TENTH EDITION

SOCIOLOGY

THE ESSENTIALS

Margaret L. Andersen • Howard F. Taylor

SOCIOLOGY
THE ESSENTIALS

Tenth Edition

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BRIEF CONTENTS

CONTENTS

PART ONE Introducing the Sociological Imagination

PART TWO Studying Society and Social Structure

9   Global Stratification   208

10   Race and Ethnicity   235

11   Gender   **268**

12   Sexuality   **298**

PART FOUR Social Institutions

15   Economy and Politics   391

PART FIVE Social Change

16   Environment, Population, and Social Change   425

FEATURES

doing sociological research

what would a sociologist say?

understanding diversity

a sociological eye on the media

maps

PREFACE

You might that think an author would get bored writing yet another edition of a book, but someone once said that if you truly understood the sociological perspective, you could never be bored.[1] For us as authors of this new edition, we are hardly bored by the tenth edition of Sociology: The Essentials. Sociology is endlessly fascinating, and we are lucky to have the opportunity to revise this book every few years so we can capture what is so compelling about the subject matter of sociology. With each new edition, we are reminded of the ever-changing nature of society, the new challenges that come from our nation's social issues, and the excitement of ongoing research on sociological subjects.

Sociology: The Essentials teaches students the basic concepts, theories, and insights of the sociological perspective. With each new edition come different challenges: new topics of study; new generations of students with different learning styles; increasing diversity among those who will read this book; and new formats for delivering course content to students. We know that how students learn and how they engage with their course material comes increasingly in the form of electronic and online learning resources.

Sociology: The Essentials, tenth edition, takes full advantage of these changes by having a fully electronic version of the book available, allowing for personalized, fully online digital learning. The platform of learning resources provided here engages students in an interactive mode, while also offering instructors the opportunity to make individualized configurations of course work. Those who want to enhance their curriculum through online resources will also be able to utilize MindTap Sociology in the way that best suits their course.

However the book is used, we have revised this edition to reflect the latest changes in society and new work in sociological scholarship. We are somewhat amazed, even as sociologists, to see how much change occurs, even in the relatively short period of time between editions. Our book adapts to these changes with each new edition. In this edition, we have maintained and strengthened the themes that have been the book's hallmark from the start: a focus on diversity in society, attention to society as both enduring and changing, the significance of social context in explaining human behavior, the increasing impact of globalization on all aspects of society, and a focus on critical thinking and an analysis of society fostered through sociological research and theory.

We know that studying sociology opens new ways of looking at the world. As we teach our students, sociology is grounded in careful observation of social facts, as well as in the analysis of how society operates. For students and faculty alike, studying sociology can be exciting, interesting, and downright fun, even though it also deals with sobering social issues, such as the growing inequality, racism, and sexism that continue to mark our time.

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[1]Jordan, June. 1981. Civil Wars. Boston: Beacon Press, p. 100.

We try to capture the excitement of the sociological perspective, while introducing students to how sociologists do research and how they theoretically approach their subject matter. We know that most students in an introductory course will not become sociology majors, although we hope, of course, that our book and their teacher will encourage them to do so. No matter their area of study, we want to give students a way of thinking about the world that is not immediately apparent to them. We especially want students to understand how sociology differs from the individualistic thinking that tends to predominate. This is showcased in the box feature throughout the book entitled, "What Would a Sociologist Say?" Here, we take a common topic and, with informal writing, briefly discuss how a sociologist would understand this particular issue. We think this feature helps students see the unique ways that sociologists view everyday topics—things as commonplace as finding a job or analyzing sports in popular culture. We want our book to be engaging and accessible to undergraduate readers, while also preserving the integrity of sociological research and theory. Our experience in teaching introductory students shows us that students can appreciate the revelations of sociological research and theory if they are presented in an engaging way that connects to their lives. We have kept this in mind throughout this revision and have focused on material that students can understand and apply to their own social worlds.

Critical Thinking and Debunking

We use the theme of debunking in the manner first developed by Peter Berger (1963) to look behind the facades of everyday life, challenging the ready-made assumptions that permeate commonsense thinking. Debunking is a way for students to develop their critical thinking, and we use the debunking theme to help students understand how society is constructed and sustained. This theme is highlighted in the **Debunking Society's Myths** feature found throughout the book. We want students to understand the rigor that is involved with sociological research, whether quantitative research or qualitative. The box feature **Doing Sociological Research** presents a diverse array of research studies, presented to students so they can see the question being asked, the method of investigation, the research results, and the study's conclusions. This feature also includes critical thinking questions ("Questions to Consider") to help students think further about the implications of the research presented. We also include a feature to help students see the relevance of sociology in their everyday lives. The box feature **See for Yourself** allows students to apply a sociological concept to observations from their own lives, thus helping them develop their critical abilities and understand the importance of the sociological perspective.

Critical thinking is a term widely used but often vaguely defined. We use it to describe the process by which students learn to apply sociological concepts to observable events in society. Throughout the book, we ask students to use sociological concepts to analyze and interpret the world they inhabit. This is reflected in the **Thinking Sociologically** feature that is also present in every chapter.

Because contemporary students are so strongly influenced by the media, we also encourage their critical thinking through the box feature called **A Sociological Eye on the Media**. These boxes examine sociological research that challenges some of the ideas and images portrayed in the media. This not only improves students' critical thinking skills but also shows them how research can debunk these ideas and images.

A Focus on Diversity

When we first wrote this book, we did so because we wanted to integrate the then new scholarship on race, gender, and class into the core of the sociological field. We continue to see race, class, and gender— or, more broadly, the study of inequality—as one of the core insights of sociological research and theory. With that in mind, diversity, and the inequality that sometimes results, is a central theme throughout this book. A boxed theme, **Understanding Diversity**, highlights this feature, but you will find that the analysis of inequality, especially by race, gender, and class, is woven throughout the book.

Social Change

The sociological perspective helps students see society as characterized both by constant change and social stability. Throughout this book, we analyze how society changes and how events, both dramatic and subtle, influence change. We have added new material throughout the text that shows students how sociological research can help them understand that social changes are influencing their lives, even if students think of these changes as individual problems.

Global Perspective

One of the main things we hope students learn in an introductory course is how broad-scale conditions influence their everyday lives. Understanding this idea is a cornerstone of the sociological perspective. We use a global perspective to examine how global changes are affecting all parts of life within the United States, as well as other parts of the world. This means more than including cross-cultural examples. It means, for example, examining phenomena such as migration and immigration or helping students understand that their own consumption habits are profoundly shaped by global interconnections. The availability of jobs, too, is another way students can learn about the impact of an international division of labor on work within the United States. Our global perspective is found in the research and examples cited throughout the book, as well as in various chapters that directly focus on the influence of globalization on particular topics, such as work, culture, and crime.

New to the Tenth Edition

We have made various changes to the tenth edition to reflect new developments in sociological research and current social issues. These revisions should make the tenth edition easier for instructors to teach and even more accessible and interesting for students. Sociology: The Essentials is organized into five major parts: "Introducing the Sociological Imagination" (Chapter 1); "Studying Society and Social Structure" (Chapters 2 through 7); "Social Inequalities" (Chapters 8 through 12); "Social Institutions" (Chapters 13 through 15); and "Social Change" (Chapter 16).

   Part I, "Introducing the Sociological Imagination," introduces students to the unique perspective of sociology, differentiating it from other ways of studying society, particularly the individualistic framework students tend to assume. Within this section, **Chapter 1, "The Sociological Perspective,"** introduces students to the sociological perspective. The theme of debunking is introduced, as is the sociological imagination, as developed by C. Wright Mills. This chapter briefly reviews the development of sociology as a discipline, with a focus on the classical frameworks of sociological theory, as well as contemporary theories, including an expanded discussion of feminist theory. The tenth edition adds examples from current events to capture student interest, including new research on growing inequality, the high rate of suicide among veterans, and the influence of social media.

   In **Part II, "Studying Society and Social Structure,"** students learn some of the core concepts of sociology. It begins with the study of culture in **Chapter 2, "Culture,"** that includes much discussion of social media as a force shaping contemporary culture. This includes research on social media usage both by young and older people. There is new material on the vast growth of digital viewing, but also research on body images and some of the popular titles that influence young people. **Chapter 3, "Doing Sociological Research,"** contains a discussion of the research process and the tools of sociological research—surveys, participant observation, controlled experiments, content analysis, historical research, and evaluation research. The chapter was reorganized to give better attention to the different types and tools of sociological research. As in the previous edition, we place the chapter on research methods after the chapter on culture as a way of capturing student interest early. **Chapter 4, "Socialization and the Life Course,"** contains material on socialization theory and research, including agents of socialization such as the media, family, and peers. There is more focus on the influence of

social media. The chapter also emphasizes the importance of socialization in various transitions, such as the transition to adulthood.

Chapter 5, "Social Structure and Social Interaction," emphasizes how changes in the macrostructure of society influence the micro level of social interaction. We do this by focusing on technological changes that are now part of students' everyday lives and making the connection between changes at the societal level in the everyday realities of people's lives. The chapter includes material on social media, including how people create identities online and use social media websites to interact with others.

In **Chapter 6, "Groups and Organizations,"** we study social groups and bureaucratic organizations, using sociology to understand the complex processes of group influence, organizational dynamics, and the bureaucratization of society. The chapter includes a discussion of organizational culture, McDonaldization, and the significance of social networks. **Chapter 7, "Deviance and Crime,"** includes the study of sociological theories and research on deviance and crime. The core material is illustrated with contemporary events, such as police shootings of young, Black men and mass shootings. The chapter has been updated to reflect the newest research on gender-based violence and hate crime. As in previous edition, the chapter maintains a focus on race, class, and gender inequality in the criminal justice system, including mass incarceration of Black Americans and Hispanics.

In **Part III, "Social Inequalities,"** each chapter explores a particular dimension of stratification in society. Beginning with the significance of class, **Chapter 8, "Social Class and Social Stratification,"** provides an overview of basic concepts central to the study of class and social stratification. The chapter has a substantial emphasis on growing inequality with the newest research and data on this topic. The section on poverty reflects the latest research, as does material on social mobility. There is updated data throughout and new data on the likelihood of social mobility in the United States compared to other nations. **Chapter 9, "Global Stratification,"** follows with a particular emphasis on understanding the significance of global stratification, the inequality that has developed among, as well as within, various nations. Data and examples are updated throughout, and the process of globalization is a central theme in the chapter. **Chapter 10, "Race and Ethnicity,"** is a comprehensive review of the significance of race and ethnicity in society, an increasingly important topic. The chapter focuses on race as a social construction, showing the institutional basis of racial inequality. Throughout, current examples and the most recent data illustrate basic concepts about race, ethnicity, and immigration. **Chapter 11, "Gender,"** focuses on gender as a central concept in sociology closely linked to systems of stratification in society. The chapter helps students understand the distinction in sex and gender, including the social construction of gender. Research on LGBTQ people is included, as is discussion of transgender. **Chapter 12, "Sexuality,"** treats sexuality as a social construction and a dimension of social stratification and inequality. We have emphasized the influence of feminist theory on the study of sexuality. The chapter also explores research on pornography and violence against women and the sexual double standard. There is new data throughout on topics such as abortion rates, teen pregnancy, and contraception usage.

Part IV, "Social Institutions," includes three chapters, each focusing on basic institutions within society. **Chapter 13, "Families and Religion,"** maintains its inclusion of important topics in the study of families, such as interracial dating, same-sex marriage, fatherhood, gender roles within families, and family violence. We have updated material on marriage and divorce rates and also include a discussion of the impact of economic stress on families. **Chapter 14, "Education and Health Care,"** emphasizes inequality in these two important institutions. There is discussion of school segregation and its consequences and the latest material on health care, including details about the Affordable Care Act even while that is being debated in social policy. **Chapter 15, "Economy and Politics,"** analyzes the state, power, authority, and bureaucratic government. It also contains a detailed discussion of theories of power. There is current research on LGBTQ experiences in the workplace. The section on politics has been revised to show the influence of money in politics, and the chapter includes the most recent available material on the demographics of voting behavior.

Part V, "Social Change," includes **Chapter 16, "Environment, Population, and Social Change."** This chapter is framed by environmental sociology—a topic of great interest to today's students. The chapter opens with a sociological analysis of environmental change, including sustainability and climate change. There is a basic introduction to demography, as well as a discussion of the social dimensions of natural disasters. The social movements section includes an illustration from the "Black Lives Matter" movement.

Features and Pedagogical Aids

The special features of this book flow from its major themes: diversity, current theory and research, debunking and critical thinking, social change, and a global perspective. The features are also designed to help students develop critical thinking skills so that they can apply abstract concepts to observed experiences in their everyday life and learn how to interpret different theoretical paradigms and approaches to sociological research questions.

