverty and single-parent homes correlated with high rates of juvenile violence. Research into social disorganization theory can greatly influence public policy. For instance, studies have found that children from disadvantaged communities who attend preschool programs that teach basic social skills are significantly less likely to engage in criminal activity. (Lally 1987)

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory looks to social and economic factors as the causes of crime and deviance. Unlike functionalists, conflict theorists don't see these factors as positive functions of society. They see them as evidence of inequality in the system. They also challenge social disorganization theory and control theory and argue that both ignore racial and socioeconomic issues and oversimplify social trends (Akers 1991). Conflict theorists also look for answers to the correlation of gender and race with wealth and crime.

Karl Marx: An Unequal System

Conflict theory was greatly influenced by the work of German philosopher, economist, and social scientist Karl Marx. Marx believed that the general population was divided into two groups. He labeled the wealthy, who controlled the means of production and business, the bourgeois. He labeled the workers who depended on the bourgeois for employment and survival the proletariat. Marx believed that the bourgeois centralized their power and influence through government, laws, and other authority agencies in order to maintain and expand their positions of power in society. Though Marx spoke little of deviance, his ideas created the foundation for conflict theorists who study the intersection of deviance and crime with wealth and power.

C. Wright Mills: The Power Elite

In his book *The Power Elite* (1956), sociologist C. Wright Mills described the existence of what he dubbed the **power elite**, a small group of wealthy and influential people at the top of society who hold the power and resources. Wealthy executives, politicians, celebrities, and military leaders often have access to national and

international power, and in some cases, their decisions affect everyone in society. Because of this, the rules of society are stacked in favor of a privileged few who manipulate them to stay on top. It is these people who decide what is criminal and what is not, and the effects are often felt most by those who have little power. Mills' theories explain why celebrities can commit crimes and suffer little or no legal retribution. For example, *USA Today* maintains a database of NFL players accused and convicted of crimes. 51 NFL players had been convicted of committing domestic violence between the years 2000 and 2019. They have been sentenced to a collective 49 days in jail, and most of those sentences were deferred or otherwise reduced. In most cases, suspensions and fines levied by the NFL or individual teams were more severe than the justice system's (Schrotenboer 2020 and clickitticket.com 2019).

Crime and Social Class

While crime is often associated with the underprivileged, crimes committed by the wealthy and powerful remain an under-punished and costly problem within society. The FBI reported that victims of burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft lost a total of $15.3 billion dollars in 2009 (FB1 2010). In comparison, when former advisor and financier Bernie Madoff was arrested in 2008, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission reported that the estimated losses of his financial Ponzi scheme fraud were close to $50 billion (SEC 2009).

This imbalance based on class power is also found within U.S. criminal law. In the 1980s, the use of crack cocaine (a less expensive but powerful drug) quickly became an epidemic that swept the country's poorest urban communities. Its pricier counterpart, cocaine, was associated with upscale users and was a drug of choice for the wealthy. The legal implications of being caught by authorities with crack versus cocaine were starkly different. In 1986, federal law mandated that being caught in possession of 50 grams of crack was punishable by a ten-year prison sentence. An equivalent prison sentence for cocaine possession, however, required possession of 5,000 grams. In other words, the sentencing disparity was 1 to 100 (New York Times Editorial Staff 2011). This inequality in the severity of punishment for crack versus cocaine paralleled the unequal social class of respective users. A conflict theorist would note that those in society who hold the power are also the ones who make the laws concerning crime. In doing so, they make laws that will benefit them, while the powerless classes who lack the resources to make such decisions suffer the consequences. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, states passed numerous laws increasing penalties, especially for repeat offenders. The U.S. government passed an even more significant law, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (known as the 1994 Crime Bill), which further increased penalties, funded prisons, and incentivized law enforcement agencies to further pursue drug offenders. One outcome of these policies was the mass incarceration of Black and Hispanic people, which led to a cycle of poverty and reduced social mobility. The crack-cocaine punishment disparity remained until 2010, when President Obama signed the Fair Sentencing Act, which decreased the disparity to 1 to 18 (The Sentencing Project 2010).

FIGURE 7.6 From 1986 until 2010, the punishment for possessing crack, a "poor person's drug," was 100 times stricter than the punishment for cocaine use, a drug favored by the wealthy. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical approach that can be used to explain how societies and/or social groups come to view behaviors as deviant or conventional.

Labeling Theory

Although all of us violate norms from time to time, few people would consider themselves deviant. Those who do, however, have often been labeled "deviant" by society and have gradually come to believe it themselves. **Labeling theory** examines the ascribing of a deviant behavior to another person by members of society. Thus, what is considered deviant is determined not so much by the behaviors themselves or the people who commit them, but by the reactions of others to these behaviors. As a result, what is considered deviant changes over time and can vary significantly across cultures.

Sociologist Edwin Lemert expanded on the concepts of labeling theory and identified two types of deviance that affect identity formation. **Primary deviance** is a violation of norms that does not result in any long-term effects on the individual's self-image or interactions with others. Speeding is a deviant act, but receiving a speeding ticket generally does not make others view you as a bad person, nor does it alter your own self-concept. Individuals who engage in primary deviance still maintain a feeling of belonging in society and are likely to continue to conform to norms in the future.

Sometimes, in more extreme cases, primary deviance can morph into secondary deviance. **Secondary deviance** occurs when a person's self-concept and behavior begin to change after his or her actions are labeled as deviant by members of society. The person may begin to take on and fulfill the role of a "deviant" as an act of rebellion against the society that has labeled that individual as such. For example, consider a high school student who often cuts class and gets into fights. The student is reprimanded frequently by teachers and school staff, and soon enough, develops a reputation as a "troublemaker." As a result, the student starts acting out even more and breaking more rules; the student has adopted the "troublemaker" label and embraced this deviant identity. Secondary deviance can be so strong that it bestows a **master status** on an individual. A master status is a label that describes the chief characteristic of an individual. Some people see themselves primarily as doctors, artists, or grandfathers. Others see themselves as beggars, convicts, or addicts.

Techniques of Neutralization

How do people deal with the labels they are given? This was the subject of a study done by Sykes and Matza (1957). They studied teenage boys who had been labeled as juvenile delinquents to see how they either embraced or denied these labels. Have you ever used any of these techniques?

Let's take a scenario and apply all five techniques to explain how they are used. A young person is working for a retail store as a cashier. Their cash drawer has been coming up short for a few days. When the boss confronts the employee, they are labeled as a thief for the suspicion of stealing. How does the employee deal with this label?

The Denial of Responsibility: When someone doesn't take responsibility for their actions or blames others. They may use this technique and say that it was their boss's fault because they don't get paid enough to make rent or because they're getting a divorce. They are rejecting the label by denying responsibility for the action.

The Denial of Injury: Sometimes people will look at a situation in terms of what effect it has on others. If the employee uses this technique they may say, "What's the big deal? Nobody got hurt. Your insurance will take care of it." The person doesn't see their actions as a big deal because nobody "got hurt."

The Denial of the Victim: If there is no victim there's no crime. In this technique the person sees their actions as justified or that the victim deserved it. Our employee may look at their situation and say, "I've worked here for years without a raise. I was owed that money and if you won't give it to me I'll get it my own way."

The Condemnation of the Condemners: The employee might "turn it around on" the boss by blaming them. They may say something like, "You don't know my life, you have no reason to judge me." This is taking the focus off of their actions and putting the onus on the accuser to, essentially, prove the person is living up to the label, which also shifts the narrative away from the deviant behavior.

Appeal to a Higher Authority: The final technique that may be used is to claim that the actions were for a higher purpose. The employee may tell the boss that they stole the money because their mom is sick and needs medicine or something like that. They are justifying their actions by making it seem as though the purpose for the behavior is a greater "good" than the action is "bad." (Sykes & Matza, 1957)

SOCIAL POLICY AND DEBATE

The Right to Vote

Before she lost her job as an administrative assistant, Leola Strickland postdated and mailed a handful of checks for amounts ranging from $90 to $500. By the time she was able to find a new job, the checks had bounced, and she was convicted of fraud under Mississippi law. Strickland pleaded guilty to a felony charge and repaid her debts; in return, she was spared from serving prison time.

Strickland appeared in court in 2001. More than ten years later, she is still feeling the sting of her sentencing. Why? Because Mississippi is one of twelve states in the United States that bans convicted felons from voting (ProCon 2011).

To Strickland, who said she had always voted, the news came as a great shock. She isn't alone. Some 5.3 million people in the United States are currently barred from voting because of felony convictions (ProCon 2009). These individuals include inmates, parolees, probationers, and even people who have never been jailed, such as Leola Strickland.

Under the Fourteenth Amendment, states are allowed to deny voting privileges to individuals who have participated in "rebellion or other crime" (Krajick 2004). Although there are no federally mandated laws on the matter, most states practice at least one form of *felony disenfranchisement*.

Is it fair to prevent citizens from participating in such an important process? Proponents of disfranchisement laws argue that felons have a debt to pay to society. Being stripped of their right to vote is part of the punishment for criminal deeds. Such proponents point out that voting isn't the only instance in which ex-felons are denied rights; state laws also ban released criminals from holding public office, obtaining professional licenses, and sometimes even inheriting property (Lott and Jones 2008).

Opponents of felony disfranchisement in the United States argue that voting is a basic human right and should be available to all citizens regardless of past deeds. Many point out that felony disfranchisement has its roots in the 1800s, when it was used primarily to block Black citizens from voting. These laws disproportionately target poor minority members, denying them a chance to participate in a system that, as a social conflict theorist would point out, is already constructed to their disadvantage (Holding 2006). Those who cite labeling theory worry that denying deviants the right to vote will only further encourage deviant behavior. If ex-criminals are disenfranchised from voting, are they being disenfranchised from society?

FIGURE 7.7 Should a former felony conviction permanently strip a U.S. citizen of the right to vote? (Credit: Joshin Yamada/flickr)

Edwin Sutherland: Differential Association

In the early 1900s, sociologist Edwin Sutherland sought to understand how deviant behavior developed among people. Since criminology was a young field, he drew on other aspects of sociology including social interactions and group learning (Laub 2006). His conclusions established **differential association theory**, which suggested that individuals learn deviant behavior from those close to them who provide models of and opportunities for deviance. According to Sutherland, deviance is less a personal choice and more a result of differential socialization processes. For example, a young person whose friends are sexually active is more likely to view sexual activity as acceptable. Sutherland developed a series of propositions to explain how deviance is learned. In proposition five, for example, he discussed how people begin to accept and participate in a behavior after learning whether it is viewed as "favorable" by those around them. In proposition six, Sutherland expressed the ways that exposure to more "definitions" favoring the deviant behavior than those opposing it may eventually lead a person to partake in deviance (Sutherland 1960), applying almost a quantitative element to the learning of certain behaviors. In the example above, a young person may find sexual activity more acceptable once a certain number of their friends become sexually active, not after only

one does so.

Sutherland's theory may explain why crime is multigenerational. A longitudinal study beginning in the 1960s found that the best predictor of antisocial and criminal behavior in children was whether their parents had been convicted of a crime (Todd and Jury 1996). Children who were younger than ten years old when their parents were convicted were more likely than other children to engage in spousal abuse and criminal behavior by their early thirties. Even when taking socioeconomic factors such as dangerous neighborhoods, poor school systems, and overcrowded housing into consideration, researchers found that parents were the main influence on the behavior of their offspring (Todd and Jury 1996).

Travis Hirschi: Control Theory

Continuing with an examination of large social factors, **control theory** states that social control is directly affected by the strength of social bonds and that deviance results from a feeling of disconnection from society. Individuals who believe they are a part of society are less likely to commit crimes against it.

Travis Hirschi (1969) identified four types of social bonds that connect people to society:

1. *Attachment* measures our connections to others. When we are closely attached to people, we worry about their opinions of us. People conform to society's norms in order to gain approval (and prevent disapproval) from family, friends, and romantic partners.
2. *Commitment* refers to the investments we make in the community. A well-respected local businessperson who volunteers at their synagogue and is a member of the neighborhood block organization has more to lose from committing a crime than a person who doesn't have a career or ties to the community.
3. Similarly, levels of *involvement*, or participation in socially legitimate activities, lessen a person's likelihood of deviance. A child who plays little league baseball and takes art classes has fewer opportunities to _____.
4. The final bond, *belief*, is an agreement on common values in society. If a person views social values as beliefs, they will conform to them. An environmentalist is more likely to pick up trash in a park, because a clean environment is a social value to them (Hirschi 1969).

Functionalism	**Associated Theorist**	**Deviance arises from:**
Strain Theory	Robert Merton	A lack of ways to reach socially accepted goals by accepted methods
Social Disorganization Theory	University of Chicago researchers	Weak social ties and a lack of social control; society has lost the ability to enforce norms with some groups
Cultural Deviance Theory	Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay	Conformity to the cultural norms of lower-class society
Conflict Theory	**Associated Theorist**	**Deviance arises from:**
Unequal System	Karl Marx	Inequalities in wealth and power that arise from the economic system

TABLE 7.2

Power Elite	C. Wright Mills	Ability of those in power to define deviance in ways that maintain the status quo
Symbolic Interactionism	**Associated Theorist**	**Deviance arises from:**
Labeling Theory	Edwin Lemert	The reactions of others, particularly those in power who are able to determine labels
Differential Association Theory	Edwin Sutherland	Learning and modeling deviant behavior seen in other people close to the individual
Control Theory	Travis Hirschi	Feelings of disconnection from society

TABLE 7.2

7.3 Crime and the Law

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Identify and differentiate between different types of crimes
- Evaluate U.S. crime statistics
- Understand the three branches of the U.S. criminal justice system

FIGURE 7.8 Both underage smoking and underage vaping are either illegal or highly regulated in every U.S. state. If vaping is a crime, who is the victim? What is the obligation of the government to protect children, and in some cases adults, from themselves? (Credit: Vaping360/flickr)

Although deviance is a violation of social norms, it's not always punishable, and it's not necessarily bad. **Crime**, on the other hand, is a behavior that violates official law and is punishable through formal sanctions. Walking to class backward is a deviant behavior. Driving with a blood alcohol percentage over the state's limit is a crime. Like other forms of deviance, however, ambiguity exists concerning what constitutes a crime and whether all crimes are, in fact, "bad" and deserve punishment. For example, during the 1960s, civil rights activists often violated laws intentionally as part of their effort to bring about racial equality. In hindsight, we recognize that the laws that deemed many of their actions crimes—for instance, Rosa Parks refusing to give up

her seat to a White man—were inconsistent with social equality.

