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# SOCIOLOGY in Our Times



**Diana Kendall**



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## 11<sup>E</sup>

**Diana Kendall**  
*Baylor University*



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**Diana Kendall**

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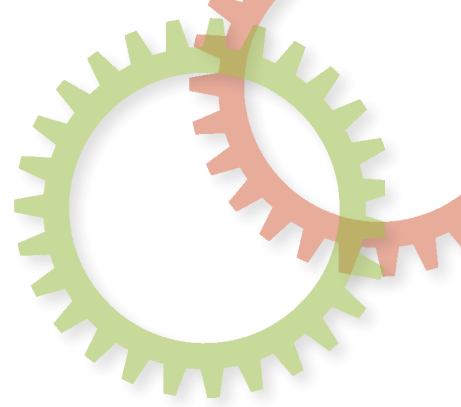
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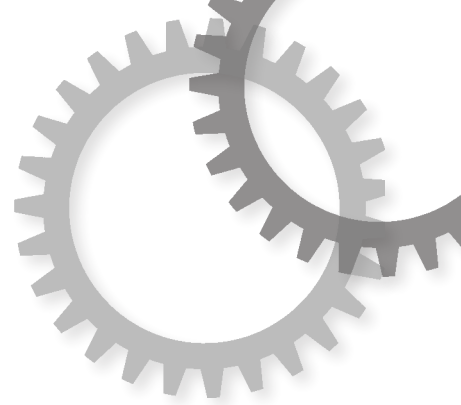
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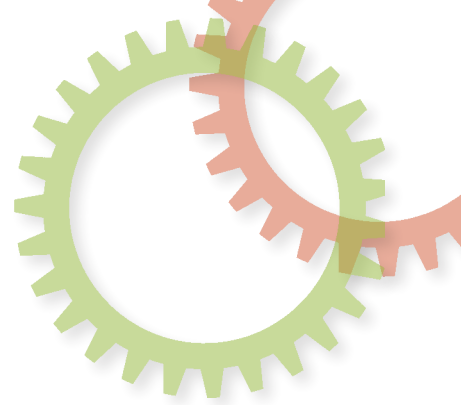
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# PREFACE

Hello and welcome to the eleventh edition of *Sociology in Our Times*! I think you will find that this best-selling text lives up to the timeliness in its name. Each edition is thoroughly revised and updated to reflect the newest sociological insights and statistical data. It also looks at contemporary social life and pressing societal problems through a sociological lens. Topics include injustice and inequality, family-related issues, educational and health problems, crime and gun violence, racism and hate crimes, terrorism and war, and environmental degradation.

What would you like to know more about in the social world where you live? As you know, we face unprecedented challenges and opportunities in the twenty-first century. By gaining new sociological insights on pressing social issues, you can enhance your perspective on the world and envision new ways in which you might make a difference for yourself and for future generations. The issues of social injustice and inequality are explored in depth in all chapters because these factors may hamper social change or contribute to it, particularly through collective behavior and social movements in which people demand that change occur. By studying sociology and reading *Sociology in Our Times*, you will gain a better understanding of why people seek stability within social institutions—including family, religion, education, politics, and government—even if they believe that these institutions might benefit from certain changes.

Like previous editions, the eleventh edition of *Sociology in Our Times* highlights the relevance of sociology to enable you to connect with the subject and the full spectrum of topics and issues that it encompasses. It achieves this connection by providing a meaningful, concrete context within which to learn. Specifically, it presents the comments and stories—the *lived experiences*—of real individuals in *Sociology and Everyday Life* features that describe the social issues they face, within the context of discussing classical and contemporary social theory and examining interesting and relevant research. The first-person commentaries and real-life examples that begin each chapter show how sociology can help you and other students understand the important questions we face and how these concerns are embedded within the larger culture and social world in which we live. These opening experiences also provide a framework that helps organize and highlight the chapter material and makes it easier for you to understand the new concepts, theories, and research that are introduced in the chapter.

Why is this text different? *Sociology in Our Times* includes the best of classical and contemporary sociologists, and it weaves an inclusive treatment of all people—across lines of race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual identity and orientation, age, ability/disability, and other important attributes—into the examination of sociology. It does not oversimplify or water down the sociology! While helping you appreciate how sociology provides a better understanding of the world, this text gives you insights on your personal role as a *member of your various groups, organizations, and communities*. As a result, you will see that sociology is more than a collection of concepts and theories: Sociology is an academic area of study that can make a significant difference in your life! I invite you to join me on this exciting journey and to let me know what you think as we move forward.

## What's New to the Eleventh Edition?

The eleventh edition builds on the best of previous editions but places more emphasis on social change while offering new cutting-edge insights, helpful learning tools, and fresh opportunities to apply the content of each chapter to relevant sociological issues and major concerns of the twenty-first century. As it is my goal to make each edition better than the previous one, I have revised all chapters to reflect the latest in sociological theory and research, and have updated examples throughout. Additionally, all statistics, such as data relating to crime, demographics, health, and the economy, are the latest available at the time of this writing. In sum, I have done more than simply revise existing materials and features. The page layouts have been refreshed and are very easy to follow: Boxed inserts have been reduced to provide you with a straightforward, more concise text that is highly relevant to your interests and makes studying for exams easier.

One feature of the eleventh edition that you will notice immediately is that learning objectives are restated at relevant locations throughout each chapter to help you with your reading and note taking. All chapter learning objectives are listed at the beginning of each chapter, and then they are listed individually when that specific topic is introduced in the chapter, and finally the Chapter Review provides a brief synopsis of all the learning objectives and key points.