Critical Thinking Features

The feature **Thinking Sociologically** takes concepts from each chapter and asks students to think about these concepts in relationship to something they can easily observe in an exercise or class discussion. The feature **Debunking Society's Myths** takes certain common assumptions and shows students how the sociological perspective would inform such assumptions and beliefs.

An Extensive and Content-Rich Map Feature

We use the map feature that appears throughout the book to help students visualize some of the ideas presented, as well as to learn more about regional and international diversity. One map theme is **Mapping America's Diversity** and the other is **Viewing Society in Global Perspective**. These maps have multiple uses for instructional value, beyond instructing students about world and national geography. The maps have been designed primarily to show the differentiation by county, state, and/or country on key social facts.

High-Interest Theme Boxes

We use high-interest themes for the box features that embellish our focus on diversity and sociological research throughout the book. **Understanding Diversity** boxes further explore the approach to diversity taken throughout the book. In most cases, these box features provide personal narratives or other information designed to teach students about the experiences of different groups in society. Because many are written as first-person narratives, they can invoke students' empathy toward groups other than those to which they belong—something we think is critical to teaching about diversity. We hope to show students the connections between race, class, and other social groups that they otherwise find difficult to grasp. The box feature **Doing Sociological Research** is intended to show students the diversity of research questions that form the basis of sociological knowledge and, equally important, how the questions researchers ask influence the methods used to investigate the questions. We see this as an important part of sociological research—that how one investigates a question is determined as much by the nature of the question as by allegiance to a particular research method. Some questions require a more qualitative approach; others, a more quantitative approach. In developing these box features, we ask: What is the central question sociologists are asking? How did they explore this question using sociological research methods? What did they find? What are the implications of this research? We deliberately selected questions that show the full and diverse range of sociological theories and research methods, as well as the diversity of sociologists. Each box feature ends with **Questions to Consider** to encourage students to think further about the implications and applications of the research. **What Would a Sociologist Say?** boxes take a topic of interest and examine how a sociologist would likely interpret this subject. The topics are selected to capture student interest, such as a discussion of veteran suicides, hip-hop culture, and sex and popular culture. We think this box brings a sociological perspective to commonplace events.

The feature **A Sociological Eye on the Media**, found in several chapters, examines some aspect of how the media influence public understanding of some of the subjects in this book. We think this is important because sociological research often debunks taken for granted points of view presented in the media, and we want students to be able to look at the media with a more critical eye. Because of the enormous influence of the media, we think this is increasingly important in educating students about sociology.

The feature **See for Yourself** provides students with the chance to apply sociological concepts and ideas to their own observations. This feature can also be used as the basis for writing exercises, helping students improve both their analytic skills and their writing skills.

In addition to the features just described, we offer an entire set of learning aids within each chapter that promotes student mastery of the sociological concepts.

In-Text Learning Aids

Learning Objectives. We have included learning objectives to this edition, which appear near the beginning of every chapter. Matched to the major chapter headings, these objectives identify what we expect students to learn from the chapter. Faculty may choose to use these learning objectives to assess how well students comprehend the material. We tried to develop the learning objectives based on different levels of understanding and analysis, recognizing the various paths that students take in how they learn material.

Chapter Outlines. A concise chapter outline at the beginning of each chapter provides students with an overview of the major topics to be covered.

Key Terms. Key terms and major concepts appear in bold when first introduced in the chapter. A list of the key terms is found at the end of the chapter, which makes study more effective. Definitions for the key terms are found in the glossary.

Theory Tables. Each chapter includes a table that summarizes different theoretical perspectives by comparing and contrasting how these theories illuminate different aspects of different subjects.

Chapter Summary in Question-and-Answer Format. Questions and answers highlight the major points in each chapter and provide a quick review of major concepts and themes covered in the chapter. A **Glossary** and complete **References** for the whole text are found at the back of the book.

MindTap Sociology: The Personal Learning Experience

The redesigned MindTap Sociology: The Essentials, tenth edition, from Cengage represents a new approach to a highly personalized, online learning platform. A fully online learning solution, MindTap Sociology combines all of a student's learning, readings, and multimedia activities into a singular learning path that guides students through an introduction to sociology course. Three new, highly interactive activities challenge students to think critically by exploring, analyzing, and creating content, developing their sociological imagination through personal, local, and global lenses. MindTap Sociology: The Essentials, tenth edition, is easy to use and saves instructors' time by allowing them to:

- Seamlessly deliver appropriate content and technology assets from a number of providers to students, as they need them.
- Break course content down into movable objects to promote personalization, encourage interactivity, and ensure student engagement.
- Customize the course—from tools to text—and make adjustments "on the fly," making it possible to intertwine breaking news into their lessons and incorporate today's teachable moments.
- Bring interactivity into learning through the integration of multimedia assets (apps from Cengage Learning and other providers) and numerous in-context exercises and supplements; student engagement will increase, leading to better student outcomes.
- Track students' use, activities, and comprehension in real time, which provides opportunities for early intervention to influence progress and outcomes. Grades are visible and archived so students and instructors always have access to current standings in the class.
- Assess knowledge throughout each section: after readings, and in automatically graded activities and assignments.

A new digital implementation guide will help you integrate the new MindTap Learning Path into your course. Learn more at www.cengage.com/mindtap.

Instructor Resources

Sociology: The Essentials, tenth edition, is accompanied by a wide array of supplements prepared to create the best learning environment inside as well as outside the classroom for both instructors and students. All the continuing supplements for *Sociology: The Essentials*, tenth edition, have been thoroughly revised and updated. We invite you to take full advantage of the teaching and learning tools available to you.

Instructor's Resource Manual. This supplement offers instructors brief chapter outlines, student learning objectives, American Sociological Association recommendations, key terms and people, detailed chapter lecture outlines, lecture/discussion suggestions, student activities, chapter worksheets, video suggestions, video activities, and Internet exercises. The tenth edition also includes a syllabus to help instructors easily organize learning tools and create lesson plans.

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero. This flexible, online system allows teachers to author, edit, and manage test bank content from multiple Cengage Learning solutions, create multiple test versions in an instant, and deliver tests from your LMs, your classroom, or wherever you want.

PowerPoint Slides. Preassembled Microsoft® PowerPoint® lecture slides with graphics from the text make it easy for you to assemble, edit, publish, and present custom lectures for your course.

Acknowledgments

We relied on the comments of many reviewers to improve the book, and we thank them for the time they gave in developing very thoughtful commentaries on the different chapters.

We appreciate the efforts of many people who make this project possible. We are fortunate to be working with a publishing team with great enthusiasm for this project. We thank all of the people at Cengage Learning who have worked with us on this and other projects, especially Ava Fruin, who shepherded this edition through important revisions. We were also fortunate to have the guidance of Samen Iqbal, who oversaw the many aspects of production that are critical to the book's success. We especially thank Laura Sanderson for her extraordinary and careful work in the production process. Finally, our special thanks also go to our spouses Richard Morris Rosenfeld and Patricia Epps Taylor for their ongoing love and willingness to put up with us when we are frazzled by the project details!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Courtesy of Margaret Andersen

Margaret L. Andersen is the Edward F. and Elizabeth Goodman Rosenberg Professor Emerita of Sociology at the University of Delaware where she has held joint appointments in women's studies and Black American studies. She is the author of *Race in Society: The Enduring American Dilemma; Thinking about Women: Sociological Perspectives on Sex and Gender; Race, Class and Gender* (with Patricia Hill Collins); *Race and Ethnicity in Society: The Changing Landscape* (with Elizabeth Higginbotham); *On Land and On Sea: A Century of Women in the Rosenfeld Collection;* and *Living Art: The Life of Paul R. Jones, African American Art Collector.* She is a recipient of the American Sociological Association's Jessie Bernard Award and the Merit Award of the Eastern Sociological Society. She is the former vice president of the American Sociological Association, former president of the Eastern Sociological Society, and a recipient of the University of Delaware's Excellence in Teaching Award and the College of Arts and Sciences Award for Outstanding Teaching.

Courtesy of Howard Taylor

Howard F. Taylor was raised in Cleveland, Ohio. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Hiram College and has a Ph.D. in sociology from Yale University. He has taught at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Syracuse University, and Princeton University, where he is Professor of Sociology. He has published over fifty articles in sociology, education, social psychology, and race relations. His books include *The IQ Game* (Rutgers University Press), a critique of hereditarian accounts of intelligence; *Balance in Small Groups* (Van No-strand Reinhold), translated into Japanese; and the forthcoming *The SAT Triple Whammy: Race, Gender, and Social Class Bias.* He is past president of the Eastern Sociological Society, and a member of the American Sociological Association and the Sociological Research Association, an honorary society for distinguished research. He is a winner of the DuBois-Johnson-Frazier Award, given by the American Sociological Association for distinguished research in race and ethnic relations, and the President's Award for Distinguished Teaching at Princeton University.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, you will learn to:

Illustrate what is meant by saying that human behavior is shaped by social structure

- -

Question individualistic explanations of human behavior

- -

Describe the significance of studying diversity in contemporary society

- -

Explain the origins of sociological thought

- -

Compare and contrast the major frameworks of sociological theory

- -

Imagine you had been switched with another infant at birth. How different would your life be? What if your accidental family was very poor . . . or very rich? How might this have affected the schools you attended, the health care you received, and the possibilities for your future career? If you had been raised in a different religion, would this have affected your beliefs, values, and attitudes? Taking a greater leap, what if you had been born another sex or a different race? What would you be like now?

We are talking about changing the basic facts of your life—your family, social class, education, religion, sex, and race. Each has major consequences for who you are and how you will fare in life. These factors play a major part in writing your life script. Your social location (meaning a person's place in society) establishes the limits and possibilities of a life.

Consider this:

- The people least likely to attend college are those most likely to benefit from it (Brand and Xie 2010).
- Neighborhoods with high concentration of African Americans and, to some extent, Latinos and Asian Americans are less likely to include health-related businesses such as fresh food markets, physical fitness facilities, and various health-providing social service organizations (Anderson 2017; Walker, Reece, and Burke 2010).
- Sons who have sisters are less likely to provide elder care to their parents than are sons without sisters. At the same time, daughters (who provide more elder care overall) provide more care to mothers than they do for fathers (Grigoryeva 2017).

These conclusions, drawn from current sociological research, describe some consequences of your particular location in society. Although we may take our place in society for granted, our social location has a profound effect on our chances in life. The power of sociology is that it teaches us to see how society influences our lives and the lives of others, and it helps us explain the consequences of different social arrangements.

Sociology also has the power to help us understand the influence of major changes on people. Currently, rapidly developing technologies, increasing globalization, a more diverse population in the United States, and growth in social inequality are affecting everyone, although in different ways. How are these changes affecting your life? Perhaps you rely on social media to keep in touch with friends. Maybe your school includes people speaking many different languages. Perhaps you see women and men in your community finding it harder to make ends meet, while people with vast sums of money shape national policy. All of these are issues that guide sociological questions. Sociology explains some of the causes and consequences of these changes.

Although society is always changing, it is also remarkably stable. People generally follow established patterns of human behavior, and you can often anticipate how people will behave in certain situations. You can even anticipate how different social conditions will affect different groups of people in society. This is what sociologists find so interesting: Society is marked by both change and stability. Societies continually evolve, creating the need for people to adapt to change while still following generally established patterns of behavior.

What Is Sociology?

Sociology is the study of human behavior in society. Sociologists are interested in the study of people and have learned a fundamental lesson: Human behavior, even when seemingly "natural" or taken for granted, is shaped by social structures—structures that have their origins beyond the immediately visible behaviors of everyday life. In other words, *all human behavior occurs in a social context*. That context—the institutions and culture that surround us—shapes what people do and think. In this book, we will examine the dimensions of society and analyze the elements of social context that influence human behavior.

Sociology is a scientific way of thinking about society and its influence on human groups. Observation, reasoning, and logical analysis are the tools of sociologists. Sociology is inspired by the fascination people have for

David Grossman/Alamy Stock Photo

Sociology is the study of human behavior. What social behaviors do you see here?

observing people, but it goes far beyond casual observations. It builds from objective analyses that others can validate as reliable.

Every day, the media in their various forms (television, film, video, digital, and print) bombard us with social commentary. Media commentators provide endless opinions about the various and sometimes bizarre forms of behavior in society. Sociology is different. Sociologists often appear in the media, and they study some of the same subjects that the media examine, such as crime, violence, or income inequality, but sociologists use specific research techniques and well-tested theories to explain social issues. Indeed, sociology can provide the tools for testing whether the things we hear about society are actually true—an increasingly important contribution in an era where many think that the media promote so-called fake news—a phenomenon that itself has social causes and consequences. Learning how to assess such claims is an important contribution of sociological research, as you will see in the feature "Debunking Society's Myths" appearing throughout this book.