As you have learned, all societies have informal and formal ways of maintaining social control. Within these systems of norms, societies have **legal codes** that maintain formal social control through laws, which are rules adopted and enforced by a political authority. Those who violate these rules incur negative formal sanctions. Normally, punishments are relative to the degree of the crime and the importance to society of the value underlying the law. As we will see, however, there are other factors that influence criminal sentencing.

Types of Crimes

Not all crimes are given equal weight. Society generally socializes its members to view certain crimes as more severe than others. For example, most people would consider murdering someone to be far worse than stealing a wallet and would expect a murderer to be punished more severely than a thief. In modern U.S. society, crimes are classified as one of two types based on their severity. **Violent crimes** (also known as "crimes against a person") are based on the use of force or the threat of force. Rape, murder, and armed robbery fall under this category. **Nonviolent crimes** involve the destruction or theft of property but do not use force or the threat of force. Because of this, they are also sometimes called "property crimes." Larceny, car theft, and vandalism are all types of nonviolent crimes. If you use a crowbar to break into a car, you are committing a nonviolent crime; if you mug someone with the crowbar, you are committing a violent crime.

When we think of crime, we often picture **street crime**, or offenses committed by ordinary people against other people or organizations, usually in public spaces. An often overlooked category is **corporate crime**, or crime committed by white-collar workers in a business environment. Embezzlement, insider trading, and identity theft are all types of corporate crime. Although these types of offenses rarely receive the same amount of media coverage as street crimes, they can be far more damaging. Financial frauds such as insurance scams, Ponzi schemes, and improper practices by banks can devastate families who lose their savings or home.

An often-debated third type of crime is **victimless crime**. Crimes are called victimless when the perpetrator is not explicitly harming another person. As opposed to battery or theft, which clearly have a victim, a crime like drinking a beer when someone is twenty years old or selling a sexual act do not result in injury to anyone other than the individual who engages in them, although they are illegal. While some claim acts like these are victimless, others argue that they actually do harm society. Prostitution may foster abuse toward women by clients or pimps. Drug use may increase the likelihood of employee absences. Such debates highlight how the deviant and criminal nature of actions develops through ongoing public discussion.

BIG PICTURE

Hate Crimes

Attacks based on a person's race, religion, or other characteristics are known as **hate crimes**. Hate crimes in the United States evolved from the time of early European settlers and their violence toward Native Americans. Such crimes weren't investigated until the early 1900s, when the Ku Klux Klan began to draw national attention for its activities against Black people and other groups. The term "hate crime," however, didn't become official until the 1980s (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2011).

The severity and impact of hate crimes is significant, but the different crime reporting methods mentioned earlier can obscure the issue. According to the Department of Justice, an average of approximately 205,000 Americans fall victim to hate crimes each year (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2021). But the FBI reports a much lower number; for example, the 2019 report indicates 7,314 criminal incidents and 8,559 related offenses as being motivated by bias (FBI 2020). The discrepancy is due to many factors: very few people actually report hate crimes for fear of retribution or based on the difficulties of enduring a criminal proceeding; also, law enforcement agencies must find clear proof that a particular crime was motivated by bias rather than other factors. (For example, an assailant who robs someone and uses a slur while committing that crime may not be deemed to be

bias-motivated.) But both reports show a growth in hate crimes, with quantities increasing each year.

The majority of hate crimes are racially motivated, but many are based on religious (especially anti-Semitic) prejudice (FBI 2020). The murders of Brandon Teena in 1993 and Matthew Shepard in 1998 significantly increased awareness of hate crimes based on gender expression and sexual orientation; LGBTQ people remain a major target of hate crimes.

The motivation behind hate crimes can arise quickly, singling out specific groups who endure a rash of abuses in a short period of time. For example, beginning in 2020, people increasingly began committing violent crimes against people of Asian descent, with evidence that the attackers associated the victims with the coronavirus pandemic (Asian American Bar Association 2021).

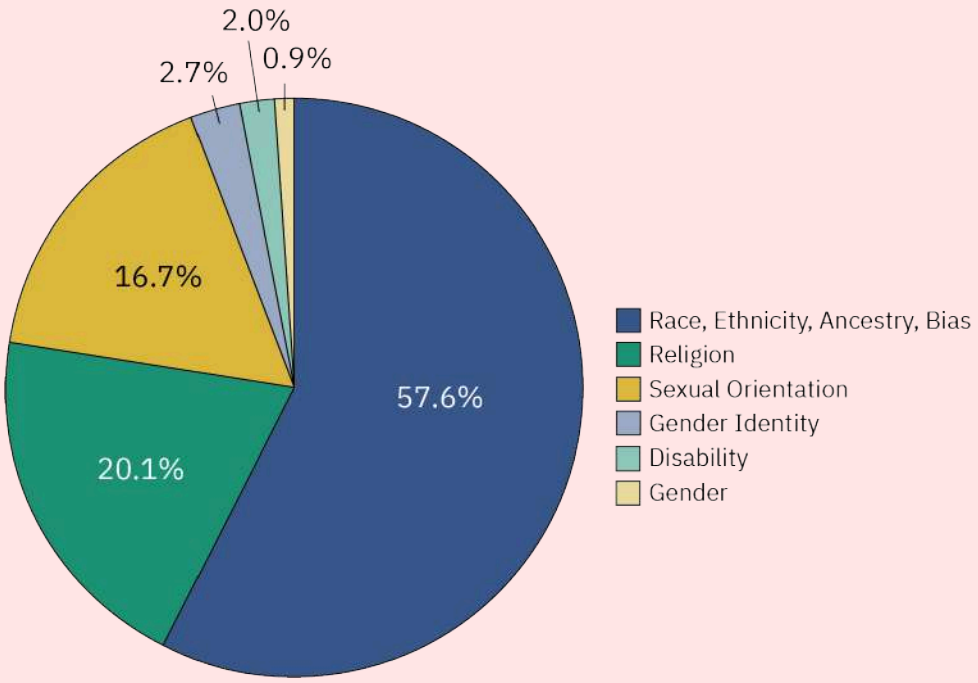

FIGURE 7.9 Bias Motivation Categories for Victims of Single-bias Incidents in 2019. The FBI Hate Crimes report identified 8,552 victims of hate crimes in 2019. This represents less than five percent of the number of people who claimed to be victims of hate crimes when surveyed. (Graph courtesy of FBI 2020)

Crime Statistics

The FBI gathers data from approximately 17,000 law enforcement agencies, and the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) is the annual publication of this data (FBI 2021). The UCR has comprehensive information from police reports but fails to account for the many crimes that go unreported, often due to victims' fear, shame, or distrust of the police. The quality of this data is also inconsistent because of differences in approaches to gathering victim data; important details are not always asked for or reported (Cantor and Lynch 2000). As of 2021, states will be required to provide data for the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), which captures more detailed information on each crime, including time of day, location, and other contexts. NIBRS is intended to provide more data-informed discussion to better improve crime prevention and policing (FBI 2021).

The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics publishes a separate self-report study known as the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). A **self-report study** is a collection of data gathered using voluntary response methods, such as questionnaires or telephone interviews. Self-report data are gathered each year, asking approximately 160,000 people in the United States about the frequency and types of crime they've

experienced in their daily lives (BJS 2019). The NCVS reports a higher rate of crime than the UCR, likely picking up information on crimes that were experienced but never reported to the police. Age, race, gender, location, and income-level demographics are also analyzed.

The NCVS survey format allows people to more openly discuss their experiences and also provides a more-detailed examination of crimes, which may include information about consequences, relationship between victim and criminal, and substance abuse involved. One disadvantage is that the NCVS misses some groups of people, such as those who don't have telephones and those who move frequently. The quality of information may also be reduced by inaccurate victim recall of the crime (Cantor and Lynch 2000).

Public Perception of Crime

Neither the NCVR nor the UCR accounts for all crime in the United States, but general trends can be determined. Crime rates, particularly for violent and gun-related crimes, have been on the decline since peaking in the early 1990s (Cohn, Taylor, Lopez, Gallagher, Parker, and Maass 2013). However, the public believes crime rates are still high, or even worsening. Recent surveys (Saad 2011; Pew Research Center 2013, cited in Overburg and Hoyer 2013) have found U.S. adults believe crime is worse now than it was twenty years ago.

Inaccurate public perception of crime may be heightened by popular crime series such as Law & Order (Warr 2008) and by extensive and repeated media coverage of crime. Many researchers have found that people who closely follow media reports of crime are likely to estimate the crime rate as inaccurately high and more likely to feel fearful about the chances of experiencing crime (Chiricos, Padgett, and Gertz 2000). Recent research has also found that people who reported watching news coverage of 9/11 or the Boston Marathon Bombing for more than an hour daily became more fearful of future terrorism (Holman, Garfin, and Silver 2014).

The U.S. Criminal Justice System

A **criminal justice system** is an organization that exists to enforce a legal code. There are three branches of the U.S. criminal justice system: the police, the courts, and the corrections system.

Police

Police are a civil force in charge of enforcing laws and public order at a federal, state, or community level. No unified national police force exists in the United States, although there are federal law enforcement officers. Federal officers operate under specific government agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI); the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Federal officers can only deal with matters that are explicitly within the power of the federal government, and their field of expertise is usually narrow. A county police officer may spend time responding to emergency calls, working at the local jail, or patrolling areas as needed, whereas a federal officer would be more likely to investigate suspects in firearms trafficking or provide security for government officials.

State police have the authority to enforce statewide laws, including regulating traffic on highways. Local or county police, on the other hand, have a limited jurisdiction with authority only in the town or county in which they serve.

FIGURE 7.10 Police use a range of tools and resources to protect the community and prevent crime. As a part of K9 units, dogs search for explosives or illegal substances on trains and at other public facilities. (Credit: MTA/flickr)

Courts

Once a crime has been committed and a violator has been identified by the police, the case goes to court. A **court** is a system that has the authority to make decisions based on law. The U.S. judicial system is divided into federal courts and state courts. As the name implies, federal courts (including the U.S. Supreme Court) deal with federal matters, including trade disputes, military justice, and government lawsuits. Judges who preside over federal courts are selected by the president with the consent of Congress.

State courts vary in their structure but generally include three levels: trial courts, appellate courts, and state supreme courts. In contrast to the large courtroom trials in TV shows, most noncriminal cases are decided by a judge without a jury present. Traffic court and small claims court are both types of trial courts that handle specific civil matters.

Criminal cases are heard by trial courts with general jurisdictions. Usually, a judge and jury are both present. It is the jury's responsibility to determine guilt and the judge's responsibility to determine the penalty, though in some states the jury may also decide the penalty. Unless a defendant is found "not guilty," any member of the prosecution or defense (whichever is the losing side) can appeal the case to a higher court. In some states, the case then goes to a special appellate court; in others it goes to the highest state court, often known as the state supreme court.

(a) (b)

FIGURE 7.11 This county courthouse in Kansas (left) is a typical setting for a state trial court. Compare this to the

courtroom of the Michigan Supreme Court (right). (Credit: (a) Ammodramus/Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) Steve & Christine/Wikimedia Commons)

Corrections

The **corrections system** is charged with supervising individuals who have been arrested, convicted, and sentenced for a criminal offense, plus people detained while awaiting hearings, trials, or other procedures. At the end of 2018, approximately 2.3 million people were incarcerated in the United States (BJS 2020); these include people who are in state and federal prisons as well as those in local jails or related facilities, as explained below. Since many convicted people are placed on probation or parole, have their sentences deferred or otherwise altered, or are released under other circumstances, the total number of people within the corrections system is much higher. In 2018, the total number of people either incarcerated, detained, paroled, or on probation was 6,410,000 (BJS 2020).

The U.S. incarceration rate has grown considerably in the last hundred years, but has begun to decline in the past decade. The total correctional population (including parolees and those on probation), peaked in 2007 at 7.3 million, resulting in approximately 1 in 32 people being under some sort of correctional supervision. With the 2018 correction system number close to 6.4 million people, that ratio goes to 1 in every 40 people (BJS 2020). The declines are seen as a positive, but the United States holds the largest number of prisoners of any nation in the world.

Prison is different from jail. A jail provides temporary confinement, usually while an individual awaits trial or parole. Prisons are facilities built for individuals serving sentences of more than a year. Whereas jails are small and local, prisons are large and run by either the state or the federal government. While incarcerated, people have differing levels of freedom and opportunity for engagement. Some inmates have options to take classes, play organized sports, and otherwise enrich themselves, usually with the goal of improving their lives upon release. Other incarcerated people have very limited opportunities. Usually these distinctions are based on the severity of their crimes and their behavior once imprisoned, but available resources and funding can be a significant factor.

Parole refers to a temporary release from prison or jail that requires supervision and the consent of officials. Parole is different from probation, which is supervised time used as an alternative to prison. Probation and parole can both follow a period of incarceration in prison, especially if the prison sentence is shortened. Most people in these situations are supervised by correctional officers or other appropriate professionals, including mental health professionals; they may attend regular meetings or counseling sessions and may be required to report on their activities and travel. People on probation or parole often have strict guidelines; not only will they be returned to jail upon committing a crime, but they may also be prohibited from associating with known criminals or suspects. These strategies are designed to prevent people on parole or probation from returning to criminal engagements, and to increase the likelihood that they will remain positive members of the community through interactions with family, productive employment, and mental health treatment if needed.