## Changes by Chapter

### CHAPTER 1, The Sociological Perspective

- Throughout the chapter, more discussion on applied sociology and on how social change affects sociological theory and students' use of what they are learning in the course
- Revised "Sociology & Everyday Life" feature about the sociological aspects of consumer debt and student credit card debt
- New discussion of the American Sociological Association's organizational section on consumers and consumption
- Expanded discussion of consumption and consumerism and why these subjects should be important to students studying sociology
- New research on how people in similar income brackets spend money differently by city and region
- Shorter and more concise section on "The Development of Sociological Thinking"
- Revised discussion of "The Development of Modern Sociology"
- Information from "Sociology Works!" feature moved into discussion of Karl Marx
- Information from "Census Profiles" on consumer spending moved into body of text
- Expanded final section on "Looking Ahead: Are Theory and/or Practice in Your Future?" regarding sociological practice and public sociology

### CHAPTER 2, Sociological Research Methods

- New opening "Sociology & Everyday Life" lived experience on bullying, social media abuse, and suicide among young people
- Updated "How Much Do You Know About Suicide?"
- "Sociology Works!" moved into "Sociology in Global Perspective" to relate Durkheim's work to contemporary suicide among young people in India
- Updated "Understanding Statistical Data Presentations" to reflect latest data on homicide, suicide, and firearm-related deaths of youths ages 15–19 by gender
- Revised "Sociology & Social Policy" to provide latest data on suicides among U.S. military personnel and efforts being made to reduce rates
- "Census Profiles" deleted to streamline chapter
- Updated "Statistics: What We Know (and Don't Know)"
- Deleted "Framing Suicide in the Media"
- Deleted dated study in "The Humphreys Research" section on "Ethical Issues in Sociological Research" because it potentially casts aspersions on groups based on sexual identity and orientation
- Revised and expanded "Looking Ahead: Research, Social Change, and Your Future" to discuss how computational social science has transformed research and how methods such as social geospatial modeling (GIS) and social network analysis have brought about rapid change in sociological studies

### CHAPTER 3, Culture

- New opening "Sociology & Everyday Life" lived experience on how culture may be spread through food trucks
- Updated map showing "States with Official English Laws"
- Deleted "Census Profiles"
- Updated "Sociology in Global Perspective" to show how old the cultural norms about drinking behavior are in the Republic of Georgia
- Deleted "Framing Culture in the Media"
- Revised "Looking Ahead: Culture, Social Change, and Your Future" to emphasize ways in which culture is affected by technology and why the study of culture helps students understand their own social world while becoming more aware of how other people live

### CHAPTER 4, Socialization

- New opening "Sociology & Everyday Life" lived experience on "Class Attendance in Higher Education" about digital-age methods of reducing skipping classes
- Updated figure on "Types of Maltreatment Among Children Under Age 18"
- Deleted "Sociology Works!" and "Media Framing" to make material more concise for students
- Revised and updated "Sociology in Global Perspective: Open Doors: Study Abroad and Global Socialization"
- New discussion of the effects of social isolation and loneliness, particularly among older individuals
- New final section on "Looking Ahead: Socialization, Social Change, and Your Future" discussing digital natives and digital immigrants

### CHAPTER 5, Social Structure and Interaction in Everyday Life

- Revised figure on "Causes of Family Homelessness in 25 Cities"
- Deleted "Framing Homelessness in the Media" and incorporated some of the information into the main text
- Revised figure: "Who Are the Homeless?"
- Deleted photo essay
- Deleted "Census Profiles"
- Revised and updated "Sociology & Social Policy: What's Going on in 'Paradise'?—Homeless Rights Versus Public Space"
- Deleted "Sociology Works!"
- Updated "You Can Make a Difference" feature

### CHAPTER 6, Groups and Organizations

- Deleted "Framing Community in the Media" and moved some information into the text
- Deleted "Sociology Works!" and moved some of the content into "Sumner's Ingroups and Outgroups"
- Revised and updated "Sociology & Social Policy: Technology and Social Change in the Workplace: BYOD?"
- Revised "Looking Ahead: Social Change and Organizations in the Future"

## CHAPTER 7, Deviance and Crime

- New opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience, “When the Unspeakable Happens,” about the final report on the Sandy Hook school killings
- Deleted “Sociology Works!” and moved some of the content into discussion about deviance
- Updated discussion and examples throughout sections on crime theories
- Updated crime statistics throughout chapter
- Revised and updated all figures pertaining to crime statistics
- Deleted “Framing Violent Crime in the Media” and moved some content into discussion about violent crime
- Updated discussion about terrorism and crime to include violence in France
- Updated statistics on the criminal justice system
- New “Sociology in Global Perspective: A Wider Perspective on Gangs: Look and Listen Around the World”
- Revised and expanded section on Internet crime

## CHAPTER 8, Class and Stratification in the United States

- Updated statistics on income, poverty, health insurance, and other issues pertaining to inequality throughout chapter
- Updated models and figures for the U.S. class structure
- Revised figure: “Distribution of Pretax Income in the United States, 2013”
- Revised figure: “Median Household Income in the United States”
- Revised figure: “Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity in the United States”
- Revised figure: “Racial Divide in Net Worth, 2013”
- Revised figure: “Rate of Uninsurance by Household Income, 2013”
- Deleted photo essay
- Revised and updated map: “Percentage of People in Poverty in the Past 12 Months by State, 2013”
- Revised and updated figure: “U.S. Poverty Rate by Age, 1959–2013”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Updated “You Can Make a Difference: Students Helping Others Through Campus Kitchen”