The subject matter of sociology is everywhere. This is why people sometimes wrongly believe that sociology just explains the obvious. Sociologists bring a unique perspective to understanding social behavior and social change. Even though sociologists often do research on familiar topics, such as youth cultures or racial inequality, they do so using specific research tools and frames of analysis (known as sociological theory). Psychologists, anthropologists, political scientists, economists, social workers, and others also study social behavior, although each has a different perspective or "angle" on people in society.

How is sociology different from psychology? After all, both study people and both identify some of the social forces that shape our lives. There is, however, a difference. Research in psychology can inform some sociological analyses, but the focus in psychology is more on individuals—what makes individuals do what they do and how individual minds and emotions work. Increasingly, psychology is also influenced by the studies of the brain that are emerging from the techniques of neuroscience. Sociologists, on

Key Sociological Concepts

As you build your sociological perspective, you must learn certain key concepts to begin understanding how sociologists view human behavior. Social structure, social institutions, social change, and social interaction are not the only sociological concepts, but they are fundamental to grasping the sociological perspective.

- **Social Interaction.** Sociologists see **social interaction** as behavior between two or more people that is given meaning. Through social interaction, people react and change, depending on the actions and reactions of others. Because society changes as new forms of human behavior emerge, change is always in the works.
- **Social Structure.** We define **social structure** as the organized pattern of social relationships and social institutions that together constitute society. Social structure is not a "thing," but refers to the fact that social forces not always visible to the human eye guide and shape human behavior. Acknowledging that social structure exists does not mean that humans have no choice in how they behave, only that those choices are largely conditioned by one's location in society.
- **Social Institutions.** In this book, you will also learn about the significance of **social institutions**, defined as established and organized systems of social behavior with a particular and recognized purpose. Family, religion, marriage, government, and the economy are examples of major social institutions. Social institutions confront individuals at birth and transcend individual experience, but they still influence individual behavior.
- **Social Change.** As you can tell, sociologists are also interested in the process of **social change**, the alteration of society over time. As much as sociologists see society as producing certain outcomes, they do not see society as fixed, nor do they see humans as passive recipients of social expectations. Sociologists view society as stable but constantly changing.

As you read this book, you will see that these key concepts—social interaction, social structure, social institutions, and social change—are central to the sociological imagination.

Q: What do the following people have in common?

Michelle Obama (former first lady)
Cam Newton (NFL quarterback)
Senator Corey Booker (from New Jersey)
Robin Williams (actor, comedian)
Ronald Reagan (former president)
Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (famed civil rights leader and pastor)
Regis Philbin (TV personality)
Reverend Jesse Jackson (civil rights leader)
Saul Bellow (novelist; Nobel Prize recipient)
Joe Theismann (former football player and TV personality)
Congresswoman Maxine Waters (from California)
Former Senator Barbara Mikulski (from Maryland)

A: They were all sociology majors!

Source: Compiled by Peter Dreier, Occidental College, supplemented by authors.

the other hand, though they learn from psychological research, are more interested in the broad social forces that shape society as a whole and the people within it. (See the box "What Would a Sociologist Say?" for an example.) Together, these and other social sciences provide compelling, though different, views of human behavior.

The Sociological Perspective

Think back to the chapter opening where we asked you to imagine yourself growing up under different circumstances. Our goal in that passage was to make you feel the stirring of the *sociological perspective*—the ability to see societal patterns that influence individual and group life. The beginnings of the sociological perspective can be as simple as the pleasures of watching people or wondering how society influences people's lives. Indeed, many students begin their study of sociology because they are "interested in people." Sociologists convert this curiosity into the systematic study of how society influences different people's experiences within it.

C. Wright Mills (1916–1962) was one of the first to write about the sociological perspective in his classic book, *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). He wrote that the task of sociology was to understand the relationship between individuals and the society in which they live. He defined the **sociological imagination** as the ability to see the societal patterns that influence the individual as well as groups of individuals. Sociology should be used, Mills argued, to reveal how the context of society shapes our lives. He thought that to understand the experience of a given person or group of people, one had to have knowledge of the social and historical context in which people lived.

Think, for example, about the time and effort that many people put into their appearance. You might ordinarily think of this as merely personal grooming or an individual attempt to "look good," but this behavior has significant social origins. When you stand in front of a mirror, you are probably not thinking about how society is present in your reflection. As you look in the mirror, though, you are seeing how others see you and are very likely adjusting your appearance with that in mind, even if not consciously.

This seemingly individual behavior is actually a very social act. If you are trying to achieve a particular look, you are likely doing so because of social forces that establish particular ideals. These ideals are produced by industries that profit enormously from the products and services that people buy, even when people do so believing they are making an individual choice. Some industries suggest that you should

Getting Pregnant: A Very Social Act

When does a woman get pregnant? Simple, you might think—it's biological. Of course, you can think of pregnancy from a biological perspective, as resulting from the process of fertilization. Or, you might think of pregnancy from a psychological perspective, analyzing the desire to have a child as rooted in an individual decision-making processes. You might even think about pregnancy from a cross-cultural or historical perspective, analyzing childbirth in different cultural contexts or analyzing historical changes in how pregnancy is managed by the medical profession. What would a sociologist say about getting pregnant?

From a sociological perspective, pregnancy is deeply social behavior. There would be many sociological angles for studying pregnancy. An example from recent research reveals the power of sociological thinking. Sociological researchers have found that the likelihood of becoming pregnant increases significantly in the two years following a friend's having had a child. As the researchers conclude, even such personal decisions as the decision to have a child result from the *web of social relationships in which people are embedded* (Balbo and Barban 2014). Pregnancy may seem like a very personal decision, but it is fertile ground for sociological study. What other social forces do you think might influence the likelihood of getting pregnant?

be thinner or curvier, your pants should be baggy or "skinny," women's breasts should be minimized or maximized—either way, you need more products. Maybe you should have a complete makeover! Many people go to great lengths to try to achieve a constantly changing beauty ideal, one that is probably not even attainable (such as flawless skin, hair always in place, with perfectly proportioned body parts). Sometimes trying to meet these ideals can even be hazardous to your physical and mental health. The ideals also vary depending on your gender.

The point is that the alleged standards of beauty are produced by social forces that extend far beyond an individual's concern with personal appearance. Appearance ideals, like other socially established beliefs and practices, are produced in particular social and historical contexts. People may come up with all kinds of personal strategies for achieving these ideals: They may buy more products, try to lose more weight or get bulked up, possibly becoming depressed and anxious if they think their efforts are failing. These personal behaviors may seem to be only individual issues, but they have basic social causes. The sociological imagination permits us to see that something as seemingly personal as how you look arises from a social context, not just individual behavior.

Sociologists are certainly concerned about individuals, but they are attuned to the social and historical context that shapes individual and group experiences. The sociological imagination distinguishes between *troubles* and *issues*. **Troubles** are privately felt problems that spring from events or feelings in a person's life. **Issues** affect large numbers of people and have their origins in the institutional arrangements and history of a society (Mills 1959). This distinction is the crux of the difference between individual experience and **social structure**, defined as the organized pattern of social relationships and social institutions that together constitute society. Issues shape the context within which troubles arise. Sociologists employ the sociological perspective to understand how issues are shaped by social structures.

Mills used the example of unemployment to explain the meaning of troubles versus issues—an example that still has resonance given people's concerns about finding work. When an individual person becomes unemployed—or cannot find work—he or she has a personal trouble, such as the worry that many college graduates have experienced in trying to find work following graduation. The personal trouble unemployment brings may include financial problems as well as the person feeling a loss of identity, becoming depressed, or having to uproot a family and move. College students may have to move back home with parents after graduation.

The problem of unemployment, however, is deeper than the experience of any one person. Unemployment is rooted in the structure of society—this is what interests sociologists. What societal forces cause unemployment? Who is most likely to become unemployed at different times? How does

Troubles and Issues

Personal troubles are everywhere around us: alcohol abuse or worries about money or even being upset about how you look. At an individual level, these things can be deeply troubling, and people sometimes need personal help to deal with them. But most personal troubles, as C. Wright Mills would say, also have their origins in societal arrangements. Take the example of alcohol abuse.

What are some of the things about society—not just individuals—that might influence this personal trouble? Is there a culture of drinking on your campus that generates peer pressure to drink? Do people drink more when they are unemployed? Is drinking more common among particular groups or at different times in history? Who profits from people's drinking? Thinking about these questions can help you understand the distinction that Mills makes between *personal troubles* and *social issues*.

unemployment affect an entire community (for instance, when a large plant shuts down) or an entire nation (such as when recessions hit)? Sociologists know that unemployment causes personal troubles, but understanding unemployment is more than understanding one person's experience. It requires understanding the social structural conditions that influence people's lives.

The specific task of sociology, according to Mills, is to comprehend the whole of human society—its personal and public dimensions, historical and contemporary—and its influence on the lives of human beings. Mills had an important point: People often feel that things are beyond their control, meaning that people are shaped by social forces larger than their individual lives. Social forces influence our lives in profound ways, even though we may not always know how. Consider this: Sociologists have noted a current trend, popularly labeled "the boomerang generation" or "accordion families" (Newman 2012). These terms refer to the pattern whereby many young people, after having left their family home to attend college, are returning home after graduation. Although this may seem like an individual decision to save money on housing or live "free" while paying off student loans, when a whole generation experiences this living arrangement, there are social forces at work that extend beyond individual decisions. In other words, people feel the impact of social forces in their personal lives, even though they may not always know the full dimensions of those forces. This is where sociology comes into play—revealing the *social structures* that shape the different dimensions of our day-to-day lives. Social structure is a lot like air: You cannot directly "see" it, but it is essential to living our lives.

Sociologists see social structures through careful and systematic observation. This makes sociology an **empirical** discipline. Empirical refers to careful observation, not just conjecture or opinion. In this way, sociology is very different from common sense. For empirical observations to be useful to others, they must be gathered and recorded rigorously. Sociologists are also obliged to reexamine their assumptions and conclusions constantly. Although the specific methods that sociologists use to examine different problems vary, as we will see in Chapter 3 on sociological research methods, the empirical basis of sociology is what distinguishes it from mere opinion or other forms of social commentary.

Discovering Unsettling Facts

In studying sociology, it is crucial to examine the most controversial topics and to do so with an open mind, even when you see the most disquieting facts. The facts we learn through sociological research can be "inconvenient" because the data can challenge familiar ways of thinking. Consider the following:

- Many think of the Internet as promoting more impersonal social interaction. Sociological research, however, finds that people with Internet access are actually *more likely* to have romantic partners because of the ease of meeting people online (Rosenfeld and Thomas 2012).
- Almost thirteen percent (12.7) of U.S. households are "food insecure," meaning that they do not have the money for an adequate amount of food (Oliviera 2017).
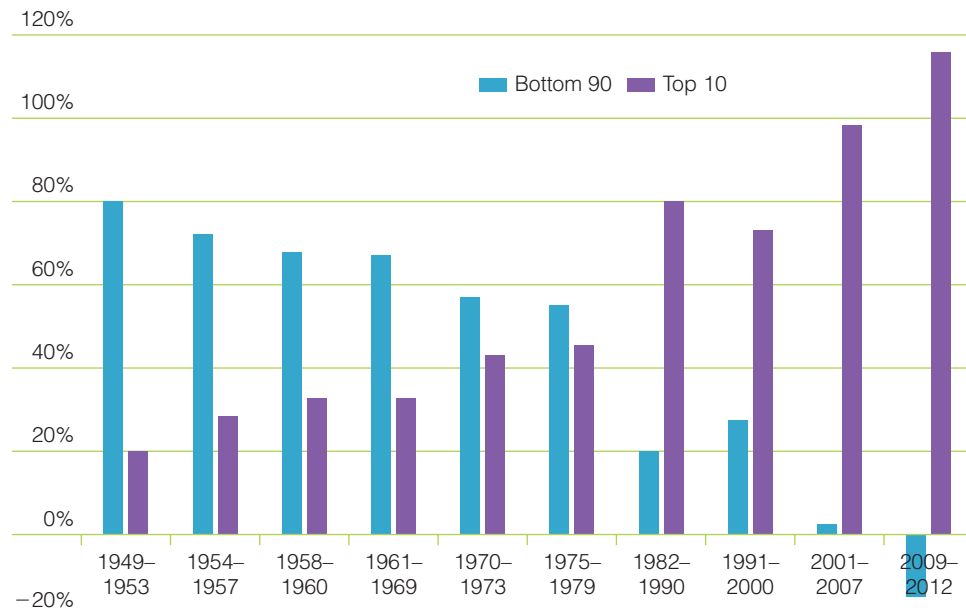
▲ Figure 1-1 **Distribution of Average Income Growth during Economic Expansions.** This figure shows how the bottom 90 percent and top 10 percent of the population experience change in their income during periods of economic expansion. What trends do you see here and how might they be affecting people's personal troubles and social issues?