Policing and Race

This chapter described just a few of the sociological theories regarding deviance and crime; there are many more, as well as many approaches for preventing crime and enforcing laws. Citizens, law enforcement, and elected officials weigh a wide array of contexts and personal experiences when considering the best way to address crime. In at least some cases, decision makers are motivated by a desire to protect the status quo or improve their political or financial position.

As discussed earlier, during the 1980s, crack cocaine was exploding in usage among lower income, Black, and Hispanic people. White middle class and upper economic class Americans became terrified of the potential for their family and children to be involved with drugs and drug-related crime. State governments passed increasingly harsh laws, resulting in stiffer penalties and the removal of judges' discretion in drug case sentencing. Among the most well known of these were "three strikes laws," which mandated long sentences for

anyone convicted of multiple drug offenses, even if the offenses themselves were minor. Practices like civil forfeiture, in which law enforcement or municipalities could seize cash and property of suspected criminals even before they were convicted, provided a significant financial incentive to investigate drug crimes (Tiegen 2018).

The additional funding sources and high likelihood of successful prosecution drove police forces toward more aggressive and inequitable tactics. After training by the Drug Enforcement Agency, police forces around the country began racial profiling in a focused, consistent manner. Black and Hispanic people were many times more likely than White people to be pulled over for routine traffic stops. Local police forces focused on patrolling minority-inhabited neighborhoods, resulting in more arrests and prosecutions of Black and Hispanic people (Harris 2020).

No issue related to race and policing is of more concern than the shooting of unarmed Black people by police. The lack of punishment of police officers for committing these acts perpetuates the issue of unequal justice. Eric Garner was killed by an officer using a prohibited chokehold after Garner had allegedly committed a misdemeanor. Breonna Taylor was killed by police who violently infiltrated the wrong home. None of the officers involved in those deaths were prosecuted, though several were fired. The officer who killed George Floyd was immediately charged with the crime, and was eventually convicted, but some believe that to be the case due to the clear and horrific video of the event (Abdollah 2021).

Police advocates, elected officials, and ordinary citizens often express the importance of effective and just law enforcement. When “Defund The Police” became a widespread position during 2020, many Black people spoke out against it; polling revealed that a majority of Black people did not support the idea, and over 80 percent of Black people preferred having the police spend the same or more time in their communities (Saad 2020). While this frequently cited result is relatively consistent across different polls, it also reveals divisions within the Black community, often based on age or other factors. The same polls find that many Black people still distrust the police or feel less secure when they see them (Yahoo/Yougov 2020).

Key Terms

conflict theory a theory that examines social and economic factors as the causes of criminal deviance
control theory a theory that states social control is directly affected by the strength of social bonds and that deviance results from a feeling of disconnection from society
corporate crime crime committed by white-collar workers in a business environment
corrections system the system tasked with supervising individuals who have been arrested for, convicted of, or sentenced for criminal offenses
court a system that has the authority to make decisions based on law
crime a behavior that violates official law and is punishable through formal sanctions
criminal justice system an organization that exists to enforce a legal code
cultural deviance theory a theory that suggests conformity to the prevailing cultural norms of lower-class society causes crime
deviance a violation of contextual, cultural, or social norms
differential association theory a theory that states individuals learn deviant behavior from those close to them who provide models of and opportunities for deviance
formal sanctions sanctions that are officially recognized and enforced
hate crimes attacks based on a person's race, religion, or other characteristics
informal sanctions sanctions that occur in face-to-face interactions
labeling theory the ascribing of a deviant behavior to another person by members of society
legal codes codes that maintain formal social control through laws
master status a label that describes the chief characteristic of an individual
negative sanctions punishments for violating norms
nonviolent crimes crimes that involve the destruction or theft of property, but do not use force or the threat of force
police a civil force in charge of regulating laws and public order at a federal, state, or community level
positive sanctions rewards given for conforming to norms
power elite a small group of wealthy and influential people at the top of society who hold the power and resources
primary deviance a violation of norms that does not result in any long-term effects on the individual's self-image or interactions with others
sanctions the means of enforcing rules
secondary deviance deviance that occurs when a person's self-concept and behavior begin to change after his or her actions are labeled as deviant by members of society
self-report study a collection of data acquired using voluntary response methods, such as questionnaires or telephone interviews
social control the regulation and enforcement of norms
social disorganization theory a theory that asserts crime occurs in communities with weak social ties and the absence of social control
social order an arrangement of practices and behaviors on which society's members base their daily lives
strain theory a theory that addresses the relationship between having socially acceptable goals and having socially acceptable means to reach those goals
street crime crime committed by average people against other people or organizations, usually in public spaces
victimless crime activities against the law, but that do not result in injury to any individual other than the person who engages in them
violent crimes crimes based on the use of force or the threat of force

Section Summary

7.1 Deviance and Control

Deviance is a violation of norms. Whether or not something is deviant depends on contextual definitions, the situation, and people's response to the behavior. Society seeks to limit deviance through the use of sanctions that help maintain a system of social control. Deviance is often relative, and perceptions of it can change quickly and unexpectedly.

7.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime

The three major sociological paradigms offer different explanations for the motivation behind deviance and crime. Functionalists point out that deviance is a social necessity since it reinforces norms by reminding people of the consequences of violating them. Violating norms can open society's eyes to injustice in the system. Conflict theorists argue that crime stems from a system of inequality that keeps those with power at the top and those without power at the bottom. Symbolic interactionists focus attention on the socially constructed nature of the labels related to deviance. Crime and deviance are learned from the environment and enforced or discouraged by those around us.

7.3 Crime and the Law

Crime is established by legal codes and upheld by the criminal justice system. In the United States, there are three branches of the justice system: police, courts, and corrections. Although crime rates and incarceration increased throughout most of the twentieth century, they are now dropping. Despite these developments, inequitable law enformcenent is a destructive reality in American communities, and efforts are underway to improve outcomes.

Section Quiz

7.1 Deviance and Control

1. Which of the following best describes how deviance is defined?
   a. Deviance is defined by federal, state, and local laws.
   b. Deviance's definition is determined by one's religion.
   c. Deviance occurs whenever someone else is harmed by an action.
   d. Deviance is socially defined.

2. During the civil rights movement, Rosa Parks and other Black protestors spoke out against segregation by refusing to sit at the back of the bus. This is an example of _____.
   a. An act of social control
   b. An act of deviance
   c. A social norm
   d. Criminal mores

3. A student has a habit of talking on their cell phone during class. One day, the professor stops the lecture and asks the student to respect others in the class by turning off the phone. In this situation, the professor used _____ to maintain social control.
   a. Informal negative sanctions
   b. Informal positive sanctions
   c. Formal negative sanctions
   d. Formal positive sanctions

4. Societies practice social control to maintain _____.
   a. formal sanctions
   b. social order
   c. cultural deviance
   d. sanction labeling

5. One day, you decide to wear pajamas to the grocery store. While you shop, you notice people giving you strange looks and whispering to others. In this case, the grocery store patrons are demonstrating _____.
   a. deviance
   b. formal sanctions
   c. informal sanctions
   d. positive sanctions

7.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime

6. A student wakes up late and realizes their sociology exam starts in five minutes. They jump into their car and speed down the road, where they are pulled over by a police officer. The student explains that they are running late, and the officer lets them off with a warning. The student's actions are an example of _____.
   a. primary deviance
   b. positive deviance
   c. secondary deviance
   d. master deviance

7. According to C. Wright Mills, which of the following people is most likely to be a member of the power elite?
   a. A war veteran
   b. A senator
   c. A professor
   d. A mechanic

8. According to social disorganization theory, crime is most likely to occur where?
   a. A community where neighbors don't know each other very well
   b. A neighborhood with mostly elderly citizens
   c. A city with a large minority population
   d. A college campus with students who are very competitive

9. According to the concept of the power elite, why would a celebrity commit a crime?
   a. Because his parents committed similar crimes
   b. Because his fame protects him from retribution
   c. Because his fame disconnects him from society
   d. Because he is challenging socially accepted norms

10. A convicted sexual offender is released on parole and arrested two weeks later for repeated sexual crimes. How would labeling theory explain this?
   a. The offender has been labeled deviant by society and has accepted a new master status.
   b. The offender has returned to their old neighborhood and so reestablished their former habits.
   c. The offender has lost the social bonds they made in prison and feels disconnected from society.
   d. The offender is poor and responding to the different cultural values that exist in their community.

11. _____ deviance is a violation of norms that _____result in a person being labeled a deviant.
   a. Secondary; does not
   b. Negative; does
   c. Primary; does not
   d. Primary; may or may not

7.3 Crime and the Law

12. Which of the following is an example of corporate crime?
   a. Embezzlement
   b. Larceny
   c. Assault
   d. Burglary

13. Spousal abuse is an example of a _____.
   a. street crime
   b. corporate crime
   c. violent crime
   d. nonviolent crime

14. Which of the following situations best describes crime trends in the United States?
   a. Rates of violent and nonviolent crimes are decreasing.
   b. Rates of violent crimes are decreasing, but there are more nonviolent crimes now than ever before.
   c. Crime rates have skyrocketed since the 1970s due to lax corrections laws.
   d. Rates of street crime have gone up, but corporate crime has gone down.

15. What is a disadvantage of the *National Crime Victimization Survey* (NCVS)?
   a. The NCVS doesn't include demographic data, such as age or gender.
   b. The NCVS may be unable to reach important groups, such as those without phones.
   c. The NCVS doesn't address the relationship between the criminal and the victim.
   d. The NCVS only includes information collected by police officers.

Short Answer

7.1 Deviance and Control

1. If given the choice, would you purchase an unusual car such as a hearse for everyday use? How would your friends, family, or significant other react? Since deviance is culturally defined, most of the decisions we make are dependent on the reactions of others. Is there anything the people in your life encourage you to do that you don't? Why don't you?

2. Think of a recent time when you used informal negative sanctions. To what act of deviance were you responding? How did your actions affect the deviant person or persons? How did your reaction help maintain social control?

7.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime

3. Pick a famous politician, business leader, or celebrity who has been arrested recently. What crime did they allegedly commit? Who was the victim? Explain their actions from the point of view of one of the major sociological paradigms. What factors best explain how this person might be punished if convicted of the crime?

4. If we assume that the power elite's status is always passed down from generation to generation, how would Edwin Sutherland explain these patterns of power through differential association theory? What crimes do these elite few get away with?

7.3 Crime and the Law

5. Recall the crime statistics presented in this section. Do they surprise you? Are these statistics represented accurately in the media? Why, or why not?

Further Research

7.1 Deviance and Control

Although we rarely think of it in this way, deviance can have a positive effect on society. Check out the Positive Deviance Initiative (http://openstax.org/l/Positive_Deviance) , a program initiated by Tufts University to promote social movements around the world that strive to improve people's lives.

7.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Deviance and Crime

The Skull and Bones Society (http://openstax.org/l/Dilemma) made news in 2004 when it was revealed that then-President George W. Bush and his Democratic challenger, John Kerry, had both been members at Yale University. In the years since, conspiracy theorists have linked the secret society to numerous world events, arguing that many of the nation's most powerful people are former Bonesmen. Although such ideas may raise a lot of skepticism, many influential people of the past century have been Skull and Bones Society members, and the society is sometimes described as a college version of the power elite later in life.

7.3 Crime and the Law

Is the U.S. criminal justice system confusing? You're not alone. Check out this handy flowchart from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (http://openstax.org/l/US_Criminal_Justice_BJS) .

How is crime data collected in the United States? Read about the methods of data collection and take the National Crime Victimization Survey (http://openstax.org/l/Victimization_Survey) .

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Media and Technology 8

FIGURE 8.1 Music fans connect in ways that overcome geographic, socioeconomic, and political differences. (Credit: whataleydude/flickr)

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION When a celebrity announces that they are quitting social media, it's big news (especially on social media). Depending on the star's status and their reason for leaving, the decision is met with a blend of astonishment, dismay, concern for the individual or others they affect, and discussion about larger problems like bullying or online toxicity.

Why do they quit? Their reasons vary, and many eventually return. Lizzo left Twitter after claiming there were "too many trolls." Lorde indicated that the stress of continual updates, "having front-row seats to the hellfire" necessitated a break (Kirkpatrick 2020). Other artists, like Coldplay, never formally deactivated their accounts, but went for long periods of inactivity. Rhianna took a six month hiatus; Justin Bieber and Adele also went without for some time. No matter what the reason, if a popular artist quits social media, a slew of articles and interviews will focus on the decision and the reasons behind it.

What makes these decisions newsworthy? A person deciding not to use a particular app doesn't affect our day-to-day life. Or does it? What if that person shared intimate aspects of their life, offering a sense of connection to their followers? What if the singer provided continual updates on the progress of their new album, or gave their followers a better chance of meeting them? What if that singer posted or liked new remixes or playlists of their material, giving their fans new music to try?

Beyond the relationship with the artist, the social media presence gives fans a sense of community. Recall the discussion of groups. In traditional terms, a musician's fanbase would be a secondary group: The group creates community, but the members aren't close and are unlikely to serve expressive functions. But social media can easily turn that secondary group into a primary one. Follow a Reddit thread about a new video, and you'll see dozens of people who seem to know each other well, who affirm or argue with each other along familiar lines, as if they're cousins reuniting over a dinner table. They've never met in person and probably never will, but they may know intimate details about each other's lives; they've shared ups and downs in the manner similar to a local, close-knit group.

Selena Gomez has had a complicated relationship with social media. She has announced several times that she is quitting, and went through periods of regular downtime. She's indicated that many of her updates are posted from friends' devices. "As soon as I became the most followed person on Instagram," she said, "I sort of freaked out. It had become so consuming to me. It's what I woke up to and went to sleep to. I was an addict, and it felt like I was seeing things I didn't want to see, like it was putting things in my head that I didn't want to care about" (Haskell 2017).

This chapter will further explore the relationships, opportunities, and issues related to media and technology. While the specific products and platforms may quickly grow out of date, consider the larger implications of group dynamics, culture, socialization, and stratification as they relate to the ways we communicate and connect, and the old and new technologies that are meant to help us.