## CHAPTER 9, Global Stratification

- Revised and updated information in “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About Global Wealth and Poverty?”
- Revised “Classifications of Economies by Income” and map of “High-, Middle-, and Low-Income Economies in Global Perspective”
- Deleted “Framing Child Labor Issues in the Media”
- Revised and updated “Global Poverty and Human Development Issues,” including life expectancy, per capita gross national income, and accompanying figures
- Updated information in “Education and Literacy” section
- Updated discussion of multidimensional poverty index
- Updated information on maquiladora plants

- Deleted “Sociology Works!” and incorporated some information into the main body of the text
- Revised and updated “Looking Ahead: Global Inequality in the Future”

## CHAPTER 10, Race and Ethnicity

- New opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience about Selma, Alabama, fifty years after the Civil Rights March
- Revised and updated information in “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About Race, Ethnicity, and Sports?”
- Deleted “Census Profiles” and included information within the chapter
- Replaced “Sociology in Global Perspective” box with new “Sociology & Social Policy” box on “Racist Hate Speech on Campus Versus First Amendment Right to Freedom of Speech”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!” and “Framing Sports in the Media” in order to expand discussion of current racial/ethnic strife in the United States
- Updated all information on “Racial and Ethnic Groups in the United States”
- Revised final section: “Looking Ahead: The Future of Global Racial and Ethnic Inequality”

## CHAPTER 11, Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

- New opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience on “When Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Weight Bias Collide”
- New “Sociology & Everyday Life” quiz on “How Much Do You Know About Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Weight Bias?”
- Revised and updated discussion about LGBTQ issues and made extensive changes to “Intersex and Transgender Persons” section
- Deleted “Sociology Works!” and “Census Profiles” to provide more space for expanded discussion of sexual identity, sexual orientation, and the U.S. Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage
- Updated section on “Gender and Socialization”
- Deleted “Framing Gender in the Media” and expanded discussion of “Mass Media and Gender Socialization” to include more on social media
- Revised and updated “Contemporary Gender Inequality” section, especially “Gendered Division of Paid Work in the United States”
- Updated table: “Percentage of the Workforce Represented by Women, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans in Selected Occupations”
- Updated figure: “The Wage Gap, 2013”
- Updated figure: “Women’s Wages as a Percentage of Men’s in Each Racial–Ethnic Category”
- Updated map: “Women’s Earnings as a Percentage of Men’s Earnings by State and Puerto Rico, 2013”
- New “Sociology in Global Perspective” box: “Women’s Body Size and the Globalization of ‘Fat Stigma’”



- Updated “You Can Make a Difference” box on the “Love Your Body” campaign
- Deleted photo essay

## CHAPTER 12, Aging and Inequality Based on Age

- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life” on “Facing Obstacles to Living a Long, Full Life”
- Revised statistics on aging throughout chapter
- Updated discussion of “Age and the Life Course in Contemporary Society”
- Revised map: “Median Age by State, 2013”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Updated “Sociology & Social Policy” box on elderly drivers
- Deleted “Framing Aging in the Media”
- Updated figure: “Percentage of Persons Age 65+ Below the Poverty Level”
- Updated figure: “Living Arrangements of the Population Ages 65 and Over, by Sex and Race and Hispanic Origin, 2012”
- Updated discussion of nursing homes

## CHAPTER 13, The Economy and Work in Global Perspective

- Updated opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience on defining the twenty-first-century workplace and updated “How Much Do You Know About Work in the United States in the 2010s?”
- Deleted “Census Profiles”
- Updated figure: “Top Ten Fastest-Growing Occupations, 2012–2022”
- Updated table: “Revenues of the World’s 20 Largest Public and Private Corporations (2014)”
- Updated table: “The Music Industry’s Big Three”
- Updated figure: “The General Motors Board of Directors”
- Updated discussion of socialism
- New “Sociology in Global Perspective” box on the “Lopsided Job Market in China: A Mismatch Between Workers and Jobs”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Updated figure: “Selected Highest-Paying Occupations, 2014”
- Updated figure: “SAT Scores by Parents’ Income and Education, 2014”
- Updated statistics in “Unemployment” section
- Deleted “Framing Luxury Consumption in the Media”
- Updated map: “U.S. Unemployment Rates by State, 2015”
- Revised and updated discussion of “Worker Resistance and Activism,” particularly labor union statistics
- Updated figure: “Major Work Stoppages in the United States, 1960–2012”
- Updated “You Can Make a Difference”
- Revised “Looking Ahead: The Global Economy and Work in the Future”
- Updated “Sociology & Social Policy” box on “How Globalization Changes the Nature of Social Policy”

## CHAPTER 14, Politics and Government in Global Perspective

- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About Politics and the Media?”
- Revised discussion of the 2012 presidential election and midterm elections throughout the chapter
- Revised and updated discussion of super PACs
- Deleted “Sociology Works!” box
- Revised “Voter Participation and Voter Apathy”
- Revised discussion of federal bureaucracy
- Revised figure: “Categories and Percentages of U.S. Federal Spending in Fiscal Year 2015”
- Updated discussion of terrorism and war
- Deleted “Framing Politics in the Media”
- Revised and updated “You Can Make a Difference: Keeping an Eye on the Media”