Source: Tcherneva, Pavlina R. 2014. *Growth for Whom?* Levy Economics Institute of Bard College. Retrieved April 1, 2015. **www.levyinstitute.org /pubs/op_47.pdf**

- The number of women prisoners has increased at almost twice the rate of increase for men; two-thirds of women and half of men in prison are parents (Carson and Anderson 2016; Glaze and Maruschak 2008).

These facts provide unsettling evidence of persistent problems in the United States, *problems that are embedded in society, not just in individual behavior*. Sociologists try to reveal the social factors that shape society and determine the chances of success for different groups. Some never get the chance to go to college; others are unlikely to ever go to jail. These divisions persist because of people's placement within society.

▲ Figure 1-1 provides graphic evidence of how changes in society might determine the opportunities for success of different groups. This image shows what percentage of income growth went to the top 10 percent and the bottom 90 percent of the U.S. population since World War II. This was a period of great economic expansion in the United States. How was income growth distributed over this time period and who benefitted? As you can see in this image, since 2000, the bottom 90 percent of the population has experienced a dramatic decline in income growth. How does this affect opportunity for people like you?

Debunking Society's Myths

Myth: Anyone who works hard enough in the United States can get ahead.
Sociological Research: There are periods in society when some groups are able to move ahead. As examples, the Black middle class expanded following changes in civil rights laws in the 1960s; the White middle class also grew in the post-World War II period as the result of such things as GI benefits for returning vets and government support for home ownership. However, although there are exceptions, most people do not change their social class position from that in which they were born. As Figure 1.1 shows you, at times groups may even fall further behind as the result of conditions in society (Piketty 2014; Noah 2013).

How might it help explain the growing concern with class inequality? We will discuss these changes more in Chapter 8, but for now, perhaps you can begin to understand how sociologists study the broad social forces that shape people's life chances. Something as simple as being born in a particular generation can shape the course of your lifetime.

Sociologists study not just the disquieting side of society. Sociologists may also study questions that affect everyday life, such as how children's play and sports affect their developing gender identities (Messner and Musto 2016), worker–customer dynamics in nail salons (Kang 2010), or the expectations that young women and men have for combining work and family life (Gerson 2010). There are also many intriguing studies of unusual groups, such as cyberspace users (Turkel 2012), strip clubs and dancers (Barton 2017), or competitive eaters (Ferguson 2014). The subject matter of sociology is vast. Some research illuminates odd corners of society; other studies address urgent problems of society that may affect the lives of millions.

Debunking in Sociology

The power of sociological thinking is that it helps us see everyday life in new ways. Sociologists question actions and ideas that are usually taken for granted. Peter Berger (1963) calls this process "debunking." **Debunking** refers to looking behind the facades of everyday life—what Berger called the "unmasking tendency" of sociology (1963: 38). In other words, sociologists look at the behind-the-scenes patterns and processes that shape the behavior they observe in the social world.

Take schooling, for example: We can see how the sociological perspective debunks common assumptions about education. Most people think that education is primarily a way to learn and get ahead. Although this is true, a sociological perspective on education reveals something more. Sociologists have concluded that more than learning takes place in schools; other social processes are at work. Social cliques are formed where some students are "insiders" and others are excluded "outsiders." Young schoolchildren acquire not just formal knowledge but also the expectations of society and people's place within it. Race and class conflicts are often played out in schools (Lewis and Diamond 2015). Poor children seldom have the same resources in schools as middle-class or elite children, and they are often assumed to be incapable of doing schoolwork and are treated accordingly. The somber reality is that schools often stifle the opportunities of some children rather than launch all children toward success (Kozol 2012).

Martin Norris Studio Photography/Alamy Stock Photo

Lindsay Hebberd/Encyclopedia/Corbis

Cultural practices that seem bizarre to outsiders may be taken for granted or defined as appropriate by insiders.

Doing Sociological Research

Evicted

Research Question

Sociologist Matthew Desmond was curious about the character of poverty in the United States, but the more he thought about it, the more he realized that people's housing arrangements were a critical part of this problem. Specifically, he wanted to know more about housing eviction: How much does it happen? What are its consequences? Who gets evicted and why? He soon realized that most studies of poverty and housing focused solely on public housing, even though many of the poor are renters in the private market.

Research Method

He began his research by designing a survey of the private housing sector in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, then interviewing 1100 tenants in their homes in households across the city to be as representative as possible (see Chapter 3 for more details on research methods). At the same time, he lived in one of the city's trailer parks, taking extensive and detailed notes that allowed him to understand housing eviction through the eyes of those affected by it. His use of multiple methods, including his interviews, field notes, and formal records, provides a powerful analysis of eviction and its consequences.

Research Results

His results were published in a Pulitzer prize winning book. His results are rich and detailed, by his following the lives of some of the people he interviewed. Among other things, he found that almost half (48 percent) of forced moves were "informal evictions"—that is, not processed through the courts, but just forced by a landlord. Eviction resulted in many additional problems, including poor physical and mental health (especially for mothers), disruption in children's education, job loss, homelessness, declines in neighborhood quality, and a disruption of social bonds that stable housing provides.

Conclusions and Implications

Eviction has been an understudied problem that Desmond has exposed to the public through his research. He concludes that public initiatives that provide decent and stable, affordable housing is critical to solving this problem. Desmond also concludes that a stable home should be one of the "unalienable rights"—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—that are founding principles for the nation.

Questions to Consider

1. Were you to be evicted from where you live, what would be the consequences? How might they be affected by your age, your race, and your family status?
2. Are there organizations in your community that assist people who need affordable housing? If so, who do they support and how? If not, do you see a need for such assistance?

Source: Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City. New York: Crown Publishers.*

Debunking Society's Myths

Myth: Email scams promising to deliver a large sum of cash from some African bank if you contact the email deliverer prey on people who are just stupid or old.

Sociological Research: Studies of these email scams indicate that Americans and Brits are especially susceptible to such scams because they play on widely held cultural stereotypes about Africa (that these are economically unsophisticated nations in which people are unable to manage money). These scams also exploit the American cultural belief that it is possible to "get rich quick"—reflecting a belief in individualism and the belief that anyone who tries hard enough can get ahead (Smith 2009).

Debunking is sometimes easier to do when looking at a culture or society different from one's own. Consider how behaviors that are unquestioned in one society may seem positively bizarre to an outsider. For a thousand years in China, it was usual for the elite classes to bind the feet of young girls to keep the feet from growing bigger—a practice allegedly derived from a mistress of the emperor. Bound feet were a sign of delicacy and vulnerability. A woman with large feet (defined as more than 4 inches long!) was thought to bring shame to her husband's household. The practice was supported by the belief that men were highly aroused by small feet, even though men never actually saw the naked foot. If they had, they might have been repulsed, because a woman's actual foot was U-shaped and often rotten and covered with dead skin (Blake 1994). Outside the social, cultural, and historical context in which it was practiced, footbinding seems bizarre, even dangerous. Feminists have pointed out that Chinese women were crippled by this practice, making them unable to move about freely and more dependent on men (Chang 1991).

This is an example of outsiders debunking a practice that was taken for granted by those within the culture. Debunking can also call into question practices in one's own culture that may normally go unexamined. Strange as the practice of Chinese footbinding may seem to you, how might someone from another culture view wearing shoes that make it difficult to walk? Or piercing one's tongue or eyebrow? Many take these practices of contemporary U.S. culture for granted, just as they do Chinese footbinding. Until these cultural processes are debunked, seen as if for the first time, they might seem normal.

Establishing Critical Distance

Debunking requires critical distance—that is, being able to detach from the situation at hand and view things with a critical mind. The role of critical distance in developing a sociological imagination is well explained by the early sociologist **Georg Simmel** (1858–1918). Simmel was especially interested in the role of *strangers* in social groups. Strangers have a position both inside and outside social groups. They are part of a group without necessarily sharing the group's assumptions and points of view. Because of this, the stranger can sometimes see the social structure of a group more readily than can people who are thoroughly imbued with the group's worldview. Simmel suggests that the sociological perspective requires a combination of nearness and distance. One must have enough critical distance to avoid being taken in by the group's definition of the situation, but be near enough to understand the group's experience.

Sociologists are not typically strangers to the society they study. You can acquire critical distance through a willingness to question the forces that shape social behavior. Often, sociologists become interested in things because of their own experiences. The biographies of sociologists are rich with examples of how their personal lives informed the questions they asked. Among sociologists are former ministers and nuns now studying the sociology of religion, women who have encountered sexism who now study the significance of gender in society, rock-and-roll fans studying music in popular culture, and sons and daughters of immigrants now analyzing race and ethnic relations (see the box "Understanding Diversity: Becoming a Sociologist").

The Significance of Diversity

The analysis of diversity is a central theme of sociology. Differences among groups, especially differences in the treatment of groups, are significant in any society, but they are particularly compelling in a society as diverse as that in the United States.

Defining Diversity

Today, the United States includes people from all nations and races. In 1900, one in eight Americans was not White; today, racial and ethnic minority groups (including African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, Native Hawaiians, Asian Americans, and people of more than one race) represent 23 percent of Americans, and that proportion is growing (see ◆ Table 1-1 and ■ map 1-1).

Table 1-1   U.S. Population Projections, 2010–2050

	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
White	79.5%	78.0%	76.6%	75.3%	74.0%
Black	12.9%	13.0%	13.1%	13.0%	13.0%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	1.0%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%
Asian	4.6%	5.5%	6.3%	7.1%	7.8%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%
Two or more races	1.8%	2.1%	2.7%	3.2%	3.7%

Note: The U.S. census counts race and Hispanic ethnicity separately. Thus, Hispanics may fall into any of the race categories. Those who identified themselves as Hispanic were 16 percent of the total U.S. population in the 2010 census.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2012. National Population Projections: Summary Table. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce. **www.census.gov**

map 1-1   Mapping America's Diversity: A Changing Population

The nation is becoming increasingly diverse, but the distribution of minority groups differs in various regions of the country. Looking at this map, what factors do you think influence the distribution of the population?

Minority Population as a Percentage of County Population

U.S. percent 36.3

Percentage
- 50.0 or more
- 36.3 to 49.9
- 25.0 to 36.2
- 10.0 to 24.9
- Less than 10.0

0   200 Miles   0   100 Miles   0   50 Miles
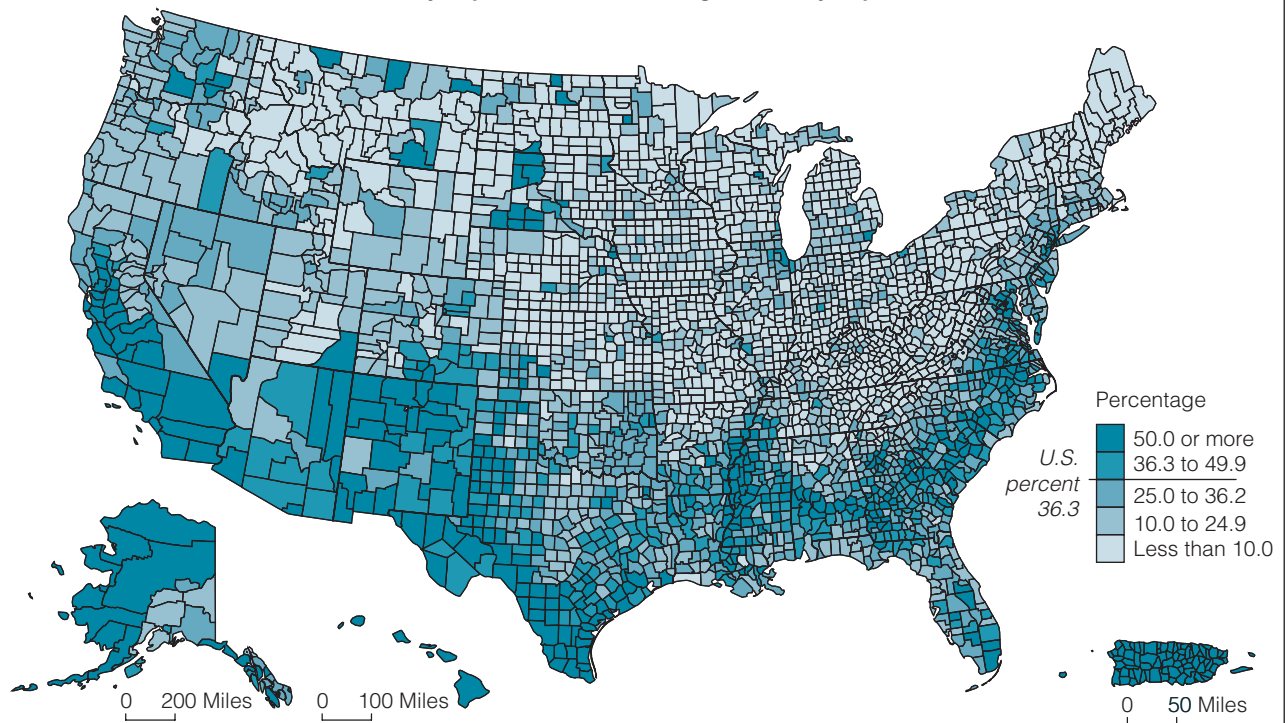
Data: U.S. Census Bureau. 2010. **www.census.gov**

Perhaps the most basic lesson of sociology is that people are shaped by the social context around them. In the United States, with so much cultural diversity, people will share some experiences, but not all. Experiences not held in common can include some of the most important influences on social development, such as language, religion, and the traditions of family and community. Understanding diversity means recognizing this diversity and making it central to sociological analyses.