8.1 Technology Today

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Define technology and describe its evolution
- Explain technological inequality and issues related to unequal access to technology
- Describe the role of planned obsolescence in technological development

(a) (b)

FIGURE 8.2 Throughout history, technology has been used to convey information. From petroglyphs near a Native American dwelling at Canyon de Chelly to warning signs outside of animal pens, our innovations have been used to provide the most effective delivery possible. (Credit: a: Anthony Quintano/flickr; b: tenioman/flickr)

It is easy to look at the latest virtual reality headset and think technology is a recent addition to our world. But from the steam engine to the most cutting-edge robotic surgery tools, **technology** has described the application of science to address the problems of daily life. We might roll our eyes at enormous and clunky computers of the 1970s that had far less storage than a free thumb drive. But chances are, twenty years from now our skinny laptops and pocket-filling phones will look just as archaic.

What Is Technology?

If someone asked your instructor what instructional technology they used, your instructor would likely assume the questioner was referring to courseware platforms, classroom response offerings, or presentation software. But if your instructor simply responded with, "pencil and paper," they'd still be accurately describing

technology. Modern paper and writing devices would have been considered fantastical creations in ancient times. And the fact that they endure, even as many other potential replacements have come into play, shows how effective those technologies are.

Just as the availability of digital technology shapes how we live today, the creation of stone tools changed how premodern humans lived and how well they ate. From the first calculator, invented in 2400 BCE Babylon in the form of an abacus, to the predecessor of the modern computer, created in 1882 by Charles Babbage, all of our technological innovations are advancements on previous iterations. And indeed, all aspects of our lives are influenced by technology. In agriculture, the introduction of machines that can till, thresh, plant, and harvest greatly reduced the need for manual labor, which in turn meant there were fewer rural jobs. This led to the urbanization of society, as well as lowered birth rates because there was less need for large families to work the farms. In the criminal justice system, the ability to ascertain innocence through DNA testing has saved the lives of people on death row. The examples are endless: technology plays a role in absolutely every aspect of our lives.

Technological Inequality

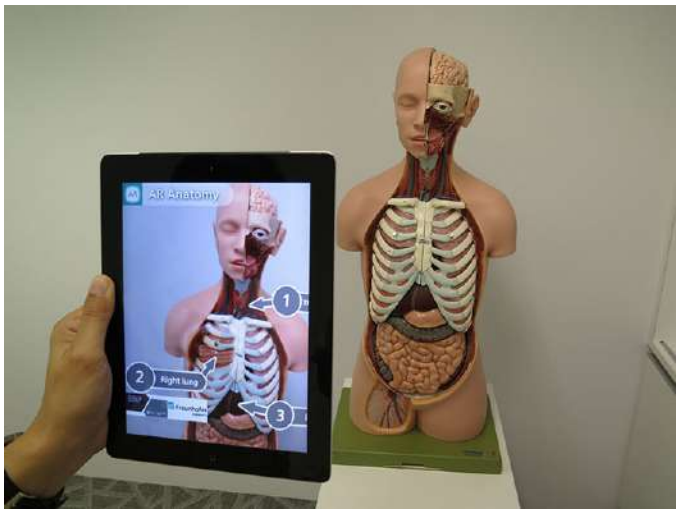

FIGURE 8.3 Augmented reality devices, robotics and 3D printing labs, and creatorspaces can significantly improve education. But due to their expense, they can also increase learning inequities.

As with any improvement to human society, not everyone has equal access. Technology, in particular, often creates changes that lead to ever greater inequalities. In short, the gap gets wider faster. This technological stratification has led to a new focus on ensuring better access for all.

There are two forms of technological stratification. The first is differential class-based access to technology in the form of the digital divide. This digital divide has led to the second form, a **knowledge gap**, which is, as it sounds, an ongoing and increasing gap in information for those who have less access to technology. Simply put, students in well-funded schools receive more exposure to technology than students in poorly funded schools. Those students with more exposure gain more proficiency, which makes them far more marketable in an increasingly technology-based job market and leaves our society divided into those with technological knowledge and those without. Even as we improve access, we have failed to address an increasingly evident gap in **e-readiness**—the ability to sort through, interpret, and process knowledge (Sciadas 2003).

Since the beginning of the millennium, social science researchers have tried to bring attention to the **digital divide**, the uneven access to technology among different races, classes, and geographic areas. The term became part of the common lexicon in 1996, when then Vice President Al Gore used it in a speech. This was the point when personal computer use shifted dramatically, from 300,000 users in 1991 to more than 10 million users by 1996 (Rappaport 2009). In part, the issue of the digital divide had to do with communities that received infrastructure upgrades that enabled high-speed Internet access, upgrades that largely went to

affluent urban and suburban areas, leaving out large swaths of the country.

At the end of the twentieth century, technology access was also a big part of the school experience for those whose communities could afford it. Early in the millennium, poorer communities had little or no technology access, while well-off families had personal computers at home and wired classrooms in their schools. In the 2000s, however, the prices for low-end computers dropped considerably, and it appeared the digital divide was naturally ending. Research demonstrates that technology use and Internet access still vary a great deal by race, class, and age in the United States, though most studies agree that there is minimal difference in Internet use by adult men and adult women.

Data from the Pew Research Center (Perrin 2019) suggests the emergence of yet another divide. Larger percentages of groups such as Latinos and African Americans use their phones rather than traditional computers to connect to the Internet and undertake related activities. Roughly eight in ten White people reported owning computers, in contrast to roughly six in ten Black and Hispanic people owning them. White people were also more likely to have broadband (high-speed Internet) in their homes. But approximately one in four Black and Hispanic people reported being smartphone-only Internet users, a number that far outpaces White people's reliance on the devices. While it might seem that the Internet is the Internet, regardless of how you get there, there's a notable difference. Tasks like updating a résumé or filling out a job application are much harder on a cell phone than on a large-screen computer in the home. As a result, the digital divide might mean no access to computers or the Internet, but could mean access to the kind of online technology that allows for empowerment, not just entertainment (Washington 2011).

Another aspect of the digital divide is present in the type of community one lives in. Census data released in 2018 showed that in the study period of 2013 to 2017, 78 percent of U.S. households had Internet access, but that homes in rural and low-income areas were below that national average by 13 percent. The data was collected by county, and showed that "mostly urban" counties significantly outpaced "mostly rural" counties. "Completely rural," lower-income counties had the lowest rates of home Internet adoption, at about 60 percent (Martin 2019).

One potential outcome of reduced home Internet and computer access can be the relatively low representation of certain populations in computing courses, computing majors, and computing careers. Some school districts, often with the help of government grants or corporate sponsorships, aim to address this aspect of the digital divide by providing computers to those who need them, either at a low cost or at no charge. A number of organizations, such as Code.org, Black Girls Code, and Black Boys Code, work to overcome the disparity by offering computer science education programs and camps, collaborative instruction programs with local school districts, and (perhaps most impactful in the long term) teacher training programs. As a result, the number of Black and Hispanic students in courses like Advanced Placement Computer Science has increased dramatically in recent years, as has the number of college majors from the same populations.

As a whole, the digital divide brings some level of controversy. Some question why it still exists after having been identified more than twenty years ago. Others question whether or not it exists at all, and offer data to support the claim that it does not exist (American Press Institute 2015). However, most experts agree that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that the digital divide has persisted, particularly in education. While millions of students were confined to home and remote instruction, they were divided by their Internet access, their familiarity with computer hardware and software, and their ability to solve their own technology issues (PRB 2020). Even when governments and educational institutions implemented improvements to the access and technology situation, there remained the qualitative aspect of unplanned remote education: Many instructors and students are not as effective while communicating only through computer screens. When considering education, policymakers faced arduous decision-making processes and contentious debates as they tried the balance the issues of safety, educational quality, teacher safety, student mental health, and the overall changing landscape of the pandemic.

Constant Contact and Replaced Relationships

How often do you check your phone for new messages or alerts? If you're typical, it might be over 100 times a day. (The number is difficult to cite with confidence, because every few months, organizations or companies release new studies claiming to have updated statistics.) What happens to your phone when you are sleeping? In 2012, researchers reported that "44% of cell phone owners have slept with their phone next to their bed because they wanted to make sure they didn't miss any calls, text messages, or other updates during the night, and 29% of cell owners describe their cell phone as 'something they can't imagine living without'" (Smith 2012). Just three years later, a frequently cited report by Bank of America indicated the number of phone-accompanied sleepers was at 71 percent (Kooser 2015). A more recent survey of 500 people found it to be 66 percent, but that survey only included adults (Abbott 2020). However, these surveys and the reaction to them might be a factor of selective memory: Prior to the rise of cell phones, many people had telephones in their rooms, often within arm's reach of their bed.

While people report that cell phones make it easier to stay in touch, simplify planning, and increase their productivity, those are not the only impacts of constant device usage in the United States. Smith also reports that "roughly one in five cell owners say that their phone has made it at least somewhat harder to forget about work at home or on the weekends; to give people their undivided attention; or to focus on a single task without being distracted" (Smith 2012). As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, even celebrities who have perhaps benefitted the most from increased communication and social media report stress and concern about their online presence and its related outcomes.

With so many people using social media both in the United States and abroad, it is no surprise that social media is a powerful force for social change or political expression. For example, McKenna Pope, a thirteen-year-old girl, used the Internet to successfully petition Hasbro to fight gender stereotypes by creating a gender-neutral Easy-Bake Oven instead of using only the traditional pink color (Kumar 2014). Movements such as MeToo and Black Lives Matter gained prominence partly through what is sometimes referred to as "hashtag activism." More recently, TikTok users who actively opposed Donald Trump's re-election registered for nearly all the seats at a major rally. When they did not attend, the arena was nearly empty, after the campaign had predicted it would be overflowing. Later, Trump supporters used the social media site Parler in their own rally planning and coordination.

Such consistent and impactful usage leads to unavoidable results: Newer communication methods are replacing older ones. Speaking by phone seems archaic and almost intrusive for some people, who greatly prefer non-voice messaging apps or texts. Media observers, etiquette commentators, and friends and family may lament people beginning and ending relationships by text message, but those methods have proven more comfortable, especially for young people.

What are the effects? There have not been studies on every type of relationship, but research into romantic relationships shows interesting results. First, consider the elements of a relationship. One is attachment, or the bond that people form with each other. Research has shown that constant communication via messaging significantly increases the level of attachment. That fact seems intuitive: people who continually check in on each other, report their whereabouts, and offer support or affirmation will build a stronger bond. The same study, however, found that the respondents rated the overall quality of the relationship as weaker or less satisfying when it was dominated by text messaging instead of voice conversation (Luo 2014).

Many of us have experienced another aspect of relationships: reliance or imbalance. Researchers have found that close friends who are heavily reliant on mobile devices and associated messaging may have more issues regarding overdependence on the relationship and differing expectations regarding communication. Friendships that do not rely on mobile devices may have far less frequent contact. Research found elements of guilt and pressure to respond (called entrapment) in mobile-dependent relationships, which led to overall dissatisfaction (Hall 2012).

Online Privacy, Security, and Control

As we increase our footprints on the web by going online more often to connect socially, share material, conduct business, and store information, we also increase our vulnerability to those with negative intent. Most Americans seem to accept that increased usage of online and related tools brings risks, but their perceptions of those risks are evolving. For example, people have different viewpoints on risks associated with individuals, companies, and the government. The Pew Research Center conducts frequent surveys on these topics. A recent publication indicated the following:

- 81 percent of people felt they had little control over the data collected by companies; 84 percent felt they had little control over data collected by the government.
- 62 percent felt that it was not possible to go through the day without having data collected about them by companies; 63% felt it wasn't possible to go through a day without data collection by the government.
- 79 percent were concerned about that data use by companies; 64 percent were concerned about data use by the government.

Other elements of the research demonstrate that older Americans felt more concern than younger ones, and that Black and Hispanic people were more likely than White people to believe the government was tracking them (Auxier 2019).

These attitudes may be revealed by practices or attitudes toward privacy efforts and safeguards. One person may be annoyed every time a privacy notice interrupts them, and they may simply sign the statement without thinking much about it. Another person may read every word of the agreement and carefully deliberate over whether to proceed.

Online privacy concerns also extend from individuals to their dependents. In accordance with the Child Online Privacy Protection Act, school districts must consider and control certain elements of privacy on behalf of students, meaning they cannot require or encourage students under age thirteen to provide personal information. Likewise, online platforms such as Instagram do not let children under the age of thirteen register for their sites. And where children are registered by their parents, sites like YouTube and, more recently, TikTok issue controls to prevent inappropriate portrayals by children or inappropriate behavior by other members. For example, YouTube often disables comments on videos produced by children (Moreno 2020). TikTok added privacy and protection methods in 2020, but in early 2021 was hit with allegations of violating child safety and privacy guidelines.

Although schools and companies are required to take steps to lower risks to children, parents and guardians are free to make their own choices on behalf of their children. Some parents avoid showing their children on social media; they do not post pictures, and ask family members to refrain from doing so (Levy, 2019). On the other end of the spectrum, some parents run social media accounts for their children. Sometimes referred to as "sharents," they may share entertaining videos, promote products through demos or try-ons, or post professionally produced photos on behalf of clothing companies or equipment makers. A child's (even a toddler's) role as an influencer can be financially lucrative, and companies making everything from helmets to dancewear have taken notice (Allchin 2012).

Net Neutrality

The issue of **net neutrality**, the principle that all Internet data should be treated equally by Internet service providers, is part of the national debate about Internet access and the digital divide. On one side of this debate is the belief that those who provide Internet service, like those who provide electricity and water, should be treated as common carriers, legally prohibited from discriminating based on the customer or nature of the goods. Supporters of net neutrality suggest that without such legal protections, the Internet could be divided into “fast” and “slow” lanes. A conflict perspective theorist might suggest that this discrimination would allow bigger corporations, such as Amazon, to pay Internet providers a premium for faster service, which could lead to gaining an advantage that would drive small, local competitors out of business.