## CHAPTER 15, Families and Intimate Relationships

- Revised chapter opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience on “Diverse Family Landscapes in the Twenty-First Century” and updated “How Much Do You Know About Contemporary Trends in U.S. Family Life?”
- Revised statistics on families throughout chapter
- Deleted “Census Profiles” and added new research to section on “Love and Intimacy”
- Updated data on cohabitation and domestic partnerships
- Added figure: “Estimated Number of Opposite-Sex Couples Cohabiting in the United States in Selected Years, 1996–2014”
- Deleted map: “Percentage of All Households Reporting as Same-Sex Couple Households in 2010 Census”
- Updated statistics on “Marriage,” “Same-Sex Marriages,” and “Housework and Child-Care Responsibilities”
- Updated statistics on “Deciding to Have Children”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Updated statistics on “Adoption,” “Teenage Childbearing,” and “Single-Parent Households”
- Deleted “Framing Teen Pregnancy in the Media”
- Updated figure: “Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old for Selected Years, 1970–2014”
- Updated figure: “Marital Status of U.S. Population Ages 18 and Over by Race/Ethnicity”
- Updated figure: “U.S. Divorce Rate by State, 1990–2012”
- Updated statistics on divorce and remarriage
- Revised “Looking Ahead: Family Issues in the Future”

## CHAPTER 16, Education

- Reworked data throughout chapter to provide latest information on education
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About U.S. Education?”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Deleted “Framing Education in the Media”
- Updated figure: “Percentage Distribution of Total Public Elementary–Secondary School System Revenue, 2014–2015”



- Revised figure: “Status Dropout Rates for 16- to 24-Year-Olds, by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Region”
- Updated discussion of “School Safety and Violence at All Levels” to include the issue of concealed carry of guns on college and university campuses
- Updated discussion of community colleges and tribal colleges
- Updated “The High Cost of a College Education”
- Updated “Slashed Budgets at State Colleges and Universities”
- Updated discussion of racial and ethnic diversity in student and faculty populations
- Deleted “Census Profiles” and moved figure on “Educational Attainment of Persons Ages 25 and Over” into the body of the text
- Revised and updated “Looking Ahead: Future Trends in Education”

## CHAPTER 17, Religion

- Deleted “Sociology Works!” and incorporated ideas of Peter Berger into text
- Updated table: “Major World Religions”
- Updated figure: “World Religions by Percentage of Adherents”
- Updated “Sociology & Social Policy” on the issue of separation of church and state
- Deleted table on “Top 25 U.S. Denominations That Self-Identify as Christian” because newer, comparable data are not available
- Updated figure: “U.S. Religious Traditions’ Membership”
- Deleted “Framing Religion in the Media”
- Updated “Looking Ahead: Religion in the Future”

## CHAPTER 18, Health, Health Care, and Disability

- Updated discussion and data for illness and health care throughout the chapter.
- Deleted “Framing Health Issues in the Media” and incorporated this material in the text
- Updated statistics on health-related data such as life expectancy, infant mortality, and racial/ethnic and class differences.
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective” on “Medical Crises in the Aftermath of Disasters: From Oklahoma to Nepal” to include earthquake in Nepal
- Updated information on sexually transmitted diseases
- Updated figure: “Chlamydia: Rates by Age and Sex, United States, 2012”
- Updated map: “Adult Obesity in the United States: 2013”
- Updated discussion on implementation and legal issues associated with the Affordable Care Act
- Updated figure: “Increase in Cost of Health Care, 1993–2014”
- Revised discussion of “Private Health Insurance,” “Public Health Insurance,” “Managed Care,” and “The Uninsured”
- Updated figure: “Uninsured Children by Poverty Status, Household Income, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity, 2013”

- Deleted “Sociology Works!”
- Updated discussion and data on disability

## CHAPTER 19, Population and Urbanization

- Updated figure: “Growth in the World’s Population, 2014”
- Revised demography discussion and included new data for fertility, mortality, and migration
- New “Sociology in Global Perspective” on “Problems People Like to Ignore: Global Diaspora and the Migrant Crisis”
- Updated table: “The Ten Leading Causes of Death in the United States, 1900 and 2014”
- Updated figure: “Population Pyramids for Mexico, Iran, the United States, and France, 2014”
- Deleted “Framing Immigration in the Media,” “Photo Essay,” and “Sociology Works!” to provide room for more information on population and urbanization
- Updated “Problems in Global Cities”
- Updated figure: “The World’s Fifteen Largest Agglomerations”
- Updated figure: “Increase in the World’s Population in Billions of People”
- Revised “Looking Ahead: Population and Urbanization in the Future.”

## CHAPTER 20, Collective Behavior, Social Movements, and Social Change

- New opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” lived experience on “Collective Behavior and Environmental Issues”
- Updated discussion of collective behavior, social movements, and social change
- Revised table: “Top 15 Policy Priorities of the U.S. Public, 2015”
- Deleted “Sociology Works!” to provide more space to revise and update discussion of environmental issues and social movements
- Added more-contemporary environmental activists and issues, including divestment in fossil-fuel industries by universities and other institutional investors

## Overview of the Text’s Contents

*Sociology in Our Times*, eleventh edition, contains twenty high-interest, up-to-date, clearly organized chapters to introduce students to the best of sociological thinking. The length of the text has been streamlined and carefully organized to make full coverage of the book possible in the time typically allocated to the introductory course.

*Sociology in Our Times* is divided into five parts. **Part 1** establishes the foundation for studying society and social life. **Part 2** examines social groups and social control. **Part 3** focuses on social inequality, looking at issues of class, race/ethnicity, sex/gender/sexuality, and age discrimination. **Part 4** offers a systematic discussion of social institutions, building students’ awareness of the importance of these foundational elements of society and showing how a

problem in one often has a significant influence on others. **Part 5** surveys social dynamics and social change.