In an increasingly diverse society, valuing and understanding diversity is a part of fully understanding society.

In this book, we use the term **diversity** to refer to the variety of group experiences that result from the social structure of society. Diversity is a broad concept that includes studying group differences in society's opportunities, the shaping of social institutions by different social factors, the formation of group and individual identity, and the process of social change. Diversity includes the study of different cultural orientations, although diversity is not exclusively about culture.

Understanding diversity is crucial to understanding society because fundamental patterns of social change and social structure are increasingly patterned by diverse group experiences. There are numerous sources of diversity, including race, class, gender, and others as well. Age, nationality, sexual orientation, and region of residence, among other factors, also differentiate the experience of diverse groups in the United States. As the world is increasingly interconnected through global communication and a global economy, the study of diversity also encompasses a global perspective—that is, an understanding of the international connections existing across national borders and the impact of such connections on life throughout the world.

Understanding Diversity

Become a Sociologist

Individual biographies often have a great influence on the subjects sociologists choose to study. The authors of this book are no exception. Margaret Andersen, a White woman, now studies the sociology of race and women's studies. Howard Taylor, an African American man, studies race, social psychology, and especially race and intelligence testing. Here, each of them writes about the influence of their early experiences on becoming a sociologist.

Margaret Andersen

As I was growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, my family moved from California to Georgia, then to Massachusetts, and then back to Georgia. Moving as we did from urban to small-town environments and in and out of regions of the country that were very different in their racial character, I probably could not help becoming fascinated by the sociology of race. Oakland, California, where I was born, was highly diverse; my neighborhood was mostly White and Asian American. When I moved to a small town in Georgia in the 1950s, I was ten years old, but I was shocked by the racial norms I encountered. I had always loved riding in the back of the bus—our major mode of transportation in Oakland—and could not understand why this was no longer allowed. Labeled by my peers as an outsider because I was not southern, I painfully learned what it meant to feel excluded just because of "where you are from."

When I moved again to suburban Boston in the 1960s, I was defined by Bostonians as a southerner and was ridiculed. Nicknamed "Dixie," I was teased for how I talked.
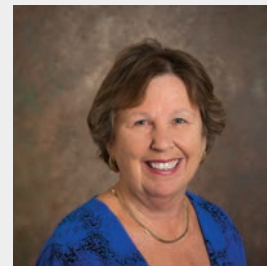
(continued)

Unlike in the South, where Black people were part of White people's daily lives despite strict racial segregation, Black people in Boston were even less visible. In my high school of 2500 or so students, Black students were rare. To me, the school seemed not much different from the strictly segregated schools I had attended in Georgia. My family soon returned to Georgia, where I was an outsider again; when I later returned to Massachusetts for graduate school in the 1970s, I worried about how a southerner would be accepted in this "Yankee" environment. Because I had acquired a southern accent, I think many of my teachers stereotyped me and thought I was not as smart as the students from other places.

These early lessons, which I may have been unaware of at the time, must have kindled my interest in the sociology of race relations. As I explored sociology, I wondered how the concepts and theories of race relations applied to women's lives. So much of what I had experienced growing up as a woman in this society was completely unexamined in what I studied in school. As the women's movement developed in the 1970s, I found sociology to be the framework that helped me understand the significance of gender and race in people's lives. To this day, I write and teach about race and gender, using sociology to help students understand their significance in society.

Howard Taylor

I grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, the son of African American professional parents. My mother, Murtis Taylor, was a social worker and the founder and then president of a social work agency called the Murtis H. Taylor Human Services Center in Cleveland, Ohio. She is well known for her contributions to the city of Cleveland and was an early "superwoman," working days and nights, cooking, caring for her two sons, and being active in many professional and civic activities. I think this gave me an early appreciation for the roles of women and the place of gender in society, although I surely would not have articulated it as such at the time.

My father was a businessman in a then all-Black life insurance company. He was also a "closet scientist," always doing physics experiments, talking about scientific studies, and bringing home scientific gadgets. He encouraged my brother and me to engage in science, so we were always experimenting with scientific studies in the basement of our house. In the summers, I worked for my mother in the social service agency where she worked, as a camp counselor, and in other jobs. Early on, I contemplated becoming a social worker, but I was also excited by science. As a young child, I acquired my father's love of science and my mother's interest in society. In college, the one field that would gratify both sides of me, science and social work, was sociology. I wanted to study human interaction, but I also wanted to be a scientist, so the appeal of sociology was clear.

Courtesy of Howard Taylor

At the same time, growing up African American meant that I faced the consequences of race every day. It was always there, and like other young African American children, I spent much of my childhood confronting racism and prejudice. When I discovered sociology, in addition to bridging the scientific and humanistic parts of my interests, I found a field that provided a framework for studying race and ethnic relations. The merging of two ways of thinking, coupled with the analysis of race that sociology has long provided, made sociology fascinating to me.

Today, my research on race, class, gender, and intelligence testing seems rooted in these early experiences. I do quantitative research in sociology and see sociology as a science that reveals the workings of race, class, and gender in society.

AP Images/Eugene Hoshiko

Globalization brings diverse cultures together, but it is also a process by which Western markets have penetrated much of the world.

Society in Global Perspective

No society can be understood apart from the global context that now influences the development of all societies. The social and economic system of any one society is increasingly intertwined with those of other nations. Coupled with the increasing ease of travel and telecommunication, a global perspective is necessary to understand change both in the United States and in other parts of the world.

To understand globalization, you must look beyond the boundaries of your own society to see how patterns in any given society are increasingly being shaped by the connections between societies. Comparing and contrasting societies across different cultures is valuable. It helps you see patterns in your own society that you might otherwise take for granted, and it enriches your appreciation of the diverse patterns of culture that mark human society and human history. A global perspective, however, goes beyond just comparing different cultures; it also helps you see how events in one society or community may be linked to events occurring on the other side of the globe.

For instance, return to the example of unemployment that C. Wright Mills used to distinguish between troubles and issues. One man may lose his job in Peoria, Illinois, and a woman in Los Angeles may employ a Latina domestic worker to take care of her child while she pursues a career. On the one hand, these are individual experiences for all three people, but they are linked in a pattern of globalization that shapes the lives of all three. The Latina domestic may have a family whom she has left in a different nation so that she can afford to support them. The corporation for which the Los Angeles woman works may have invested in a new plant overseas that employs cheap labor, resulting in the unemployment of the man in Peoria. The man in Peoria may have seen immigrant workers moving into his community. One of his children may have made a friend at school who speaks a language other than English.

Such processes are increasingly shaping many of the subjects examined in this book—work, family, education, politics, just to name a few. Without a global perspective, you would not be able to fully understand the experience of any one of the people just mentioned, much less how these processes of change and global context shape society. Throughout this book, we will use a global perspective to understand some of the developments shaping contemporary life in the United States.

The Development of Sociological Theory

Like the subjects it studies, sociology is itself a social product. Sociology first emerged in western Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this period, the political and economic systems of Europe were rapidly changing. Monarchy, the rule of society by kings and queens, was disappearing, and new ways of thinking were emerging. Religion as the system of authority and law was giving way to scientific authority. At the same time, capitalism grew. Contact between different societies increased, and

worldwide economic markets developed. The traditional ways of the past were giving way to a new social order. The time was ripe for a new understanding.

The Influence of the Enlightenment

The **Enlightenment** in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe had an enormous influence on the development of modern sociology. Also known as the Age of Reason, the Enlightenment was characterized by faith in the ability of human reason to solve society's problems. Intellectuals believed that there were natural laws and processes in society to be discovered and used for the general good. Modern science was gradually supplanting traditional and religious explanations for natural phenomena with theories confirmed by experiments.

The earliest sociologists promoted a vision of sociology grounded in careful observation. **Auguste Comte** (1798–1857), a French philosopher who coined the term *sociology*, believed that just as science had discovered the laws of nature, sociology could discover the laws of human social behavior and thus help solve society's problems. This approach is called **positivism**, a system of thought still prominent today, in which scientific observation and description is considered the highest form of knowledge, as opposed to, say, religious dogma or poetic inspiration. The modern scientific method, which guides sociological research, grew out of positivism.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859), a French citizen, traveled to the United States as an observer beginning in 1831. Tocqueville thought that democratic values and the belief in human equality positively influenced American social institutions and transformed personal relationships. Less admiringly, he felt that in the United States the tyranny of kings had been replaced by the *tyranny of the majority*. He was referring to the ability of a majority to impose its will on everyone else in a democracy. Tocqueville also felt that, despite the emphasis on individualism in American culture, Americans had little independence of mind, making them self-centered and anxious about their social class position (Collins and Makowsky 1972).

Another early sociologist is **Harriet Martineau** (1802–1876). Like Tocqueville, Martineau, a British citizen, embarked on a long tour of the United States in 1834. She was fascinated by the newly emerging culture in the United States. Her book *Society in America* (1837) is an analysis of the social customs that she observed. This important work was overlooked for many years, probably because the author was a woman. It is now recognized as a classic. Martineau also wrote the first sociological methods book, *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (1838), in which she discussed how to observe behavior when one is a participant in the situation being studied.

Spencer Arnold/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

As one of the earliest observers of American culture, Harriet Martineau used the powers of social observation to record and analyze the social structure of American society. Long ignored for her contributions to sociology, she is now seen as one of the founders of early sociological thought.

Classical Sociological Theory

Of all the contributors to the development of sociology, the giants of the European tradition were Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber. They are classical thinkers because the ideas they offered more than 150 years ago continue to influence our understanding of society, not just in sociology but in other fields as well (such as political science and history).

Emile Durkheim

During the early academic career of the Frenchman **Emile Durkheim** (1858–1917), France was in the throes of great political and religious upheaval. Anti-Semitism (hatred of Jews) was rampant. Durkheim, himself Jewish, was fascinated by how the public degradation of Jews by non-Jews seemed to calm and unify a large segment of the divided French public. Durkheim later wrote that public rituals have a special purpose in society. Rituals create social solidarity, referring to the bonds that link the members of a group. Some of Durkheim's most significant works explore what forces hold society together and make it stable.

According to Durkheim, people in society are glued together by belief systems (Durkheim 1947/1912). The rituals of religion and other institutions symbolize and reinforce the sense of belonging. Public ceremonies create a bond between people in a social unit. Durkheim thought that such rituals as publicly punishing people sustain moral cohesion in society. Durkheim's views on this are further examined in Chapter 7, which discusses deviant behavior.

Durkheim also viewed society as an entity larger than the sum of its parts. He described this as society *sui generis* (which translates as "thing in itself"), meaning that society is a subject to be studied separately from the sum of the individuals who compose it. Society is external to individuals, yet its existence is internalized in people's minds—that is, people come to believe what society expects them to believe. Durkheim conceived of society as an integrated whole—each part contributing to the overall stability of the system. His work is the basis for *functionalism*, an important theoretical perspective that we will return to later in this chapter.

One contribution from Durkheim was his conceptualization of the *social facts*. Durkheim created the term **social facts** to indicate those social patterns that are *external* to individuals. Things such as customs and social values exist outside individuals, whereas psychological drives and motivation exist inside people. Social facts, therefore, are the proper subject of sociology; they are its reason for being.

A striking illustration of this principle was Durkheim's study of suicide (Durkheim 1951/1897). He analyzed rates of suicide in a society, as opposed to looking at individual (psychological) causes of suicide. He showed that suicide rates varied according to how clear the norms and customs of the society were, whether the norms and customs were consistent with each other and not contradictory. *Anomie* (the breakdown of social norms) exists where norms were either grossly unclear or contradictory; the suicide rates were higher in such societies or such parts of a society. It is important to note that this condition is in society—external to individuals, but felt by them (Puffer 2009). In this sense, such a condition is truly societal.