The other side of the debate holds the belief that designating Internet service providers as common carriers would constitute an unreasonable regulatory burden and limit the ability of telecommunication companies to operate profitably. A functional perspective theorist might point out that, without profits, companies would not invest in making improvements to their Internet service or expanding those services to underserved areas. The final decision rests with the Federal Communications Commission and the federal government, which must decide how to fairly regulate broadband providers without dividing the Internet into haves and have-nots.

8.2 Media and Technology in Society

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the evolution and current role of different media, like newspapers, television, and new media
- Describe the function of product advertising in media
- Demonstrate awareness of the social homogenization and social fragmentation that occur via modern society's use of technology and media

FIGURE 8.4 Facebook's VP of Engineering Regina Dugan gave a talk about innovations in the platform's technologies in which she shared potential innovations, including creating text directly from our thoughts. While the prospect of drafting messages or papers by thinking about them would certainly speed up our processes, opening our thoughts directly to a social media company might have larger implications. (Credit: Anthony Quintano/flickr)

Technology and the media are interwoven, and neither can be separated from contemporary society in most core and semi-peripheral nations. **Media** is a term that refers to all print, digital, and electronic means of communication. From the time the printing press was created (and even before), technology has influenced how and where information is shared. Today, it is impossible to discuss media and the ways societies communicate without addressing the fast-moving pace of technology change. Twenty years ago, if you wanted to share news of your baby's birth or a job promotion, you phoned or wrote letters. You might tell a handful of people, but you probably wouldn't call up several hundred, including your old high school chemistry teacher, to let them know. Now, you might join an online community of parents-to-be even before you announce your pregnancy via a staged Instagram picture. The circle of communication is wider than ever, and when we talk about how societies engage with technology, we must take media into account, and vice versa.

Technology creates media. The comic book you bought your daughter is a form of media, as is the movie you streamed for family night, the web site you used to order takeout, the billboard you passed on the way to pick up your food, and the newspaper you read while you were waiting for it. Without technology, media would not exist, but remember, technology is more than just the media we are exposed to.

Categorizing Technology

There is no one way of dividing technology into categories. Whereas once it might have been simple to classify

innovations such as machine-based or drug-based or the like, the interconnected strands of technological development mean that advancement in one area might be replicated in dozens of others. For simplicity's sake, we will look at how the U.S. Patent Office, which receives patent applications for nearly all major innovations worldwide, addresses patents. This regulatory body will patent three types of innovation. **Utility patents** are the first type. These are granted for the invention or discovery of any new and useful process, product, or machine, or for a significant improvement to existing technologies. The second type of patent is a **design patent**. Commonly conferred in architecture and industrial design, this means someone has invented a new and original design for a manufactured product. **Plant patents**, the final type, recognize the discovery of new plant types that can be asexually reproduced. While genetically modified food is the hot-button issue within this category, farmers have long been creating new hybrids and patenting them. A more modern example might be food giant Monsanto, which patents corn with built-in pesticide (U.S. Patent and Trademark Office 2011).

Anderson and Tushman (1990) suggest an **evolutionary model of technological change**, in which a breakthrough in one form of technology leads to a number of variations. Once those are assessed, a prototype emerges, and then a period of slight adjustments to the technology, interrupted by a breakthrough. For example, in terms of portable data storage, the first mainstream device was a floppy disk–a square, plastic object larger than a playing card, which in its final iteration held 1.4 megabytes of data (or less than a single high-resolution photo). Until the early 2000s, these were common formats, and students and professionals would regularly carry several of them. Floppy disks were improved and upgraded, then replaced by higher-capacity Zip and Jaz disks, which were then replaced by flash drives. This is essentially a generational model for categorizing technology, in which first-generation technology is a relatively unsophisticated jumping-off point that leads to an improved second generation, and so on.

Another type of evolution involves disruptive technology (or disruptive innovation), which is a product, service, or process that has a major effect on the operation of an entire industry, and/or may create new industries or new markets. In the example above, a disruptive technology might be the advent of cloud-based storage platforms like Google Drive and iCloud, which have significantly reduced the need for physical portable storage. Disruptive technology can create and destroy entire industries, sometimes in a rapid manner rather than in an evolutionary one. In one of the most famous examples, the advent of digital photography rendered film-based cameras obsolete; the change came quickly, and many companies could not adjust. In a similar manner, ride-sharing services have had a massive impact on the taxi and limousine industry. Emerging technologies such as blockchain, additive manufacturing (3D printing), and augmented reality are likely to have similar impacts. For example, if companies decide that it is more efficient to 3D print many products or components close to their destinations instead of shipping them from distant manufacturing plants and warehouses, the entire shipping industry may be affected.

The sociological impact of disruptive technology can be sudden. Digital photography, for example, resulted in the rapid decline of companies like Kodak, which had been stalwarts of the American economy and a major employer. Layoffs devastated cities like Rochester, New York. The advent of online music purchasing and subscription services resulted in the closure of thousands of record stores, both small businesses and large chains like Tower Records. Beyond the economic impact, these stores were often parts of the fabric of communities, places for fans to gather to explore and share music. Automation has likewise changed manufacturing and mining, resulting in severe job loss and drastic alterations in regions such as the Great Lakes, where many towns went from being part of the Manufacturing Belt to being part of the Rust Belt.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Violence in Media and Video Games: Does It Matter?

FIGURE 8.5 One of the most popular video games, Grand Theft Auto, has frequently been at the center of debate about gratuitous violence in the gaming world. (Credit: Meddy Garnet/flickr)

A glance through popular video game and movie titles geared toward children and teens shows the vast spectrum of violence that is displayed, condoned, and acted out.

As a way to guide parents in their programming choices, the motion picture industry put a rating system in place in the 1960s. But new media—video games in particular—proved to be uncharted territory. In 1994, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ERSB) set a ratings system for games that addressed issues of violence, sexuality, drug use, and the like. California took it a step further by making it illegal to sell video games to underage buyers. The case led to a heated debate about personal freedoms and child protection, and in 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the California law, stating it violated freedom of speech (ProCon 2012).

Children's play has often involved games of aggression—from cops and robbers to fake sword fights. Many articles report on the controversy surrounding the suggested link between violent video games and violent behavior. Is the link real? Psychologists Anderson and Bushman (2001) reviewed forty-plus years of research on the subject and, in 2003, determined that there are causal linkages between violent video game use and aggression. They found that children who had just played a violent video game demonstrated an immediate increase in hostile or aggressive thoughts, an increase in aggressive emotions, and physiological arousal that increased the chances of acting out aggressive behavior (Anderson 2003).

However, though the American Psychological Association and other researchers found an increase in aggressive tendencies based on video game play, several studies and conclusions indicated "scant evidence" that violent video games cause either physical violence or criminal behavior. Researchers have found correlations between those behaviors, essentially indicating that violent people may be more likely to play violent video games, but that still does not mean that video games cause violence.

Types of Media and Technology

Media and technology have evolved hand in hand, from early print to modern publications, from radio to

television to film. New media emerge constantly, such as we see in the online world.

Newspaper

Early forms of print media, found in ancient Rome, were hand-copied onto boards and carried around to keep the citizenry informed. With the invention of the printing press, the way that people shared ideas changed, as information could be mass produced and stored. For the first time, there was a way to spread knowledge and information more efficiently; many credit this development as leading to the Renaissance and ultimately the Age of Enlightenment. This is not to say that newspapers of old were more trustworthy than the *Weekly World News* and *National Enquirer* are today. Sensationalism abounded, as did censorship that forbade any subjects that would incite the populace.

The invention of the telegraph, in the mid-1800s, changed print media almost as much as the printing press. Suddenly information could be transmitted in minutes. As the nineteenth century became the twentieth, U.S. publishers such as Hearst redefined the world of print media and wielded an enormous amount of power to socially construct national and world events. Of course, even as the media empires of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer were growing, print media also allowed for the dissemination of countercultural or revolutionary materials. Internationally, Vladimir Lenin's *Irksa* (*The Spark*) newspaper was published in 1900 and played a role in Russia's growing communist movement (World Association of Newspapers 2004).

With the invention and widespread use of television in the mid-twentieth century, newspaper circulation steadily dropped off, and in the 21st century, circulation has dropped further as more people turn to internet news sites and other forms of new media to stay informed. According to the Pew Research Center, 2009 saw an unprecedented drop in newspaper circulation––down 10.6 percent from the year before (Pew 2010).

This shift away from newspapers as a source of information has profound effects on societies. When the news is given to a large diverse conglomerate of people, it must maintain some level of broad-based reporting and balance in order to appeal to a broad audience and keep them subscribing. As newspapers decline, news sources become more fractured, so each segment of the audience can choose specifically what it wants to hear and what it wants to avoid. Increasingly, newspapers are shifting online in an attempt to remain relevant. It is hard to tell what impact new media platforms will have on the way we receive and process information.

It is hard to tell what impact new media platforms will have on the way we receive and process information. The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (2013) reported that audiences for all the major news magazines declined in 2012, though digital ad revenue increased. The same report suggested that, while newspaper circulation is holding steady at around $10 billion after years of decline, it is digital pay plans that allow newspapers to keep their heads above water, and the digital ad revenue that is increasing for news magazines is not enough to compensate for print revenue loss in newspapers.

A 2014 report suggested that U.S. adults read a median of five books per year in 2013, which is about average. But are they reading traditional print or e-books? About 69 percent of people said they had read at least one printed book in the past year, versus 28 percent who said they'd read an e-book (DeSilver 2014). Is print more effective at conveying information? In recent study, Mangen, Walgermo, and Bronnick (2013) found that students who read on paper performed slightly better than those who read an e-book on an open-book reading comprehension exam of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. While a meta-analysis of research by Andrews (1992) seemed to confirm that people read more slowly and comprehend less when reading from screens, a meta-analysis of more recent research on this topic does not show anything definite (Noyes and Garland 2008).

Television and Radio

FIGURE 8.6 Television control rooms feature feeds from many other networks, so that producers and reporters can see different perspectives on the same events and be alerted to new developments around the world (Credit: Anthony Quintano/flickr).

Radio programming obviously preceded television, but both shaped people's lives in much the same way. In both cases, information (and entertainment) could be enjoyed at home, with a kind of immediacy and community that newspapers could not offer. For instance, many people in the United States might remember when they saw on television or heard on the radio that the Twin Towers in New York City had been attacked in 2001. Even though people were in their own homes, media allowed them to share these moments in real time. This same kind of separate-but-communal approach occurred with entertainment too. School-aged children and office workers gathered to discuss the previous night's installment of a serial television or radio show.

Right up through the 1970s, U.S. television was dominated by three major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) that competed for ratings and advertising dollars. The networks also exerted a lot of control over what people watched. Public television, in contrast, offered an educational nonprofit alternative to the sensationalization of news spurred by the network competition for viewers and advertising dollars. Those sources—PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), the BBC (British Broadcasting Company), and CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Company)—garnered a worldwide reputation for high-quality programming and a global perspective. Al Jazeera, the Arabic independent news station, has joined this group as a similar media force that broadcasts to people worldwide.

The impact of television on U.S. society is hard to overstate. By the late 1990s, 98 percent of U.S. homes had at least one television set, and the average person watched between two and a half and five hours of television daily. All this television has a powerful socializing effect, providing reference groups while reinforcing social norms, values, and beliefs.

Film

The film industry took off in the 1930s, when color and sound were first integrated into feature films. Like television, early films were unifying for society: as people gathered in theaters to watch new releases, they would laugh, cry, and be scared together. Movies also act as time capsules or cultural touchstones for society. From Westerns starring the tough-talking Clint Eastwood to the biopic of Facebook founder and Harvard dropout Mark Zuckerberg, movies illustrate society's dreams, fears, and experiences. While many consider Hollywood the epicenter of moviemaking, India's Bollywood actually produces more films per year, speaking to the cultural aspirations and norms of Indian society. The film industry, like other media formats, has gone

through substantial change as a result of streaming services, online privacy, and the new competition for people's entertainment dollars. Because the mainstream movie industry has been so reliant on ticket sales at live theaters, the COVID-19 pandemic affected it more dramatically than most other media categories. Highly anticipated movies slated for 2020 and 2021 releases were delayed or shifted to streaming distribution, reducing revenue. And some companies made lasting decisions regarding their future offerings.

New Media and Online Environments

New media encompasses all interactive forms of information exchange. These include social networking sites, blogs, podcasts, wikis, and virtual worlds. Many are not "new" in the sense that they were developed in the past few years (some may be older than you), but they are newer than the media mentioned above, and they rely on types of technologies that were not available until about thirty years ago. Many are ways disruptive to traditional media or to companies that rely on those other formats. Clearly, the list of new media grows almost daily, and you might feel we are missing some. In fact, the immediacy of new media coupled with the lack of oversight means we must be more careful than ever to ensure that we are making good decisions about the accuracy, ethics, and cultural responsiveness of these formats.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

Planned Obsolescence: Technology That's Built to Crash

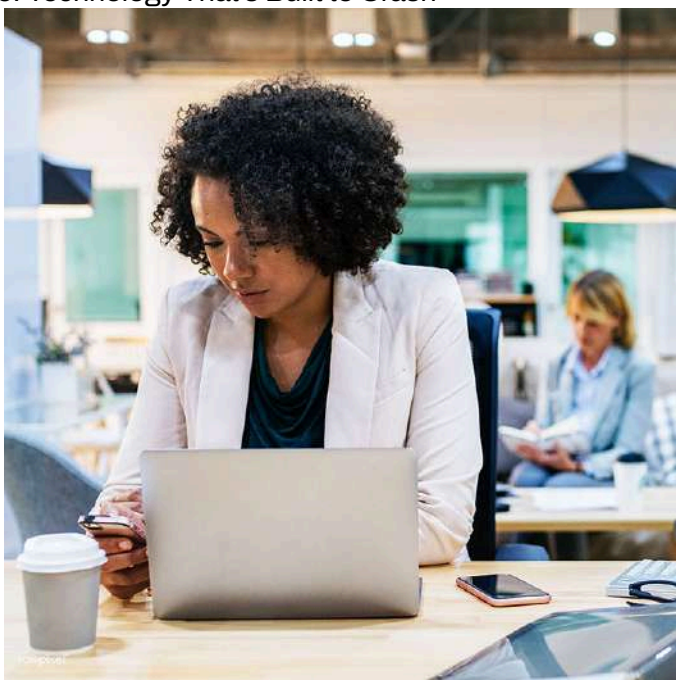

FIGURE 8.7 Many people are incredibly reliant on their devices, but in business contexts, a failing phone or computer can have impacts on customers and revenues. (Credit: Rawpixel Ltd/flickr)

Chances are your mobile phone company, as well as the makers of your laptop and your household appliances, are all counting on their products to fail. Not too quickly, of course, or consumers wouldn't stand for it—but frequently enough that you might find that it costs far more to fix a device than to replace it with a newer model. Or you find the phone company e-mails you saying that you're eligible for a free new phone, because yours is a whopping two years old. And appliance repair people say that while they might be fixing some machines that are twenty years old, they generally aren't fixing those that are seven years old; newer models are built to be thrown out. This strategy is called **planned obsolescence**, and it is the business practice of planning for a product to be obsolete or unusable from the time it is created.