## Part 1

**Chapter 1** introduces students to the sociological imagination and traces the development of sociological thinking. The chapter sets forth the major theoretical perspectives used by sociologists in analyzing compelling social issues, such as the problem of credit card abuse and hyperconsumerism among college students and others.

**Chapter 2** focuses on sociological research methods and shows students how sociologists conduct research. This chapter provides a thorough description of both quantitative and qualitative methods of sociological research. Throughout the chapter, new updates concentrate on various factors that influence suicide rates.

In **Chapter 3**, culture is spotlighted as either a stabilizing force or a force that can generate discord, conflict, and even violence in societies. Cultural diversity is discussed as a contemporary issue, and unique coverage is given to popular culture and leisure and to divergent perspectives on popular culture.

**Chapter 4** looks at the positive and negative aspects of socialization, including opening lived experiences about learning socialization cues in college and medical school. This chapter presents an innovative analysis of gender and racial–ethnic socialization and of issues associated with recent immigration.

## Part 2

**Chapter 5** applies the sociological imagination to an examination of social structure and social interaction, using homelessness as a sustained example of the dynamic interplay of structure and interaction in society. Unique to this chapter are discussions of the sociology of emotions and of personal space as viewed through the lenses of race, class, gender, and age.

**Chapter 6** analyzes groups and organizations, including innovative forms of social organization and ways in which organizational structures may differentially affect people based on race, class, gender, and age. The opening narrative discusses an MIT professor's experience with students using digital technology in the classroom.

**Chapter 7** examines how deviance and crime emerge in societies, using diverse theoretical approaches to describe the nature of deviance, crime, and the criminal justice system. Key issues are dramatized for students through an analysis of recent mass shootings and the consequences of violence on individuals and society.

## Part 3

**Chapter 8** focuses on class and stratification in the United States, analyzing the causes and consequences of inequality and poverty, including a discussion of the ideology and accessibility of the American Dream.

**Chapter 9** addresses the issue of global stratification and examines differences in wealth and poverty in rich and poor nations around the world. Explanations for these differences are discussed.

The focus of **Chapter 10** is race and ethnicity, which includes an illustration of the historical relationship (or lack of it) between sports and upward mobility by persons from diverse racial–ethnic groups. A thorough analysis of prejudice, discrimination, theoretical perspectives, and the experiences of diverse racial and ethnic groups is presented, along with global racial and ethnic issues.

**Chapter 11** examines sex, gender, and sexuality, with special emphasis on gender stratification in historical perspective. Linkages between gender socialization and contemporary gender inequality are described and illustrated by lived experiences and perspectives on body image.

**Chapter 12** provides a cutting-edge analysis of aging, including theoretical perspectives and inequalities experienced by people across the life course. This chapter has thorough discussions of adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood.

## Part 4

The economy and work are explored in **Chapter 13**, including the different types of global economic systems, the social organization of work in the United States, unemployment, and unions. The chapter has been extensively revised to include issues pertaining to the aftermath of the “Great Recession,” including job loss, higher rates of unemployment, and the gradual economic recovery during the second decade of the twenty-first century.

**Chapter 14** discusses the intertwining nature of politics, government, and the media. Political systems are examined in global perspective, and politics and government in the United States are analyzed with attention to governmental bureaucracy and the military–industrial complex.

**Chapter 15** focuses on families in global perspective and on the diversity found in U.S. and global families today. The latest figures on family-related issues such as family violence, foster care, and teenage pregnancy are included.

**Chapter 16** investigates education in the United States and other nations. In the process the chapter highlights issues of race, class, and gender inequalities in current U.S. education.

In **Chapter 17**, religion is examined from a global perspective, including a survey of world religions and an analysis of how religious beliefs affect other aspects of social life. Current trends in U.S. religion are also explored, including various sociological explanations of why people look to religion to find purpose and meaning in life.

**Chapter 18** analyzes health, health care, and disability from both U.S. and global perspectives. Among the topics included are social epidemiology, lifestyle factors influencing health and illness, health care organization in the United States and other nations, social implications of advanced medical technology, and holistic and alternative medicine. This chapter is unique in that it contains a

thorough discussion of the sociological perspectives on disability and of social inequalities based on disability. The Affordable Care Act is explored in detail.

## Part 5

**Chapter 19** examines population and urbanization, looking at demography, global population change, and the process and consequences of urbanization. Special attention is given to race- and class-based segregation in urban areas and the crisis in health care in central cities.

**Chapter 20** concludes the text with an innovative analysis of collective behavior, social movements, and social change. The need for persistence in social movements, such as the continuing work of environmental activists over the past fifty years, is used as an example to help students grasp the importance of collective behavior and social movements in producing social change.

## Distinctive, Classroom-Tested Features

The following special features are specifically designed to demonstrate the relevance of sociology in our lives, as well as to support students' learning. As the preceding overview of the book's contents shows, these features appear throughout the text, some in every chapter, others in selected chapters.

### Unparalleled Coverage of and Attention to Diversity

From its first edition, I have striven to integrate diversity in numerous ways throughout this book. The individuals portrayed and discussed in each chapter accurately mirror the diversity in society itself. As a result, this text speaks to a wide variety of students and captures their interest by taking into account their concerns and perspectives. Moreover, the research used includes the best work of classical and established contemporary sociologists—including many women and people of color—and it weaves an inclusive treatment of *all* people into the examination of sociology in *all* chapters. Therefore, this text helps students consider the significance of the intersectionality of class, race, gender, and age in all aspects of social life.