Durkheim held that social facts, though they exist outside individuals, nonetheless pose constraints on individual behavior. Durkheim's major contribution was the discovery of the social basis of human behavior. He proposed that society could be known through the discovery and analysis of social facts. This is the central task of sociology (Coser 1977; Bellah 1973; Durkheim 1950/1938).

Karl Marx

It is hard to imagine another scholar who has had as much influence on intellectual history as has **Karl Marx** (1818–1883). Along with his collaborator, Friedrich Engels, Marx not only changed intellectual history but also world history.

Marx's work was devoted to explaining how capitalism shaped society. He argued that capitalism is an economic system based on the pursuit of profit and the sanctity of private property. Marx used a class

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What Would a Sociologist Say?

Suicide among Veterans

Currently, 7400 veterans commit suicide each year, accounting for 18 percent of all suicides (in 2014), even though veterans are only 8.5 percent of the population (VA Suicide Prevention Program 2016). How do sociologists explain this?

Certainly, there are psychological factors at work—post-traumatic stress, depression, and, sometimes, substance abuse—but sociological factors are at work, too. Durkheim would argue that this is a good example of suicide as a social fact. A soldier returning home is likely to encounter a far less structured environment than when in service where military life is highly structured. This can be a suicide-prone environment, especially if combined with unemployment, homelessness, or a disability. If you add to that a lack of social support services or benefits specifically to address the risk of suicide, you can have a potentially lethal social context.

Although sociologists do not ignore the psychological dimensions of behavior such as suicide, they see that there are other important social factors that produce this tragic behavior.

analysis to explain capitalism, describing capital-
ism as a system of relationships among differ-
ent classes, including capitalists (also known as
the bourgeois class), the proletariat (or working
class), the petty bourgeoisie (small business
owners and managers), and the *lumpenprole-
tariat* (those "discarded" by the capitalist system,
such as the homeless). In Marx's view, profit, the
goal of capitalist endeavors, is produced through
the exploitation of the working class. Workers
sell their labor in exchange for wages, and capi-
talists make certain that wages are worth less
than the goods the workers produce. The dif-
ference in value is the profit of the capitalist. In
the Marxist view, the capitalist class system is
inherently unfair because the entire system rests
on workers getting less than they give.

Durkheim thought that symbols and rituals were important
for producing social cohesion in society. You can witness
this when shrines are spontaneously created in the
aftermath of tragedies, as illustrated here after the school
shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown,
Connecticut.

Marx thought that the economic orga-
nization of society was the most important
influence on what humans think and how
they behave. He found that the beliefs of the common people tended to support the interests of the
capitalist system, not the interests of the workers themselves. Why? The answer is that the capitalist
class controls the production of goods *and* the production of ideas. It owns the publishing companies,
endows the universities where knowledge is produced, and controls information industries—thus
shaping what people think.

Marx considered all of society to be shaped by economic forces. Laws, family structures, schools, and
other institutions all develop, according to Marx, to suit economic needs under capitalism. Like other
early sociologists, Marx took social structure as his subject rather than the actions of individuals. It was
the *system* of capitalism that dictated people's behavior. Marx saw social change as arising from tensions
inherent in a capitalist system—the conflict between the capitalist and working classes. Marx's ideas
are often misperceived by U.S. students because communist revolutionaries throughout the world have
claimed Marx as their guiding spirit. It would be naive to reject his ideas solely on political grounds. Much
that Marx predicted has not occurred—for instance, he claimed that the "laws" of history made a world-
wide revolution of workers inevitable, and this has not happened. Still, he left us an important body of
sociological thought springing from his insight that society is systematic and structural and that class is a
fundamental dimension of society that shapes social behavior.

Max Weber

Max Weber (1864–1920; pronounced "vayber") was greatly influenced by and built upon Marx's work.
Whereas Marx saw economics as the basic organizing element of society, Weber theorized that society
had three basic dimensions: political, economic, and cultural. According to Weber, a complete sociologi-
cal analysis must recognize the interplay between economic, political, and cultural institutions (Parsons
1947). Weber is credited with developing a *multidimensional* analysis of society that goes beyond Marx's
more one-dimensional focus on economics.

Weber also theorized extensively about the relationship of sociology to social and political values.
He did not believe there could be a value-free sociology because values would always influence what
sociologists considered worthy of study. Weber thought sociologists should acknowledge the influence
of values so that ingrained beliefs would not interfere with objectivity. Weber professed that the task of
sociologists is to teach students the uncomfortable truth about the world. Faculty should not use their
positions to promote their political opinions, he felt; rather, they have a responsibility to examine all
opinions, including unpopular ones, and use the tools of rigorous sociological inquiry to understand why
people believe and behave as they do.

An important concept in Weber's sociology is *verstehen* (meaning "understanding" and pronounced "vershtayen"). **Verstehen**, a German word, refers to understanding social behavior from the point of view of those engaged in it. Weber believed that to understand social behavior, one had to understand the meaning that a behavior had for people. He did not believe sociologists had to be born into a group to understand it (in other words, he didn't believe "it takes one to know one"), but he did think sociologists had to develop some subjective understanding of how other people experience their world. One major contribution from Weber was the definition of *social action* as a behavior to which people give meaning (Gerth and Mills 1946; Weber 1962/1913; Parsons 1951b), such as placing a bumper sticker on your car that states pride in U.S. military troops.

Sociology in the United States

American sociology was built on the earlier work of Europeans, but unique features of U.S. culture contribute to its distinctive flavor. In the early twentieth century, as sociology was evolving, most early sociologists in the United States took a reform-based approach, emphasizing more the importance of applying knowledge for social change. American sociologists believed that if they exposed the causes of social problems, they could alleviate human suffering. The nation in the early twentieth century was moving to a more urban society, with a new mix of immigrants and visible problems such as those we face today: urban blight, hunger, poverty, and racial segregation. Sociology, it was believed, could explain how these problems were caused and, therefore, be used to create change.

Nowhere was the emphasis on application more evident than at the University of Chicago, where a style of sociological thinking known as the Chicago School developed. The Chicago School included scholars who wanted to understand how society shapes the mind and identity of people. Sociologists such as George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley thought of society as a human laboratory where they could observe and understand human behavior to be better able to address human needs, and they used the city in which they lived as a living laboratory. You will study these thinkers more in Chapter 4.

Robert Park (1864–1944), from the University of Chicago, was a key founder of sociology. Originally a journalist who worked in several Midwestern cities, Park was interested in urban problems and how different racial groups interacted with each other. He was also fascinated by the sociological design of cities, noting that cities were typically sets of concentric circles. At the time, the very rich and the very poor lived in the middle, ringed by slums and low-income neighborhoods (Coser 1977; Collins and Makowsky 1972; Park and Burgess 1921). Today, Park would still be intrigued by how boundaries are defined and maintained in urban neighborhoods. You might notice this yourself. A single street crossing might delineate a Vietnamese neighborhood from an Italian one, an affluent White neighborhood from a barrio. The social structure of cities continues to be a subject of sociological research.

Bettmann/Corbis

Jane Addams, the only sociologist to win the Nobel Peace Prize, used her sociological skills to try to improve people's lives. The settlement house movement provided social services to groups in need, while also providing a social laboratory in which to observe the sociological dimensions of problems such as poverty.

Many early sociologists of the Chicago School were women whose work is only now being rediscovered. **Jane Addams** (1860–1935) was one of the most renowned sociologists of her day. Because she was a woman, she was never given the jobs or prestige that men in her time received. She was the only practicing sociologist ever to win a Nobel Peace Prize (in 1931), yet she never had a regular teaching job. Instead, she used her skills as a research sociologist to develop community projects that assisted people in need (Deegan 1988). She was a leader in the settlement house movement providing services and doing research to improve the lives of slum dwellers, immigrants, and other poor people.

Another early sociologist, widely noted for her work in the antilynching movement, was **Ida B. Wells-Barnett** (1862–1931). Born a slave, Ida B. Wells-Barnett learned to read and write at Rust College, a school established for freed slaves, later receiving her teaching credentials at Fisk University. She wrote numerous essays on the status of African Americans in the United States and was an active crusader against lynching and for women's rights, including the

right to vote. She was so violently attacked—in writing and in actual threats—that she often had to write under an assumed name. Until recently, her contributions to the field of sociology have been largely unexamined. Interestingly, her grandson, Troy Duster (b. 1936) is now a faculty member at New York University and the University of California, Berkeley (Giddings 2008; Henry 2008; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998).

W. E. B. DuBois (1868–1963; pronounced "due boys") was one of the most important early sociological thinkers in the United States. DuBois was a prominent Black scholar, a cofounder of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in 1909, a prolific writer, and one of the best American minds. He received the first Ph.D. ever awarded to a Black person in any field (from Harvard University), and he studied for a time in Germany, hearing several lectures by Max Weber (Morris 2015).

DuBois was deeply troubled by the racial divisiveness in society, writing in a classic essay published in 1901 that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" (DuBois 1901: 354). Like many of his women colleagues, he envisioned a community-based, activist profession committed to social justice (Deegan 1988); he was a friend and collaborator with Jane Addams. He believed in the importance of a scientific approach to sociological questions, but he also thought that convictions always directed one's studies. Were he alive today, he might no doubt note that the problem of the color line persists well into the twenty-first century.

Much of DuBois's work focused on the social structure of Black communities, one of his classic studies being of the city of Philadelphia. His book, *The Philadelphia Negro*, published in 1899, remains a classic study of African American urban life and its social institutions. One of the most lasting ideas from DuBois is his concept of "dual (or double) consciousness." DuBois saw African Americans as always having to see themselves through the eyes of others, a response that would be typical among any group oppressed by others. For DuBois, this dual consciousness led African Americans to always be alert to how others see them, and at the same time, to develop a strong collective identity of themselves as "Black" or, as we would say now, African American (DuBois 1903).

Ida B. Wells-Barnett is now well known for her brave campaign against the lynching of African American people. Less known are her early contributions to sociological thought.

Theoretical Frameworks in Sociology

The founders of sociology have established theoretical traditions that ask basic questions about society and inform sociological research. The idea of theory may seem dry to you because it connotes something that is only hypothetical and divorced from "real life." Sociological theory though is one of the tools that sociologists use to interpret real life. Sociologists use theory to organize their observations and apply them to the broad questions sociologists ask, such as: How are individuals related to society? How is social order maintained? Why is there inequality in society? How does social change occur? (See ◆ Table 1-2.)

Different theoretical frameworks within sociology make different assumptions and provide different insights about the nature of society. In the realm of *macrosociology* are theories that strive to understand society as a whole. Durkheim, Marx, and Weber were macrosociological theorists. Theoretical frameworks that center on face-to-face social interaction are known as *microsociology*. Some of the work derived from the Chicago School—research that studies individuals and group processes in society—is microsociological. Although sociologists draw from diverse theoretical perspectives to understand society, four theoretical traditions form the major theoretical perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interaction, and, more recently, feminist theory.

Functionalism

Functionalism has its origins in the work of Durkheim, who you will recall was especially interested in how social order is possible and how society remains relatively stable. **Functionalism** interprets each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the stability of the whole. As Durkheim suggested,

Table 1-2 Classical Theorists Reflect on the Economic Inequality

	Major Concepts	What's the Big Idea?	An Applied Example: Economic Inequality
EMILE DURKHEIM (1858–1917) Bettmann/Corbis	Society sui generis Social solidarity Social facts	Social structures produce social forces that impinge on individuals even when they are not immediately visible; social solidarity is produced through identifying some as "other" or not belonging.	In times of rising economic inequality, those who are especially vulnerable tend to blame others, such as immigrants or "foreigners," for taking jobs from those perceived as more worthy. This produces solidarity among those who may even act outside of their own interests because of their perception of "others."
KARL MARX (1818–1883) Bettmann/Corbis	Capitalism Class conflict	Capitalism is built on the exploitation of laboring groups for the profit of others. Class conflict is embedded in the system of capitalism that then shapes other social institutions.	It is no surprise that inequality is growing; the forces of capitalism mean that the rich will amass the most resources, with everyone else becoming worse off.
MAX WEBER (1864–1920) akg-images/Newscom	Multidimensional analysis Verstehen	Cultural values interact with economic and political systems to produce society; no one factor determines the character of society.	Even when the economy is stagnant, cultural beliefs in hard work and the Protestant ethic mean that people will blame individuals, not the system, for failure.
W. E. B. DUBOIS (1868–1963) Historical/Corbis	Color line Double consciousness	Racial inequality structures social institutions in the United States. Those who are oppressed by race develop a dual consciousness, ever aware of their status in the eyes of others but also having a collective identity as African American.	The "problem of the color line" extends into the twenty-first century, as African American people and other people of color are uniquely disadvantaged by economic inequality.