To some extent, planned obsolescence is a natural extension of new and emerging technologies. After all, who is going to cling to an enormous and slow desktop computer from 2000 when a few hundred dollars can buy one that is significantly faster and better? But the practice is not always so benign. The classic example of planned obsolescence is the nylon stocking. Women's stockings—once an everyday staple of women's lives––get "runs" or "ladders" after only a few wearings. This requires the stockings to be discarded and new ones purchased. Not surprisingly, the garment industry did not invest heavily in finding a rip-proof fabric; it was in manufacturers' best interest that their product be regularly replaced.

Those who use Microsoft Windows might feel that like the women who purchased endless pairs of stockings, they are victims of planned obsolescence. Every time Windows releases a new operating system, there are typically not many innovations in it that consumers feel they must have. However, the software programs are upwardly compatible only. This means that while the new versions can read older files, the old version cannot read the newer ones. In short order, those who have not upgraded right away find themselves unable to open files sent by colleagues or friends, and they usually wind up upgrading as well.

Planned obsolescence is not always done ethically, and some companies can dictate the obsolescence after the user makes a purchase. Apple users took to social media to confirm that their older iPhones suddenly began losing power or were slowing down considerably. Many users bought new phones at high prices, and later learned that the slow downs were intended by the phone maker. Customers filed dozens of class action lawsuits, which are suits where a very large group of people can band together. Apple was found to have intentionally and improperly altered its phones through a software update in order to hide battery problems. While it never admitted guilt, Apple's $500 million settlement paid benefits to iPhone 6 and iPhone 7 users who had been affected, and a later $113 agreement with state attorneys general included provisions to behave more ethically and transparently (CNBC 2020).

Product Advertising and the Attention Economy

Companies use advertising to sell to us, but the way they reach us is changing. Naomi Klein identified the destructive impact of corporate branding her 1999 text, *No Logo*, an antiglobalization treatise that focused on sweatshops, corporate power, and anticonsumerist social movements. In the post-millennial society, synergistic advertising practices ensure you are receiving the same message from a variety of sources and on a variety of platforms. For example, you may see billboards for Miller beer on your way to a stadium, sit down to watch a game preceded by a Miller commercial on the big screen, and watch a halftime ad in which people are shown holding up the trademark bottles. Chances are you can guess which brand of beer is for sale at the concession stand.

Advertising has changed, as technology and media have allowed consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues. From the invention of the remote control, which allows us to skip television advertising without leaving our seats, to recording devices that let us watch programs but skip the ads, conventional television advertising is on the wane. And print media is no different. Advertising revenue in newspapers and on television has fallen significantly, which shows that companies need new ways of getting their messages to consumers.

Brand ambassadorships can also be powerful tools for advertisers. For example, companies hire college students to be their on-campus representatives, and they may target for students engaged in high-profile activities like sports, fraternities, and music. (This practice is slightly different from sponsorships, and note that some students, particularly athletes, need to follow strict guidelines about accepting money or products.) The marketing team is betting that if we buy perfume because Beyoncé tells us to, we'll also choose our workout gear, clothing, or make-up brand if another student encourages that choice. Tens of thousands of brand ambassadors or brand evangelists work on college campuses, and such marketing approaches are seen as highly effective investments for companies. The numbers make it clear: Ambassador-referred customers provide sixteen percent higher value to companies than other customers, and over ninety percent of people indicate that people trust referrals from people they know (On-Campus Advertising, 2017).

Social media has made such influencer and ambassador marketing a near constant. Some formal ambassadors are sponsored by companies to show or use their products. In some cases, compensation arrives only in the form of the free products and whatever monetization the ambassador receives from the site, such as YouTube. Influencers are usually less formally engaged with companies than are ambassadors, relying mostly on site revenue to reward their efforts. Some influencers may overstate their popularity in order to get free products or services. For example, luxury hotels report that they are barraged by influencers (some with very few followers, and therefore questionable influence) who expect free stays in exchange for creating posts promoting the location (Locker 2019).

One ethical and perhaps relationship-oriented question is whether paid ambassadors should be required to disclose their relationship with a company, and how that works in online versus face-to-face interactions. In this case, online presence may be more "truthful" than in-person relationships. A video can formally include sponsorship information, and some ambassadors list partners or sponsors on their profiles. But in day-to-day, in-person conversations, it might be awkward for a classmate or colleague to mention that they are wearing a particular brand or using gear based on a financial relationship. In other words, the person sitting next to you with the great bag may be paid to carry it, and you may never know.

Homogenization and Fragmentation

Despite the variety of media at hand, the mainstream news and entertainment you enjoy are increasingly homogenized. Research by McManus (1995) suggests that different news outlets all tell the same stories, using the same sources, resulting in the same message, presented with only slight variations. So whether you are reading the *New York Times* or the CNN's web site, the coverage of national events like a major court case or political issue will likely be the same.

Simultaneously with this homogenization among the major news outlets, the opposite process is occurring in the newer media streams. With so many choices, people increasingly customize their news experience, minimizing their opportunity to encounter information that does not jive with their worldview (Prior 2005). For instance, those who are staunchly Republican can avoid centrist or liberal-leaning cable news shows and web sites that would show Democrats in a favorable light. They know to seek out Fox News over MSNBC, just as Democrats know to do the opposite. Further, people who want to avoid politics completely can choose to visit web sites that deal only with entertainment or that will keep them up to date on sports scores. They have an easy way to avoid information they do not wish to hear. Americans seem to view this phenomenon with great concern, indicating that the impact of customized or personalized news delivers worse news. Yet, they still engage with the platforms that deliver news in that manner.

The fragmentation of the news has led to an increased amount of digital tribalism. Tribalism in this sense is the state or tendency to gather and reinforce ideas belonging to a group, and to do so out of a sense of strong loyalty. Digital tribalism, then, is the tendency to do so online, and also to forge new tribes purely based on online personas or ideologies. Instead of basing these groups on the classic bonds of ethnic, religious, or geographic ideologies, they are based on politics, emotions, lifestyles or lifestyle goals, or even brands (Taute & Sierra 2014). Digital tribes can lead people to a greater sense of belonging, and can also be heavily exploited for commercial or power-attaining interests.

8.3 Global Implications of Media and Technology

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the advantages and concerns of media globalization
- Explain the globalization of technology

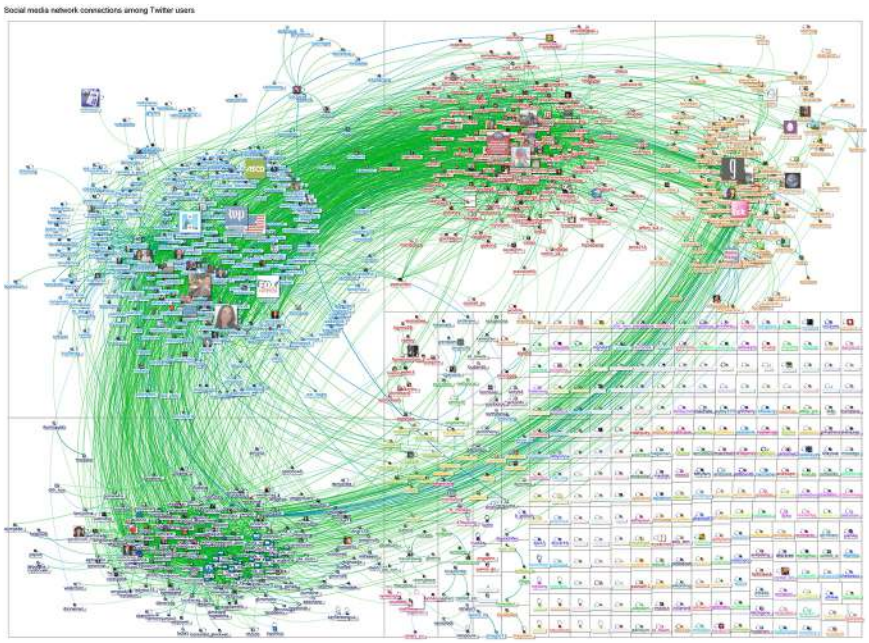

FIGURE 8.8 This graphic indicates the connections among people who tweeted or replied about the State of the Union address. Green lines indicate people who follow each other on the platform. (Credit Marc Smith/flickr)

Technology, and increasingly media, has always driven globalization. In a landmark book, Thomas Friedman (2005), identified several ways in which technology "flattened" the globe and contributed to our global economy. The first edition of *The World Is Flat*, written in 2005, posits that core economic concepts were changed by personal computing and high-speed Internet. Access to these two technological shifts has allowed core-nation corporations to recruit workers in call centers located in China or India. Using examples like a Midwestern U.S. woman who runs a business from her home via the call centers of Bangalore, India, Friedman warns that this new world order will exist whether core-nation businesses are ready or not, and that in order to keep its key economic role in the world, the United States will need to pay attention to how it prepares workers of the twenty-first century for this dynamic.

Of course not everyone agrees with Friedman's theory. Many economists pointed out that in reality innovation, economic activity, and population still gather in geographically attractive areas, and they continue to create economic peaks and valleys, which are by no means flattened out to mean equality for all. China's hugely innovative and powerful cities of Shanghai and Beijing are worlds away from the rural squalor of the country's poorest denizens.

It is worth noting that Friedman is an economist, not a sociologist. His work focuses on the economic gains and risks this new world order entails. In this section, we will look more closely at how media globalization and technological globalization play out in a sociological perspective. As the names suggest, **media globalization** is the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas, while **technological globalization** refers to the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology.

Media Globalization

Lyons (2005) suggests that multinational corporations are the primary vehicle of media globalization, and these corporations control global mass-media content and distribution (Compaine 2005). It is true, when looking at who controls which media outlets, that there are fewer independent news sources as larger and larger conglomerates develop. In the early 2000s, the United States offered about 1,500 newspapers, 2,800 book publishers, plus 6,000 magazines and a whopping 10,000 radio outlets (Bagdikian 2004). By 2019, some of those numbers had changed: There were only 1,000 newspapers, but over 7,000 magazines (note that both newspapers and magazines count as such even if they publish largely online) (BBC 2019). The number of book

publishers and radio outlets has generally remained static, which may seem surprising.

On the surface, there is endless opportunity to find diverse media outlets. But the numbers are misleading. **Media consolidation** is a process in which fewer and fewer owners control the majority of media outlets. This creates an **oligopoly** in which a few firms dominate the media marketplace. In 1983, a mere 50 corporations owned the bulk of mass-media outlets. Today in the United States (which has no government-owned media) just five companies control 90 percent of media outlets (McChesney 1999). Ranked by 2014 company revenue, Comcast is the biggest, followed by the Disney Corporation, Time Warner, CBS, and Viacom (Time.com 2014). What impact does this consolidation have on the type of information to which the U.S. public is exposed? Does media consolidation deprive the public of multiple viewpoints and limit its discourse to the information and opinions shared by a few sources? Why does it matter?

Monopolies matter because less competition typically means consumers are less well served since dissenting opinions or diverse viewpoints are less likely to be found. Media consolidation results in the following dysfunctions. First, consolidated media owes more to its stockholders than to the public. Publicly traded Fortune 500 companies must pay more attention to their profitability and to government regulators than to the public's right to know. The few companies that control most of the media, because they are owned by the power elite, represent the political and social interests of only a small minority. In an oligopoly there are fewer incentives to innovate, improve services, or decrease prices.

While some social scientists predicted that the increase in media forms would create a global village (McLuhan 1964), current research suggests that the public sphere accessing the global village will tend to be rich, Caucasoid, and English-speaking (Jan 2009). As shown by the spring 2011 uprisings throughout the Arab world, technology really does offer a window into the news of the world. For example, here in the United States we saw internet updates of Egyptian events in real time, with people tweeting, posting, and blogging on the ground in Tahrir Square.

Still, there is no question that the exchange of technology from core nations to peripheral and semi-peripheral ones leads to a number of complex issues. For instance, someone using a conflict theorist approach might focus on how much political ideology and cultural colonialism occurs with technological growth. In theory at least, technological innovations are ideology-free; a fiber optic cable is the same in a Muslim country as a secular one, a communist country or a capitalist one. But those who bring technology to less-developed nations—whether they are nongovernment organizations, businesses, or governments—usually have an agenda. A functionalist, in contrast, might focus on the ways technology creates new means to share information about successful crop-growing programs, or on the economic benefits of opening a new market for cell phone use. Either way, cultural and societal assumptions and norms are being delivered along with those high-speed wires.

Cultural and ideological bias are not the only risks of media globalization. In addition to the risk of cultural imperialism and the loss of local culture, other problems come with the benefits of a more interconnected globe. One risk is the potential for censoring by national governments that let in only the information and media they feel serve their message, as is occurring in China. In addition, core nations such as the United States risk the use of international media by criminals to circumvent local laws against socially deviant and dangerous behaviors such as gambling, child pornography, and the sex trade. Offshore or international web sites allow U.S. citizens (and others) to seek out whatever illegal or illicit information they want, from twenty-four hour online gambling sites that do not require proof of age, to sites that sell child pornography. These examples illustrate the societal risks of unfettered information flow.