### Personal Narratives That Highlight Key Issues

Authentic first-person commentaries serve as the vignettes that open each chapter and personalize the issue that unifies the chapter's coverage. These lived experiences provide opportunities for students to examine social life beyond their own experiences and for instructors to systematically incorporate into lectures and discussions an array of interesting and relevant topics that help demonstrate to students the value of applying sociology to their everyday lives. New topics include "Class Attendance in Higher Education," "When Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Weight Bias Collide," and "Collective Behavior and Environmental Issues."

## Focus on the Relationship Between Sociology and Everyday Life

Each chapter has a brief quiz in the opening "Sociology & Everyday Life" feature that relates the sociological perspective to the pressing social issues presented in the opening vignette. (Answers are provided at the end of the chapter.)

## Emphasis on the Importance of a Global Perspective

The global implications of all topics are examined throughout each chapter and in the "Sociology in Global Perspective" boxes, which highlight our interconnected world and reveal how the sociological imagination extends beyond national borders.

## Emphasis on Social and Global Change

The eleventh edition also strives to relate the importance of social and global change in its many forms and how this affects not only our everyday lives but also our communities and the entire nation and world.

## Applying the Sociological Imagination to Social Policy

The "Sociology & Social Policy" boxes in selected chapters help students understand the connection between law and social policy issues in society.

## Focus on Making a Difference

Designed to help students learn how to become involved in their communities, the "You Can Make a Difference" boxes look at ways in which students can address, on a personal level, issues raised by the chapter themes.

## Effective Study Aids

In addition to basic reading and study aids such as learning objectives, chapter outlines, key terms, a running glossary, and our popular online study system, *Sociology in Our Times* includes the following pedagogical aids to enhance students' mastery of course content:

- **Concept Quick Review.** These tables categorize and contrast the major theories or perspectives on the specific topics presented in a chapter.
- **Questions for Critical Thinking.** Each chapter concludes with "Questions for Critical Thinking" to encourage students to reflect on important issues, to develop their own critical-thinking skills, and to highlight how ideas presented in one chapter often build on those developed previously.
- **Feature-Concluding Reflect & Analyze Questions.** From activating prior knowledge related to concepts and themes, to highlighting main ideas and reinforcing



diverse perspectives, this text's questions consistently contribute to student engagement.

- **End-of-Chapter Summaries.** Connected to the learning objectives, chapter summaries provide a built-in review for students by reexamining material covered in the chapter in an easy-to-read question-and-answer format to review, highlight, and reinforce the most important concepts and issues discussed in each chapter. Each element in the chapter summaries is related to one of the learning objectives introduced at the beginning of the chapter.

## Comprehensive Supplements Package

The eleventh edition of *Sociology in Our Times* is accompanied by a wide array of supplements developed to create the best teaching and learning experience inside as well as outside the classroom. All of the continuing supplements have been thoroughly revised and updated, and some new supplements have been added. Cengage Learning prepared the following descriptions, and I invite you to start taking full advantage of the teaching and learning tools available to you by reading this overview.

## Products for Blended and Online Courses

### MindTap™: The Personal Learning Experience

MindTap *Sociology in Our Times*, enhanced eleventh edition, represents a new approach to a highly personalized, online learning platform. A fully online learning solution, MindTap combines all of a students' learning tools, readings, and multimedia activities into a "Learning Path" that guides the student through the introductory sociology course. Four new highly interactive activities challenge students to think critically by exploring, analyzing, and creating content, while developing their sociological lenses through personal, local, and global issues.

MindTap *Sociology in Our Times*, enhanced eleventh edition, is easy to use and saves instructors time by allowing you to

- Break course content down into manageable modules to promote personalization, encourage interactivity, and ensure student engagement.
- 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](http://www.cengage.com/mindtap).

MindTap Sociology for Kendall's *Sociology in Our Times*, eleventh edition, features Aplia assignments, which help students learn to use their sociological imagination through compelling content and thought-provoking questions. Students complete interactive activities that encourage them to think critically in order to practice and apply course concepts. These valuable critical-thinking skills help students become thoughtful and engaged members of society. Aplia for Kendall's *Sociology in Our Times*, eleventh edition, is also available as a stand-alone product. Log in to **CengageBrain.com** for access.

**CourseReader for Sociology** CourseReader for Sociology allows you to create a fully customized online reader in minutes. You can access a rich collection of thousands of primary and secondary sources, readings, and audio and video selections from multiple disciplines. Each selection includes a descriptive introduction that puts it into context, and every selection is further supported by both critical-thinking and multiple-choice questions designed to reinforce key points. This easy-to-use solution allows you to select exactly the content you need for your courses, and it is loaded with convenient pedagogical features, such as highlighting, printing, note taking, and downloadable MP3 audio files for each reading. You have the freedom to assign and customize individualized content at an affordable price. CourseReader is the perfect complement to any class.

## Resources for Customizing Your Textbook

Cengage Learning is pleased to offer three modules that help you tailor *Sociology in Our Times*, eleventh edition, to your course. The modules present topics not typically covered in most introductory texts but often requested by instructors. In addition, you can choose to add your own materials or reorganize the table of contents. Work with your local Cengage Learning consultant to find out more.