Table 1-3 Manifest and Latent Functions: The Family	
Manifest Functions (explicit, deliberate)	**Latent Functions (unintended, unrecognized)**
Reproduction	Sexual relations outside of the traditional family may be judged as deviant
Transmission of cultural values	Risk of intolerance of different cultures/groups
Care of the young	Neglect of public policies to support working parents
Emotional support	Silence around conflicts that occur within families
Consumption of goods	Transmission of inequality across generations as wealth and property is passed on for some and not others

functionalism conceptualizes society as more than the sum of its component parts. Each part is "functional" for society—that is, contributes to the stability of the whole. The different parts are primarily the institutions of society, each of which is organized to fill different needs and each of which has particular consequences for the form and shape of society. The parts each then depend on one another.

The family as an institution, for example, serves multiple functions. At its most basic level, the family has a reproductive role. Within the family, infants receive protection and sustenance. As they grow older, they are exposed to the patterns and expectations of their culture. Across generations, the family supplies a broad unit of support and enriches individual experience with a sense of continuity with the past and future. All these aspects of family can be assessed by how they contribute to the stability and prosperity of society. The same is true for other institutions.

The functionalist framework emphasizes the consensus and order that exist in society, focusing on social stability and shared public values. From a functionalist perspective, disorganization in the system, such as an economic collapse, leads to change because societal components must adjust to achieve stability. This is a key part of functionalist theory—that when one part of society is not working (or is *dysfunctional*, as they would say), it affects all the other parts and creates social problems. Change may be for better or worse. Changes for the worse stem from instability in the social system, such as a breakdown in shared values or a social institution no longer meeting people's needs (Eitzen and Baca Zinn 2012; Merton 1968).

Functionalism was a dominant theoretical perspective in sociology for many years, and one of its major theorists was **Talcott Parsons** (1902–1979). In Parsons's view, all parts of a social system are interrelated, with different parts of society having different basic functions. Functionalism was further developed by **Robert Merton** (1910–2003). Merton saw that social practices often have consequences for society that are not immediately apparent. He suggested that human behavior has both manifest and latent functions. *Manifest functions* are the stated and intended goals of social behavior. *Latent functions* are neither stated nor intended. The family, for example, has both manifest and latent functions, as demonstrated in ◆ Table 1-3.

Critics of functionalism argue that its emphasis on social stability understates the roles of power and conflict in society. Critics also disagree with the explanation of inequality offered by functionalism—that it persists because social inequality creates a system for the fair and equitable distribution of societal resources (discussed further in Chapter 8). Functionalists argue that it is fair and equitable that the higher social classes earn more money because they are more important (functional) to society. Critics disagree, saying that functionalism is too accepting of the status quo. From a functionalist perspective though, inequality serves a purpose in society: It provides an incentive system for people to work and promotes solidarity among groups linked by their common social standing.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory emphasizes the role of coercion and power in society and the ability of some to influence and control others. It differs from functionalism, which emphasizes cohesion within society. Instead, conflict

theory emphasizes strife and friction. Conflict theory pictures society as comprised of groups that compete for social and economic resources. Social order is maintained not by consensus but by domination, with power in the hands of those with the greatest political, economic, and social resources. When consensus exists, according to conflict theorists, it is attributable to people being united around common interests, often in opposition to other groups (Dahrendorf 1959; Mills 1956).

According to conflict theory, inequality exists because those in control of a disproportionate share of society's resources actively defend their advantages. The masses are not bound to society by their shared values but by coercion at the hands of the powerful. In conflict theory, the emphasis is on social control, not on consensus and conformity. Those with the most resources exercise power over others; inequality and power struggles are the result. Conflict theory gives great attention to class, race, gender, and sexuality in society because these are seen as the grounds of the most pertinent and enduring struggles in society.

Conflict theorists see inequality as inherently unfair, persisting only because groups who are economically advantaged use their social position to their own betterment. Their dominance even extends to the point of shaping the beliefs of other members of the society by controlling public information and holding power in institutions such as education and religion that shape what people think and know. From the conflict perspective, power struggles between conflicting groups are the source of social change. Those with the greatest power are typically able to maintain their advantage at the expense of other groups.

Conflict theory has been criticized for neglecting the importance of shared values and public consensus in society while overemphasizing inequality. Like functionalist theory, conflict theory finds the origins of social behavior in the structure of society, but it differs from functionalism in emphasizing the importance of power.

Symbolic Interaction

The third major framework of sociological theory is **symbolic interaction**. Instead of thinking of society in terms of abstract institutions, symbolic interaction emphasizes immediate social interaction as the place where "society" exists. Because of the human capacity for reflection, people give meaning to their behavior. The creation of meaning is how they interpret the different behaviors, events, or things that happen in society.

As its name implies, symbolic interaction relies extensively on the symbolic meaning that people develop and employ in the process of social interaction. Symbolic interaction theory emphasizes face-to-face interaction and thus is a form of microsociology, whereas functionalism and conflict theory are more macrosociological.

Derived from the work of the Chicago School, symbolic interaction theory analyzes society by addressing the subjective meanings that people impose on objects, events, and behaviors. Subjective

Table 1-4	Comparing Sociological Theories			
Basic Questions	**Functionalism**	**Conflict Theory**	**Symbolic Interaction**	**Feminist Theory**
What is the relationship of individuals to society?	Individuals occupy fixed social roles.	Individuals are subordinated to society.	Individuals and society are interdependent.	Women and men are bound together in a system of gender relationships that shape identities and beliefs.
Why is there inequality?	Inequality is inevitable and functional for society.	Inequality results from a struggle over scarce resources.	Inequality is demonstrated through the importance of symbols.	Inequality stems from the matrix of domination that links gender, race, class, and sexuality.
How is social order possible?	Social order stems from consensus on public values.	Social order is maintained through power and coercion.	Social order is sustained through social interaction and adherence to social norms.	Patriarchal social orders are maintained by the power that men hold over women.
What is the source of social change?	Society seeks equilibrium when there is social disorganization.	Change comes through the mobilization of people struggling for resources.	Change develops from an ever-evolving set of social relationships and the creation of new meaning systems.	Social change comes from the mobilization of women and their allies on behalf of women's liberation.
Major Criticisms				
	This is a conservative view of society that underplays power differences among and between groups.	The theory understates the degree of cohesion and stability in society.	There is little analysis of inequality, and it overstates the subjective basis of society.	Feminist theory has too often been anchored in the experiences of White, middle-class women.

meanings are important because, according to symbolic interaction, people behave based on what they *believe*, not just on what is objectively true. Symbolic interaction sees society as socially constructed through human interpretation (Blumer 1969; Berger and Luckmann 1967; Shibutani 1961). Social meanings are constantly modified through social interaction.

People interpret one another's behavior; these interpretations form social bonds. These interpretations are called the "definition of the situation." For example, why would young people smoke cigarettes even though all objective medical evidence points to the danger of doing so? The answer is in the definition of the situation that people create. Studies find that teenagers are well informed about the risks of tobacco, but they also think that "smoking is cool," that they themselves will be safe from harm, and that smoking projects an image—a positive identity for boys as a "tough guy" and for girls as fun-loving, mature, and glamorous. Smoking is also defined by young women as keeping you thin—an ideal constructed through dominant images of beauty. In other words, the symbolic meaning of smoking overrides the actual facts regarding smoking and risk.

Symbolic interaction interprets social order as constantly negotiated and created through the interpretations people give to their behavior. In observing society, symbolic interactionists see not simply facts but "social constructions," the meanings attached to things, whether those are concrete symbols (like a certain way of dress or a tattoo) or nonverbal behaviors. In symbolic interaction theory, society is highly subjective—existing in the minds of people, even though its effects are very real.

Feminist Theory

Contemporary sociological theory has been greatly influenced by the development of **feminist theory**. Prior to the emergence of second-wave feminism (the feminist movement emerging in the 1960s and 1970s), women were largely absent and invisible within most sociological work—indeed, within most academic work. When seen, they were strongly stereotyped in traditional roles as wives and mothers.

Careers in Sociology

Now that you understand a bit more what sociology is about, you may ask, "What can I do with a degree in sociology?" This is a question we often hear from students. There is no single job called "sociologist" like there is "engineer" or "nurse" or "teacher," but sociology prepares you well for many kinds of jobs, whether with a bachelor's degree or a postgraduate education. The skills you acquire from your sociological education are useful for jobs in business, health care, criminal justice, government agencies, various nonprofit organizations, and other job venues.

For example, the research skills one gains through sociology can be important in analyzing business data or organizing information for a food bank or homeless shelter. Students in sociology gain experience working with and understanding those with different cultural and social backgrounds; this is an important and valued skill that employers seek. Also, the ability to dissect the different causes of a social problem can be an asset for jobs in various social service organizations.

Some sociologists have worked in their communities to deliver more effective social services. Sociologists employed in business organizations and social services use their sociological training to address issues such as poverty, crime and delinquency, population studies, substance abuse, violence against women, family social services, immigration policy, and any number of other important issues. Sociologists also work in the offices of U.S. representatives and senators, doing background research on the various issues addressed in the political process.

These are just a few examples of how sociology can prepare you for various careers. A good way to learn more about how sociology prepares you for work is to consider doing an internship while you are still in college. For more information about careers in sociology, see the booklet, "21st Century Careers with an Undergraduate Degree in Sociology," available through the American Sociological Association (www.asanet.org).

Critical Thinking Exercise

1. Read a national newspaper over a period of one week and identify any experts who use a sociological perspective in their commentary. What does this suggest to you as a possible career in sociology? What are some of the different subjects about which sociologists provide expert information?

2. Identify some of the students from your college who have finished degrees in sociology. What different ways have they used their sociological knowledge?

Flake/Alamy Stock Photo

Symbolic interaction theory can help explain why people might do things that otherwise seem contrary to what one might expect.

Feminist theory developed to understand the status of women in society and with the purpose of using that knowledge to better women's lives.

Feminist theory has created vital new knowledge about women and has also transformed what is understood about men. Feminist scholarship in sociology, by focusing on the experiences of women, provides new ways of seeing the world and contributes to a more complete view of society.

Feminist theory takes gender as a primary lens through which to view society. Beyond that, feminist theory makes the claim that without considering gender in society, one's analysis of any social behavior is incomplete and, thus, incorrect. At the same time, feminist theory purports to analyze society with an eye to improving the status of women. Men are not excluded from feminist theory. In fact, feminist theory, as we will see in various chapters that follow, also argues that men are gendered subjects too. We cannot understand society without understanding how gender is structured in society and in women's and men's lives.

Feminist theory is a now vibrant and rich perspective in sociology, and it has added much to how people understand

the sociology of gender—and its connection to other social factors, such as race, sexuality, age, and class. Along with the classical traditions of sociology, feminist theory is included throughout this book.

Functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interaction, and feminist theory are by no means the only theoretical frameworks in sociology. For some time, however, they have provided the most prominent general explanations of society. Each has a unique view of the social realm. None is a perfect explanation of society, yet each has something to contribute. Functionalism gives special weight to the order and cohesion that usually characterizes society. Conflict theory emphasizes the inequalities and power imbalances in society. Symbolic interaction emphasizes the meanings that humans give to their behavior. Feminist theory takes gender as a primary lens through which to understand society, especially in relation to other structures of inequality. Together, these frameworks provide a rich, comprehensive perspective on society, individuals within society, and social change (see ◆ Table 1-4).

Whatever the theoretical framework used, theory is evaluated in terms of its ability to explain observed social facts. The sociological imagination is not a single-minded way of looking at the world. It is the ability to observe social behavior and interpret that behavior in light of societal influences.

Chapter Summary

What is sociology?

Sociology is the study of human behavior in society. The *sociological imagination* is the ability to see societal patterns that influence individuals. Sociology is an *empirical* discipline, relying on careful observations as the basis for its knowledge.

What is debunking?

Debunking in sociology refers to the ability to look behind things taken for granted, looking instead to the origins of social behavior.

Why is diversity central to the study of sociology?

One of the central insights of sociology is its analysis of social diversity and inequality. Understanding *diversity* is critical to sociology because it is necessary to analyze *social institutions* and because diversity shapes most of our social and cultural institutions.

When and how did sociology emerge as a field of study?

Sociology emerged in western Europe during the *Enlightenment* and was influenced by the values of critical reason, humanitarianism, and positivism. *Auguste Comte*, one of the earliest sociologists,

emphasized sociology as a positivist discipline. *Alexis de Tocqueville* and *Harriet Martineau* developed early and insightful analyses of American culture.

What are some of the basic insights of classical sociological theory?

Emile Durkheim is credited with conceptualizing society as a social system and with identifying *social facts* as patterns of behavior that are external to the individual. *Karl Marx* showed how capitalism shaped the development of society. *Max Weber* sought to explain society through cultural, political, and economic factors. *W. E. B. DuBois* saw racial inequality as the greatest challenge in U.S. society.