BIG PICTURE

Authority and the Internet: An Uncomfortable Friendship

FIGURE 8.9 What information is accessible to these patrons of an internet café in China? What is censored from their view? (Credit: Kai Hendry/flickr)

In the United States, the Internet is used to access illegal gambling and pornography sites, as well as to research stocks, crowd-source what car to buy, or keep in touch with childhood friends. Can we allow one or more of those activities, while restricting the rest? And who decides what needs restricting? In a country with democratic principles and an underlying belief in free-market capitalism, the answer is decided in the court system. But globally, the questions––and the governments' responses––are very different.

Other countries take a far more restrictive and directive approach to Internet regulation. China, which is a country with a tight rein on the dissemination of information, has long worked to suppress what it calls “harmful information,” including dissent concerning government politics, dialogue about China’s relationship with Hong Kong, or criticism of the government’s handling of events.

With sites like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube blocked in China, the nation’s Internet users turn to local media companies for their needs. Even so, the country exerts strong control by identifying and prosecuting some violators of the bans, and undertaking more far-reaching tactics.

The nation blocks the use of certain terms, such as “human rights,” and passes new laws that require people to register with their real names and make it more dangerous to criticize government actions.

In early 2021, Myanmar's military launched a coup against its government. Elected leader Ang San Suu Kyi was arrested, and other top officials were detained or pushed from power. (Suu Kyi had previously spent years under house arrest.) Immediately, citizens launched widespread and persistent protests against the coup. Myanmar's military took immediate steps to quell the protests, including firing at and killing dozens of protesters and storming colleges and hospitals. But first, the government banned Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp in an effort to reduce coordination among protesters and restrain news about the crackdown. The government also arrested reporters, including foreign nationals, who were accused of violating a public order law. Social media companies replied in what ways they could, such as deactivating the accounts of Myanmar's military so that they couldn't share their own messages.

Technological Globalization

Technological globalization is speeded in large part by **technological diffusion**, the spread of technology across borders. In the last two decades, there has been rapid improvement in the spread of technology to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations, and a 2008 World Bank report discusses both the benefits and ongoing challenges of this diffusion. In general, the report found that technological progress and economic growth rates were linked, and that the rise in technological progress has helped improve the situations of many living in absolute poverty (World Bank 2008). The report recognizes that rural and low-tech products such as corn can benefit from new technological innovations, and that, conversely, technologies like mobile banking can aid those whose rural existence consists of low-tech market vending. In addition, technological advances in areas like mobile phones can lead to competition, lowered prices, and concurrent improvements in related areas such as mobile banking and information sharing.

However, the same patterns of social inequality that create a digital divide in the United States also create digital divides within peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. While the growth of technology use among countries has increased dramatically over the past several decades, the spread of technology within countries is significantly slower among peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. In these countries, far fewer people have the training and skills to take advantage of new technology, let alone access it. Technological access tends to be clustered around urban areas and leaves out vast swaths of peripheral-nation citizens. While the diffusion of information technologies has the potential to resolve many global social problems, it is often the population most in need that is most affected by the digital divide. For example, technology to purify water could save many lives, but the villages in peripheral nations most in need of water purification don't have access to the technology, the funds to purchase it, or the technological comfort level to introduce it as a solution.

SOCIOLOGY IN THE REAL WORLD

The Mighty Cell Phone: How Mobile Phones Are Impacting Sub-Saharan Africa

Many of Africa's poorest countries suffer from a marked lack of infrastructure including poor roads, limited electricity, and minimal access to education and telephones. But while landline use has not changed appreciably during the past ten years, there's been a fivefold increase in mobile phone access; more than a third of people in Sub-Saharan Africa have the ability to access a mobile phone (Katine 2010). Even more can use a "village phone"—through a shared-phone program created by the Grameen Foundation. With access to mobile phone technology, a host of benefits become available that have the potential to change the dynamics in these poorest nations. Sometimes that change is as simple as being able to make a phone call to neighboring market towns. By finding out which markets have vendors interested in their goods, fishers and farmers can ensure they travel to the market that will serve them best and avoid a wasted trip. Others can use mobile phones and some of the emerging money-sending systems to securely send money to a family member or business partner elsewhere (Katine 2010).

These shared-phone programs are often funded by businesses like Germany's Vodafone or Britain's Masbabi, which hope to gain market share in the region. Phone giant Nokia points out that there are 4 billion mobile phone users worldwide—that's more than twice as many people as have bank accounts—meaning there is ripe opportunity to connect banking companies with people who need their services (ITU Telecom 2009). Not all access is corporate-based, however. Other programs are funded by business organizations that seek to help peripheral nations with tools for innovation and entrepreneurship.

But this wave of innovation and potential business comes with costs. There is, certainly, the risk of cultural imperialism, and the assumption that core nations (and core-nation multinationals) know what is best for those struggling in the world's poorest communities. Whether well intentioned or not, the vision of a continent of Africans successfully chatting on their iPhone may not be ideal. Like all aspects of global inequity, access to technology in Africa requires more than just foreign investment. There must be a concerted effort to ensure the benefits of

technology get to where they are needed most.

8.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Discuss how we analyze media and technology through various sociological perspectives

It is difficult to conceive of any one theory or theoretical perspective that can explain the variety of ways in which people interact with technology and the media. Technology runs the gamut from the match you strike to light a candle all the way up to sophisticated nuclear power plants that might power the factory where that candle was made. Media could refer to the television you watch, the ads wrapping the bus you take to work or school, or the magazines you flip through in a dentist's waiting room, not to mention all the forms of new media, including Instagram, Facebook, blogs, YouTube, and the like. Are media and technology critical to the forward march of humanity? Are they pernicious capitalist tools that lead to the exploitation of workers worldwide? Are they the magic bullet the world has been waiting for to level the playing field and raise the world's poor out of extreme poverty? Choose any opinion and you will find studies and scholars who agree with you––and those who disagree.

Functionalism

Because functionalism focuses on how media and technology contribute to the smooth functioning of society, a good place to begin understanding this perspective is to write a list of functions you perceive media and technology to perform. Your list might include the ability to find information on the Internet, television's entertainment value, or how advertising and product placement contribute to social norms.

Commercial Function

FIGURE 8.10 TV commercials can carry significant cultural currency. For some, the ads during the Super Bowl are more water cooler-worthy than the game itself. (Credit: Dennis Yang/flickr)

As you might guess, with nearly every U.S. household possessing a television, and the 250 billion hours of television watched annually by people in the United States, companies that wish to connect with consumers

find television an irresistible platform to promote their goods and services (Nielsen 2012). Television advertising is a highly functional way to meet a market demographic where it lives. Sponsors can use the sophisticated data gathered by network and cable television companies regarding their viewers and target their advertising accordingly. Whether you are watching cartoons on Nick Jr. or a cooking show on Telemundo, chances are advertisers have a plan to reach you.

And it certainly doesn't stop with television. Commercial advertising precedes movies in theaters and shows up on and inside public transportation, as well as on the sides of building and roadways. Major corporations such as Coca-Cola bring their advertising into public schools, by sponsoring sports fields or tournaments, as well as filling the halls and cafeterias of those schools with vending machines hawking their goods. With rising concerns about childhood obesity and attendant diseases, the era of soda machines in schools may be numbered. In fact, as part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act and Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Initiative, a ban on junk food in school began in July 2014.

Entertainment Function

An obvious manifest function of media is its entertainment value. Most people, when asked why they watch television or go to the movies, would answer that they enjoy it. And the numbers certainly illustrate that. While 2012 Nielsen research shows a slight reduction of U.S. homes with televisions, the reach of television is still vast. And the amount of time spent watching is equally large. Clearly, enjoyment is paramount. On the technology side, as well, there is a clear entertainment factor to the use of new innovations. From online gaming to chatting with friends on Facebook, technology offers new and more exciting ways for people to entertain themselves.

Social Norm Functions

Even while the media is selling us goods and entertaining us, it also serves to socialize us, helping us pass along norms, values, and beliefs to the next generation. In fact, we are socialized and resocialized by media throughout our whole lives. All forms of media teach us what is good and desirable, how we should speak, how we should behave, and how we should react to events. Media also provide us with cultural touchstones during events of national significance. How many of your older relatives can recall watching the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger* on television? How many of those reading this textbook followed the events of September 11 or Hurricane Katrina on television or the Internet?

Just as in Anderson and Bushman's (2011) evidence in the Violence in Media and Video Games: Does It Matter? feature, debate still exists over the extent and impact of media socialization. One recent study (Krahe et al. 2011) demonstrated that violent media content does have a desensitizing affect and is correlated with aggressive thoughts. Another group of scholars (Gentile, Mathieson, and Crick 2011) found that among children exposure to media violence led to an increase in both physical and relational aggression. Yet, a meta-analysis study covering four decades of research (Savage 2003) could not establish a definitive link between viewing violence and committing criminal violence.

It is clear from watching people emulate the styles of dress and talk that appear in media that media has a socializing influence. What is not clear, despite nearly fifty years of empirical research, is how much socializing influence the media has when compared to other agents of socialization, which include any social institution that passes along norms, values, and beliefs (such as peers, family, religious institutions, and the like).

Life-Changing Functions

Like media, many forms of technology do indeed entertain us, provide a venue for commercialization, and socialize us. For example, some studies suggest the rising obesity rate is correlated with the decrease in physical activity caused by an increase in use of some forms of technology, a latent function of the prevalence of media in society (Kautiainen et al. 2011). Without a doubt, a manifest function of technology is to change our

lives, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. Think of how the digital age has improved the ways we communicate. Have you ever used Skype or another webcast to talk to a friend or family member far away? Or maybe you have organized a fund drive, raising thousands of dollars, all from your desk chair.

Of course, the downside to this ongoing information flow is the near impossibility of disconnecting from technology that leads to an expectation of constant convenient access to information and people. Such a fast-paced dynamic is not always to our benefit. Some sociologists assert that this level of media exposure leads to **narcotizing dysfunction**, a result in which people are too overwhelmed with media input to really care about the issue, so their involvement becomes defined by awareness instead of by action (Lazerfeld and Merton 1948).

Conflict Perspective

In contrast to theories in the functional perspective, the conflict perspective focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality—social processes that tend to disrupt society rather than contribute to its smooth operation. When we take a conflict perspective, one major focus is the differential access to media and technology embodied in the digital divide. Conflict theorists also look at who controls the media, and how media promotes the norms of upper-middle-class White people in the United States while minimizing the presence of the working class, especially people of color.

Control of Media and Technology

Powerful individuals and social institutions have a great deal of influence over which forms of technology are released, when and where they are released, and what kind of media is available for our consumption, which is a form of gatekeeping. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) define **gatekeeping** as the sorting process by which thousands of possible messages are shaped into a mass media-appropriate form and reduced to a manageable amount. In other words, the people in charge of the media decide what the public is exposed to, which, as C. Wright Mills (1956) famously noted, is the heart of media's power. Take a moment to think of the way "new media" evolve and replace traditional forms of hegemonic media. With hegemonic media, a culturally diverse society can be dominated by one race, gender, or class that manipulates the media to impose its worldview as a societal norm. New media weakens the gatekeeper role in information distribution. Popular sites such as YouTube and Facebook not only allow more people to freely share information but also engage in a form of self-policing. Users are encouraged to report inappropriate behavior that moderators will then address.

In addition, some conflict theorists suggest that the way U.S. media are generated results in an unbalanced political arena. Those with the most money can buy the most media exposure, run smear campaigns against their competitors, and maximize their visual presence. Almost a year before the 2012 U.S. presidential election, the candidates––Barack Obama for the Democrats and numerous Republican contenders––had raised more than $186 million (Carmi et al. 2012). Some would say that the *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Committee* is a major contributing factor to our unbalanced political arena. In *Citizens United*, the Supreme Court affirmed the right of outside groups, including Super Political Action Committees (SuperPACs) with undisclosed donor lists, to spend unlimited amounts of money on political ads as long as they don't coordinate with the candidate's campaign or specifically advocate for a candidate. What do you think a conflict perspective theorist would suggest about the potential for the non-rich to be heard in politics, especially when SuperPACs ensure that the richest groups have the most say?

Technological Social Control and Digital Surveillance

Social scientists take the idea of the surveillance society so seriously that there is an entire journal devoted to its study, *Surveillance and Society*. The **panoptic surveillance** envisioned by Jeremy Bentham, depicted in the form of an all-powerful, all-seeing government by George Orwell in *1984*, and later analyzed by Michel Foucault (1975) is increasingly realized in the form of technology used to monitor our every move. This surveillance was imagined as a form of constant monitoring in which the observation posts are decentralized and the observed is never communicated with directly. Today, digital security cameras capture our

movements, observers can track us through our cell phones, and police forces around the world use facial-recognition software.

Feminist Perspective

FIGURE 8.11 Many people argue that women's portrayal in the media remains misleadingly narrow. But the advent of influencer culture may provide more agency to women, who can control their own portrayal. (Credit: Nenad Stojkovic/flickr)

Take a look at popular television shows, advertising campaigns, and online game sites. In most, women are portrayed in a particular set of parameters and tend to have a uniform look that society recognizes as attractive. Most are thin, White or light-skinned, beautiful, and young. Why does this matter? Feminist perspective theorists believe this idealized image is crucial in creating and reinforcing stereotypes. For example, Fox and Bailenson (2009) found that online female avatars conforming to gender stereotypes enhance negative attitudes toward women, and Brasted (2010) found that media (advertising in particular) promotes gender stereotypes. As early as 1990, *Ms.* magazine instituted a policy to publish without any commercial advertising.

The gender gap in tech-related fields (science, technology, engineering, and math) is no secret. A 2011 U.S. Department of Commerce Report suggested that gender stereotyping is one reason for this gap which acknowledges the bias toward men as keepers of technological knowledge (US Department of Commerce 2011). But gender stereotypes go far beyond the use of technology. Press coverage in the media reinforces stereotypes that subordinate women; it gives airtime to looks over skills, and coverage disparages women who defy accepted norms.