**Careers in Sociology Module** Written by leading author Joan Ferrante, Northern Kentucky University, the Careers in Sociology module offers the most extensive and useful information on careers that is available. This module provides six career tracks, each of which has a "featured employer," a job description, and a letter of recommendation (written by a professor for a sociology student) or application (written by a sociology student). The module also includes résumé-building tips on how to make the most out of being a sociology major and offers specific course suggestions along with the transferable skills gained by taking

these courses. As part of Cengage Learning's Add-a-Module Program, Careers in Sociology can be purchased separately, bundled, or customized with any of our introductory texts.

**Sociology of Sports Module** The Sociology of Sports module, authored by Jerry M. Lewis, Kent State University, examines why sociologists are interested in sports, mass media and sports, popular culture and sports (including feature-length films on sports), sports and religion, drugs and sports, and violence and sports. As part of Cengage Learning's Add-a-Module Program, Sociology of Sports can be purchased separately, bundled, or customized with any of our introductory texts.

**Rural Sociology Module** The Rural Sociology module, authored by Carol A. Jenkins, Glendale Community College–Arizona, presents the realities of life in rural America. Many people imagine a rural America characterized by farming, similar cultures, and close-knit communities. However, rural Americans and rural communities are extremely diverse—demographically, culturally, socially, economically, and environmentally. The module presents these characteristics of rural life in a comprehensive and accessible format for introductory sociology students. As part of Cengage Learning's Add-a-Module program, Rural Sociology can be purchased separately, bundled, or customized with any of our introductory sociology texts.

## Teaching Aids for Instructors

A broad array of teaching aids is available to make course planning faster and easier, giving you more time to focus on your students. All of these resources can be accessed with a single account. Go to **login.cengage.com** to log in.

## Online Instructor's Resource Center

**Online Instructor's Resource Manual** Prepared by Josh Packard of the University of Northern Colorado, this text is designed to maximize the effectiveness of your course preparation. It offers you Quick Start questions to launch your lecture, brief chapter outlines, key terms, and student learning objectives, plus extensive chapter lecture outlines mapped to the learning objectives, lecture ideas, questions for discussion, Internet activities, student activities, and creative lecture and teaching suggestions, including video suggestions.

**Online Test Bank** Prepared by Josh Packard of the University of Northern Colorado, the eleventh edition's test bank consists of revised and updated true/false and multiple-choice questions for every chapter of the text, along with an answer key and page references for each question. Each multiple-choice item has the question type (fact, concept, or application) indicated. Also included are short-answer and essay questions for every chapter.

**Online PowerPoint® Slides** Helping you make your lectures more engaging while effectively reaching your

visually oriented students, these handy Microsoft® PowerPoint slides outline the chapters of the main text in a classroom-ready presentation that include tables, selected figures, a Quick Quiz, and now more photos as “Consider This” slides. The PowerPoint slides are updated to reflect the content and organization of the new edition of the text.

**The Sociology Video Library Vols. I–IV** These DVDs drive home the relevance of course topics through short, provocative clips of current and historical events. Perfect for enriching lectures and engaging students in discussion, many of the segments on this volume have been gathered from BBC Motion Gallery. Ask your Cengage Learning representative for a list of contents.

## Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero

This is a flexible, online system that allows you to

- import, edit, and manipulate test bank content from the *Sociology in Our Times* test bank or elsewhere, including your own favorite test questions
- create multiple test versions in an instant
- deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want

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I invite you to send your comments and suggestions about this book to me in care of:

Sociology Team  
Cengage Learning  
500 Terry A. Francois Blvd., 2nd Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94158

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DIANA KENDALL is Professor of Sociology at Baylor University, where she was named an Outstanding University Professor. Dr. Kendall has taught a variety of courses, including Introduction to Sociology; Sociological Theory (undergraduate and graduate); Sociology of Medicine; Sociology of Law; and Race, Class, and Gender. Previously, she enjoyed many years of teaching sociology and serving as chair of the Social and Behavioral Science Division at Austin Community College.

Diana Kendall received her Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin, where she was invited to membership in Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. Her areas of specialization and primary research interests are sociological theory and the sociology of medicine. She is the author of *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials*, tenth edition; *The Power of Good Deeds: Privileged Women and the Social Reproduction of the Upper Class* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); *Members Only: Elite Clubs and the Process of Exclusion* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008); and *Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America*, second edition (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012). Professor Kendall is a member of numerous sociological associations, including the American Sociological Association, the Society for the Study of Social Problems, and the Southwestern Sociological Association.



# SOCIOLOGY IN OUR TIMES



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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 **Define** sociology and explain how it can contribute to our understanding of social life.
- 2 **Identify** what is meant by the sociological imagination.
- 3 **Describe** how we can develop a global sociological imagination.
- 4 **Describe** the historical context in which sociological thinking developed.
- 5 **Discuss** why early social thinkers were concerned with social order and stability.
- 6 **Identify** reasons why many later social thinkers were concerned with social change.
- 7 **Discuss** how industrialization and urbanization influenced the theories of Max Weber and Georg Simmel.
- 8 **Compare** and contrast contemporary functionalist and conflict perspectives on social life.
- 9 **Identify** key differences in contemporary symbolic interactionism and postmodernist perspectives on social life.