What are the major theoretical frameworks in sociology?

Functionalism emphasizes the stability and integration in society. *Conflict theory* sees society as organized around the unequal distribution of resources and held together through power and coercion. *Symbolic interaction* emphasizes the role of individuals in giving meaning to social behavior, thereby creating society. *Feminist theory* is the analysis of women and men in society and is intended to improve women's lives.

Key Terms

conflict theory 22

debunking 8

diversity 12

empirical 6

Enlightenment 15

feminist theory 24

functionalism 19

issues 5

positivism 15

social change 3

social facts 16

social institution 3

social interaction 3

social structure 3

sociological imagination 5

sociology 2

symbolic interaction 22

troubles 5

Verstehen 18

CULTURE

In this chapter, you will learn to:

Define culture

- -

Recall the elements of culture

- -

Explain the significance of cultural diversity

- -

Relate the influence of the mass media and popular culture

- -

Compare and contrast theoretical explanations of culture and the media

- -

Discuss the components of cultural change

- -

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In one contemporary society known for its technological sophistication, people—especially the young—walk around with plugs in their ears. The plugs are connected to small wires that are themselves coated with a plastic film. These little plastic-covered wires are then connected to small devices made of metal, plastic, silicon, and other modern components, although most people who use them have no idea how they are made. When turned on, these devices put music into people's ears or, in some cases, show pictures and movies on a screen not much larger than a bar of soap. Some people who use these devices wouldn't even consider walking around without them. It is as if the devices shield them from other elements of their culture.

The same people who carry these devices around have other habits that, when seen from the perspective of someone unfamiliar with this culture, might seem peculiar and certainly highly ritualized. Apparently, when young people in this society go away to school, most take a large number of various electronic devices along with them. Many sleep with one of these devices turned on all night. It seems that everything these young people do involves looking at some kind of screen, enough so that one of the authors of this book has labeled their generation "screenagers." People in this culture now talk about "streaming" things—an innovative term that would have had no meaning not many years ago.

Cultural practices may seem strange to outsiders, but may be taken for granted by those within the culture. How might some contemporary cultural practices in the United States look strange to people from a very different culture?

Not everyone in this culture has access to all of these devices, although many want them. Indeed, having more devices seems to be a mark of one's social status, that is, how you are regarded in this culture, but very few people know where the devices are made, what they are made of, or how they work. The young also often ridicule older people for not understanding how to operate the devices or why they are so important to young people. From outside the culture, these practices seem strange, yet few within the culture think the behaviors associated with these devices are anything but perfectly ordinary.

You have surely guessed that the practices described here are taken from U.S. culture: smartphones, tablets, and other electronic devices. These devices have become so commonplace that they practically define modern American culture. As with all cultural habits, unless they are somehow interrupted, most people do not think much about their influence on society, on people's relationships, or on people's definitions of themselves.[1]

When viewed from the outside, cultural habits that seem perfectly normal often seem strange. Take an example from a different culture. The Tchikrin people—a remote culture of the central Brazilian rain forest—paint their bodies in elaborate designs. Painted bodies communicate to others the relationship of the person to his or her body, to society, and to the spiritual world. The designs and colors symbolize the balance the Tchikrin people think exists between biological powers and the integration of people into the social group. The Tchikrin also associate hair with sexual powers; lovers get a special thrill from using their teeth to pluck an eyebrow or eyelash from their partner's face (Sanders and Vail 2008; Turner 1969). To Tchikrin people, these practices are no more unusual or exotic than the daily habits we practice in the United States.

To study culture, to analyze it and measure its significance in society, we must separate ourselves from judgments such as "strange" or "normal." We must see a culture as insiders see it, but we cannot be completely taken in by that view. We should know the culture as insiders and understand it as outsiders.

Defining Culture

Culture is the complex system of meaning and behavior that defines the way of life for a given group or society. It includes beliefs, values, knowledge, art, morals, laws, customs, habits, language, and dress, among other things. Culture includes ways of thinking as well as patterns of behavior. Observing culture involves studying what people think, how they interact, and the objects they use.

In any society, culture defines what is perceived as beautiful and ugly, right and wrong, good and bad. Culture helps hold society together, giving people a sense of belonging, instructing them on how to behave, and telling them what to think in particular situations.

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[1]This introduction is inspired by a classic article on the "Nacirema"—American, backward—by Horace Miner (1956). But it is also written based on essays students at the University of Delaware wrote regarding the media blackout exercise described later in this chapter. Students have written that, without access to their usual media devices, they "had no personality" and that the period of the blackout was the "worst forty-eight hours of my life!"

Culture is both material and nonmaterial. **Material culture** consists of the objects created in a given society—its buildings, art, tools, toys, literature, and other tangible objects, such as those discussed in the chapter opener. In the popular mind, material artifacts constitute culture because they can be collected in museums or archives and analyzed for what they represent. These objects are significant because of the meaning they are given. A temple, for example, is not merely a building, nor is it only a place of worship. Its form and presentation signify the religious meaning system of the faithful.

Nonmaterial culture includes the norms, laws, customs, ideas, and beliefs of a group of people. Nonmaterial culture is less tangible than material culture, but it has an equally strong, if not stronger, presence in social behavior. Nonmaterial culture is found in patterns of everyday life. For example, in some cultures, people eat with utensils; in others, people do not. The eating utensils are part of material culture, but the belief about whether to use them is nonmaterial culture.

Cultural patterns make humans interesting. Some animal species develop what we might call culture. Chimpanzees, for example, learn behavior through observing and imitating others, a point proved by observing different eating practices among chimpanzees in the same species but raised in different groups (Whiten et al. 1999). Elephants have been observed picking up and fondling bones of dead elephants, perhaps evidence of grieving behavior (Meredith 2003). Dolphins have a complex auditory language. Most people also think that their pets communicate with them. Apparently, humans are not unique in their ability to develop systems of communication. Are human beings different from animals? Scientists generally conclude that animals lack the elaborate symbol-based forms of knowing and communication that are common in human societies—in other words, culture.

Understanding culture is critical to knowing how human societies operate. Culture can even shape the physical and biological characteristics of human beings. Nutrition, for instance, is greatly influenced by the cultural environment. Cultural eating habits will shape the body height and weight of a given population, even though height and weight are also biological phenomena. Without understanding culture, you cannot understand such things as changes in idealized images of beauty over time, as the photos on this page show.

In the 1920s, the ideal woman was portrayed as curvaceous with an emphasis on her reproductive characteristics—wide, childbearing hips and large breasts. In more recent years, idealized images of

Thinking Sociologically

Celebrating Your Birthday!

Birthday cake, candles, family and friends singing "Happy birthday to you!" Once a year, you feel like the day is yours. Some people give you presents, send cards, and call you. If you are turning to a legal age, maybe a drinking ritual is involved. If you are older, say turning forty or fifty, perhaps people kid you about "being over the hill." Such are the cultural rituals associated with birthdays in the United States.

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How would these rituals change in a different culture? Traditionally, in Vietnam everyone's birthday is celebrated on the first day of the year, and few really acknowledge the day they were born. In Russia, you might get a birthday *pie* with a birthday message carved into the crust. In Newfoundland, you might have butter rubbed on your nose for good luck—the butter is considered too greasy for bad luck to catch you. These cultural practices show how something as seemingly "normal" as celebrating your birthday has strong cultural roots.

What are the norms associated with birthday parties that you have attended? How do these reflect the values in U.S. culture?

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Justin de Villeneuve/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Body size ideals, which stem from culture, have changed dramatically since the 1950s. Jayne Mansfield was a major star and sex symbol in the 1950s; she was a size 4. Marilyn Monroe was a size 8. When Twiggy became the ideal in the 1960s, she was the equivalent of a size triple zero! Kate Moss, considered now to be "average" size would wear a size 4 dress. In reality, not the ideal, the average American woman wears a size 14!

women have become increasingly thin. Body mass index (BMI) is a measure of relative size, using height and weight. In the 1950s, the body mass index of idolized women, such as Marilyn Monroe, was 20. Now models have a body mass index in the mid-teens, far below the average BMI for U.S. adult women, which is 28. The point is that the media communicate that only certain forms of beauty are culturally valued. These ideals are not "natural"; they are created within a society's culture.

The Power of Culture: Ethnocentrism, Cultural Relativism, and Culture Shock

Would you dice a jellyfish and serve it as a delicacy? Roll a cabbage through your house on New Year's Day to ensure good luck in the year ahead? Peculiar or strange as these examples may seem, from within a particular culture, each seems perfectly normal. Because culture tends to be taken for granted, it can be difficult for people within a culture to see their culture as anything but "the way things are." Seen from

outside the culture, everyday habits and practices can seem bizarre, certainly unusual or quirky. Such reactions show just how deeply influential culture is.

We take our own culture for granted to such a degree that it can be difficult to view other cultures without making judgments based on one's own cultural assumptions. **Ethnocentrism** is the habit of seeing things only from the point of view of one's own group. An ethnocentric perspective prevents you from understanding the world as others experience it, and it can lead to narrow-minded conclusions about the worth of diverse cultures.

Any group can be ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism can be extreme or subtle—as in the example of social groups who think their way of life is better than that of any other group. Is there such a ranking among groups in your community? Fraternities and sororities often build group rituals around such claims; youth groups see their way of life as superior to adults; urbanites may think their cultural habits are more sophisticated than those of groups labeled "country hicks." Ethnocentrism is a powerful force because it combines a strong sense of group solidarity with the idea of group superiority.

Ethnocentrism can build group solidarity, but it can limit intergroup understanding (see, for example, ▲ Figure 2-1). Taken to extremes, ethnocentrism can lead to overt political conflict, war, terrorism, even *genocide*, the mass killing of people based on their membership in a particular group. You might wonder how people could believe so much in the righteousness of their religious faith that they would murder people. Ethnocentrism is a key part of the answer. Understanding ethnocentrism does not excuse or fully explain such behavior, but it helps you understand how such murderous behavior can occur.

Contrasting with ethnocentrism is cultural relativism. **Cultural relativism** is the idea that something can be understood and judged only in relation to the cultural context in which it appears. This does not make every cultural practice morally acceptable, but it suggests that without knowing the cultural context, it is impossible to understand why people behave as they do. For example, in the United States, burying or cremating the dead is the cultural practice. It may be difficult for someone from this culture to understand that in parts of Tibet, with a ruggedly cold climate and the inability to dig the soil, the dead
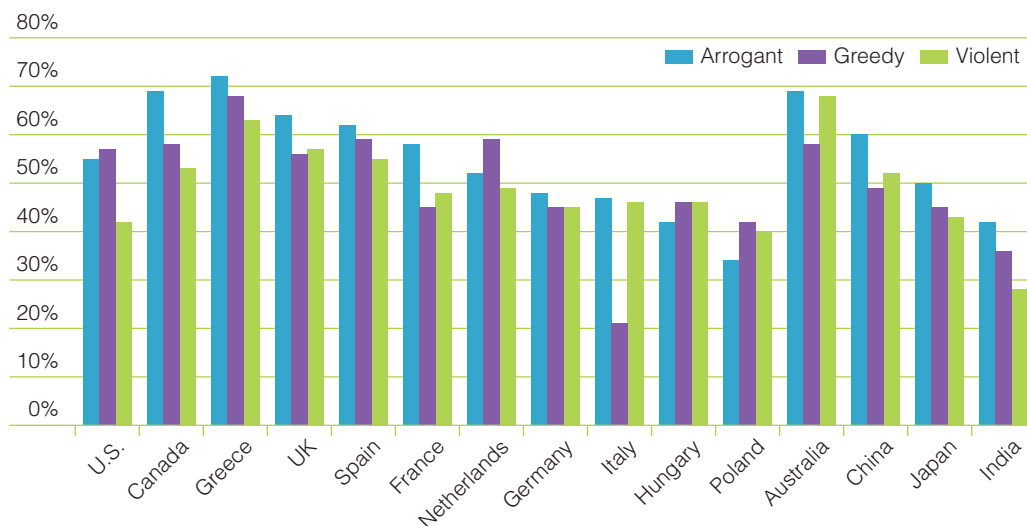
▲ **Figure 2-1   Global Views of Americans.** Most Americans see themselves as hardworking, optimistic, and tolerant of others—a view shared by many around the world. But, people from other nations also tend to see Americans as arrogant, greedy, and violent—a view that many Americans have of themselves, though not so much as in the eyes of certain nations, as this graph shows. Where do such perceptions come from? Do you think the American media has some influence on how people across the globe view American culture? If so, what does this tell you about the power of the media to shape global attitudes?

Data: Wike, Richard, Jabob Poushter, and Hani Zainulbhai. 2016 (June 28). "America's International Image." Pew Research Global Attitudes Project. Washington, DC: Pew Research Project. **www.pewglobal.org**