Recent research in new media has offered a mixed picture of its potential to equalize the status of men and women in the arenas of technology and public discourse. A European agency, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (2010), issued an opinion report suggesting that while there is the potential for new media forms to perpetuate gender stereotypes and the gender gap in technology and media access, at the same time new media could offer alternative forums for feminist groups and the exchange of feminist ideas. Still, the committee warned against the relatively unregulated environment of new media and the potential for antifeminist activities, from pornography to human trafficking, to flourish there.

Increasingly prominent in the discussion of new media and feminism is **cyberfeminism**, the application to, and promotion of, feminism online. Research on cyberfeminism runs the gamut from the liberating use of blogs by women living in Iraq during the second Gulf War (Peirce 2011) to an investigation of the Suicide Girls web site (Magnet 2007).

Symbolic Interactionism

Technology itself may act as a symbol for many. The kind of computer you own, the kind of car you drive, your ability to afford the latest Apple product—these serve as a social indicator of wealth and status. **Neo-Luddites** are people who see technology as symbolizing the coldness and alienation of modern life. But for **technophiles**, technology symbolizes the potential for a brighter future. For those adopting an ideological middle ground, technology might symbolize status (in the form of a massive flat-screen television) or failure (ownership of a basic old mobile phone with no bells or whistles).

Social Construction of Reality

Meanwhile, media create and spread symbols that become the basis for our shared understanding of society. Theorists working in the interactionist perspective focus on this social construction of reality, an ongoing process in which people subjectively create and understand reality. Media constructs our reality in a number of ways. For some, the people they watch on a screen can become a primary group, meaning the small informal groups of people who are closest to them. For many others, media becomes a reference group: a group that influences an individual and to which an individual compares himself or herself, and by which we judge our successes and failures. We might do very well without the latest smartphone, until we see characters using it on our favorite television show or our classmates whipping it out between classes.

While media may indeed be the medium to spread the message of rich White men, Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, and Sasson (1992) point out that some forms of media discourse allow competing constructions of reality to appear. For example, advertisers find new and creative ways to sell us products we don't need and probably wouldn't want without their prompting, but some networking sites such as Freecycle offer a commercial-free way of requesting and trading items that would otherwise be discarded. The web is also full of blogs chronicling lives lived "off the grid," or without participation in the commercial economy.

Social Networking and Social Construction

While Tumblr and Facebook encourage us to check in and provide details of our day through online social networks, corporations can just as easily promote their products on these sites. Even supposedly crowd-sourced sites like Yelp (which aggregates local reviews) are not immune to corporate shenanigans. That is, we think we are reading objective observations when in reality we may be buying into one more form of advertising.

Facebook, which started as a free social network for college students, is increasingly a monetized business, selling you goods and services in subtle ways. But chances are you don't think of Facebook as one big online advertisement. What started out as a symbol of coolness and insider status, unavailable to parents and corporate shills, now promotes consumerism in the form of games and fandom. For example, think of all the money spent to upgrade popular Facebook games like Candy Crush. And notice that whenever you become a "fan," you likely receive product updates and special deals that promote online and real-world consumerism. It is unlikely that millions of people want to be "friends" with Pampers. But if it means a weekly coupon, they will, in essence, rent out space on their Facebook pages for Pampers to appear. Thus, we develop both new ways to spend money and brand loyalties that will last even after Facebook is considered outdated and obsolete.

Key Terms

cyberfeminism the application to and promotion of feminism online
design patents patents that are granted when someone has invented a new and original design for a manufactured product
digital divide the uneven access to technology around race, class, and geographic lines
e-readiness the ability to sort through, interpret, and process digital knowledge
evolutionary model of technological change a breakthrough in one form of technology that leads to a number of variations, from which a prototype emerges, followed by a period of slight adjustments to the technology, interrupted by a breakthrough
gatekeeping the sorting process by which thousands of possible messages are shaped into a mass media-appropriate form and reduced to a manageable amount
knowledge gap the gap in information that builds as groups grow up without access to technology
media all print, digital, and electronic means of communication
media consolidation a process by which fewer and fewer owners control the majority of media outlets
media globalization the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas
neo-Luddites those who see technology as a symbol of the coldness of modern life
net neutrality the principle that all Internet data should be treated equally by internet service providers
new media all interactive forms of information exchange
oligopoly a situation in which a few firms dominate a marketplace
panoptic surveillance a form of constant monitoring in which the observation posts are decentralized and the observed is never communicated with directly
planned obsolescence the act of a technology company planning for a product to be obsolete or unable from the time it's created
plant patents patents that recognize the discovery of new plant types that can be asexually reproduced
technological diffusion the spread of technology across borders
technological globalization the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology
technology the application of science to solve problems in daily life
technophiles those who see technology as symbolizing the potential for a brighter future
utility patents patents that are granted for the invention or discovery of any new and useful process, product, or machine

Section Summary

8.1 Technology Today

Technology is the application of science to address the problems of daily life. The fast pace of technological advancement means the advancements are continuous, but that not everyone has equal access. The gap created by this unequal access has been termed the digital divide. The knowledge gap refers to an effect of the digital divide: the lack of knowledge or information that keeps those who were not exposed to technology from gaining marketable skills

8.2 Media and Technology in Society

Media and technology have been interwoven from the earliest days of human communication. The printing press, the telegraph, and the Internet are all examples of their intersection. Mass media have allowed for more shared social experiences, but new media now create a seemingly endless amount of airtime for any and every voice that wants to be heard. Advertising has also changed with technology. New media allow consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues and cause companies to be more innovative and intrusive as they try to gain our attention.

8.3 Global Implications of Media and Technology

Technology drives globalization, but what that means can be hard to decipher. While some economists see technological advances leading to a more level playing field where anyone anywhere can be a global contender, the reality is that opportunity still clusters in geographically advantaged areas. Still, technological diffusion has led to the spread of more and more technology across borders into peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. However, true technological global equality is a long way off.

8.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

There are myriad theories about how society, technology, and media will progress. Functionalism sees the contribution that technology and media provide to the stability of society, from facilitating leisure time to increasing productivity. Conflict theorists are more concerned with how technology reinforces inequalities among communities, both within and among countries. They also look at how media typically give voice to the most powerful, and how new media might offer tools to help those who are disenfranchised. Symbolic interactionists see the symbolic uses of technology as signs of everything from a sterile futuristic world to a successful professional life.

Section Quiz

8.1 Technology Today

1. Jerome is able to use the Internet to select reliable sources for his research paper, but Charlie just copies large pieces of web pages and pastes them into his paper. Jerome has _____ while Charlie does not.
   a. a functional perspective
   b. the knowledge gap
   c. e-readiness
   d. a digital divide

2. The _____ can be directly attributed to the digital divide, because differential ability to access the internet leads directly to a differential ability to use the knowledge found on the Internet.
   a. digital divide
   b. knowledge gap
   c. feminist perspective
   d. e-gap

3. The fact that your cell phone is using outdated technology within a year or two of purchase is an example of _____.
   a. the conflict perspective
   b. conspicuous consumption
   c. media
   d. planned obsolescence

4. The history of technology began _____.
   a. in the early stages of human societies
   b. with the invention of the computer
   c. during the Renaissance
   d. during the nineteenth century

8.2 Media and Technology in Society

5. When it comes to technology, media, and society, which of the following is true?
   a. Media can influence technology, but not society.
   b. Technology created media, but society has nothing to do with these.
   c. Technology, media, and society are bound and cannot be separated.
   d. Society influences media but is not connected to technology.

6. If the U.S. Patent Office were to issue a patent for a new type of tomato that tastes like a jellybean, it would be issuing a _____ patent?
   a. utility patent
   b. plant patent
   c. design patent
   d. The U.S. Patent Office does not issue a patent for plants.

7. Which of the following is the primary component of the evolutionary model of technological change?
   a. Technology should not be subject to patenting.
   b. Technology and the media evolve together.
   c. Technology can be traced back to the early stages of human society.
   d. A breakthrough in one form of technology leads to a number of variations, and technological developments.

8. Which of the following is *not* a form of new media?
   a. The cable television program *Yellowstone*
   b. Wikipedia
   c. Snapchat
   d. A cooking blog written by Rachael Ray

9. Research regarding video game violence suggests that _____.
   a. boys who play violent video games become more aggressive, but girls do not
   b. girls who play violent video games become more aggressive, but boys do not
   c. violent video games have no connection to aggressive behavior
   d. violent video games lead to an increase in aggressive thought and behavior

10. Comic books, Wikipedia, MTV, and a commercial for Coca-Cola are all examples of:
   a. media
   b. symbolic interaction perspective
   c. e-readiness
   d. the digital divide

8.3 Global Implications of Media and Technology

11. When Japanese scientists develop a new vaccine for swine flu and offer that technology to U.S. pharmaceutical companies, _____ has taken place.
   a. media globalization
   b. technological diffusion
   c. monetizing
   d. planned obsolescence

12. In the mid-90s, the U.S. government grew concerned that Microsoft was a _____, exercising disproportionate control over the available choices and prices of computers.
a. monopoly
b. conglomerate
c. oligopoly
d. technological globalization

13. The movie *Babel* featured an international cast and was filmed on location in various nations. When it screened in theaters worldwide, it introduced a number of ideas and philosophies about cross-cultural connections. This might be an example of:
a. technology
b. conglomerating
c. symbolic interaction
d. media globalization

14. Which of the following is *not* a risk of media globalization?
a. The creation of cultural and ideological biases
b. The creation of local monopolies
c. The risk of cultural imperialism
d. The loss of local culture

15. The government of _____ blocks citizens' access to popular new media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.
a. China
b. India
c. Afghanistan
d. Australia

8.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

16. A parent secretly monitoring the babysitter through the use of GPS, site blocker, and nanny cam is a good example of:
a. the social construction of reality
b. technophilia
c. a neo-Luddite
d. panoptic surveillance

17. The use of Facebook to create an online persona by only posting images that match your ideal self exemplifies the_____ that can occur in forms of new media.
a. social construction of reality
b. cyberfeminism
c. market segmentation
d. referencing

18. _____ tend to be more pro-technology, while _____ view technology as a symbol of the coldness of modern life.
a. Luddites; technophiles
b. technophiles; Luddites
c. cyberfeminists; technophiles
d. liberal feminists; conflict theorists

19. When it comes to media and technology, a functionalist would focus on:
   a. the symbols created and reproduced by the media
   b. the association of technology and technological skill with men
   c. the way that various forms of media socialize users
   d. the digital divide between the technological haves and have-nots

20. When all media sources report a simplified version of the environmental impact of hydraulic fracturing, with no effort to convey the hard science and complicated statistical data behind the story, _____ is probably occurring.
   a. gatekeeping
   b. the digital divide
   c. technophilia
   d. market segmentation

Short Answer

8.1 Technology Today

1. Can you think of people in your own life who support or defy the premise that access to technology leads to greater opportunities? How have you noticed technology use and opportunity to be linked, or does your experience contradict this idea?

2. Should the U.S. government be responsible for providing all citizens with access to the Internet? Or is gaining Internet access an individual responsibility?

3. How have digital media changed social interactions? Do you believe it has deepened or weakened human connections? Defend your answer.

4. Conduct sociological research. Google yourself. How much information about you is available to the public? How many and what types of companies offer private information about you for a fee? Compile the data and statistics you find. Write a paragraph or two about the social issues and behaviors you notice.

8.2 Media and Technology in Society

5. Where and how do you get your news? Do you watch network television? Read the newspaper? Go online? How about your parents or grandparents? Do you think it matters where you seek out information? Why, or why not?

6. Do you believe new media allows for the kind of unifying moments that television and radio programming used to? If so, give an example.

7. Where are you most likely to notice advertisements? What causes them to catch your attention?

8.3 Global Implications of Media and Technology

8. Do you believe that technology has indeed flattened the world in terms of providing opportunity? Why, or why not? Give examples to support your reason.

9. Where do you get your news? Is it owned by a large conglomerate (you can do a web search and find out!)? Does it matter to you who owns your local news outlets? Why, or why not?

10. Who do you think is most likely to bring innovation and technology (like cell phone businesses) to Sub-Saharan Africa: nonprofit organizations, governments, or businesses? Why?

8.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

11. Contrast a functionalist viewpoint of digital surveillance with a conflict perspective viewpoint.

12. In what ways has the Internet affected how you view reality? Explain using a symbolic interactionist perspective.

13. Describe how a cyberfeminist might address the fact that powerful female politicians are often demonized in traditional media.

14. The issue of airplane-pilot exhaustion is an issue of growing media concern. Select a theoretical perspective, and describe how it would explain this.

15. Would you characterize yourself as a technophile or a Luddite? Explain, and use examples.

Further Research

8.1 Technology Today

To learn more about the digital divide and why it matters, check out this website with research on the digital divide (http://openstax.org/l/Digital_Divide) .

To find out more about Internet privacy and security, check out this website on privacy rights (http://openstax.org/l/2EPrivacy) .

8.2 Media and Technology in Society

To get a sense of the timeline of technology. Check out this website with a technology timeline. (http://openstax.org/l/Tech_History)

To learn more about new media, check out the New Media Institute (http://openstax.org/l/new_media)

To understand how independent media coverage differs from major corporate affiliated news outlets, review material from the Democracy Now! website (http://openstax.org/l/2EDemoNow) .

8.3 Global Implications of Media and Technology

Check out more in this article about the global digital divide (http://openstax.org/l/Global_Digital_Divide) . http://openstax.org/l/Global_Digital_Divide

8.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

To learn more about cyberfeminism, check out the interdisciplinary artist collective, subRosa (http://openstax.org/l/cyberfeminism) .

To explore the implications of panoptic surveillance, review some surveillance studies at the free, open source Surveillance and Society site (http://openstax.org/l/Surveillance) .

Read an example of socialist media from *Jacobin* magazine (http://openstax.org/l/2EJacobin) .

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