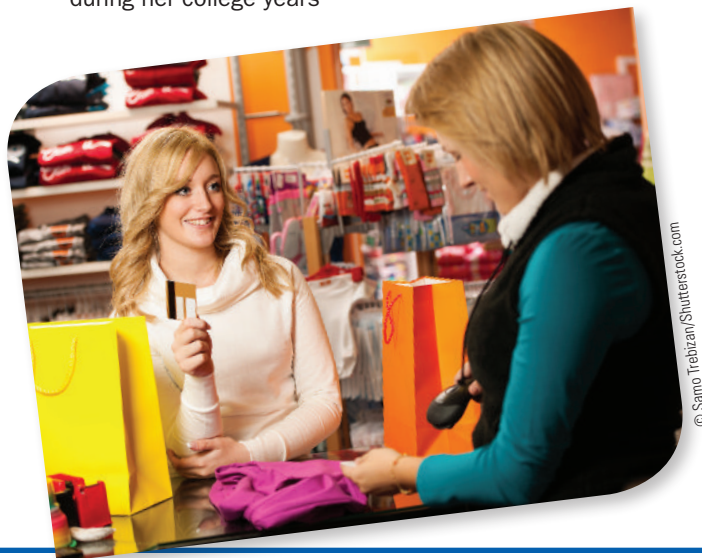
# SOCIOLOGY & EVERYDAY LIFE

## College Life and the Consumer Society

**What I enjoyed about college was that I was able to walk away with a degree and go find a job,** but what I regret most is getting a credit card, racking it up and getting multiple credit cards and doing the same thing, 'cause now I have to deal with it and I'm paying it off now and it's kind of hard to deal with. Things that I charged on my credit card in college were those spring break vacations, going out to eat with friends numerous times. Other things were like materialistic things like clothes, accessories, makeup—all that good stuff—trying to keep up with everyone else. [Slight laugh.] I wish I could do those things now. Now, I can't have those things; I have to do with what I've got. . . . I can't enjoy the things I enjoyed in college because I enjoyed them in college. I guess when I was making the purchases in college with my credit card saying, "Oh, I can just pay that off later," I figured I would be making more money than what I was given through financial aid and through my parents, [but] in reality, you're not. You have to

compensate for other things like tax being taken out of your salary, groceries, gas is something I didn't even think about because my parents always paid it. I mean, all those little things: They will add up!

—ROBYN BECK (2014) describing her experience of struggling to pay off \$7,000 in credit card debt that she ran up during her college years



Young people who run up credit card debt may find that paying off the debt can take decades.

Like millions of college students in the United States and other high-income nations, Robyn Beck quickly learned both the liberating and constraining aspects of living in a "consumer society" where many of us rely on our credit cards to pay for the goods or services that we want or need. For many years companies targeted college students, trying to get you to apply for a credit card regardless of whether you had the financial ability to pay off your balance. Since 2009, the Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure (CARD) Act has banned credit card approval for anyone under age twenty-one unless the person can prove that he or she has sufficient income to pay their bill or unless someone over age twenty-one agrees to cosign the application. However, this has not ended the problems related to students' credit card debt. Are you aware, for example, that most college students who own a credit card have an unpaid balance of at least \$500 on that card? The companies that issue credit cards are concerned because students have little, if any, credit card history and have the potential to be less "creditworthy." As a result, these companies frequently charge the highest annual interest rates for student-issued cards. These rates may be as high as 22 percent each year. Think about this: If you charge \$1,000 on a credit card with a 22 percent interest rate and pay the minimum amount due each month, eventually you will pay near \$2,000 for the \$1,000 you initially borrowed. If you

add no additional charges beyond the initial \$1,000 and pay only the minimum amount due each month, you will need 8 years to pay off the debt. Not only on college campuses but also across nations and the entire world, consumerism is an important aspect of social life in the twenty-first century.

As sociologists in training, why should you be interested in studying consumerism? According to the American Sociological Association's "Section on Consumers and Consumption" (2014), sociologists who specialize in this area do research to show "the pervasiveness of consumer goods and consumerism in shaping our everyday lives, the social structure, and the contemporary social, political, economic, and environmental problems that we face as a global society." From this explanation, you can see that what we buy is much more than just acquiring goods or services; it also strongly influences how we live our everyday lives and how social change occurs locally and globally. Consumer goods and consumerism are deeply intertwined with the social structure of our nation and the larger global society, including significant global issues such as environmental problems, widening gaps in wealth and other resources, and greater inequalities based on gender, race/ethnicity, and class hierarchies (ASA Section on Consumers and Consumption, 2014).

When you study the *consumer society*—a society in which discretionary consumption is a mass phenomenon among people across diverse income categories—you will

## How Much Do You Know About Consumption and Credit Cards?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 The average U.S. household owes more than \$15,000 in credit card debt.
T	F	2 It has become easier in the 2010s for undergraduate college students to get a credit card in their own name.
T	F	3 Among college students who have their own credit card, the average unpaid balance is slightly less than \$500.
T	F	4 Millennials (people ages 18–34) spend more money online in a given year than people in any other age category.
T	F	5 Credit cards are not a financial safety net for low-income families because people with low and middle incomes have greater difficulty acquiring credit.
T	F	6 Fewer individuals filed for bankruptcy in the 2010s because more people are better off financially today than in the past.
T	F	7 The total U.S. outstanding revolving debt on credit cards alone is over \$800 billion.
T	F	8 Overspending is primarily a problem for people in higher-income brackets in the United States and other affluent nations.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

gain important insights into all aspects of social life and social change. However, we must distinguish between *consumption* and *consumerism* for a clearer sociological understanding. When we study *consumption*, we are looking at *behavior* that people around the world routinely engage in—the selection, purchase, and use of products and services that are available in a society. By contrast, *consumerism* refers to social and economic *beliefs* and *structures* that encourage people to acquire goods and services in an ever-increasing manner. Consumerism refers to the characteristics of a larger society and an ideology that frames people's world-views, values, relationships, identities, and behaviors.

From a sociological perspective, we want to know more about the influences, experiences, and social relationships that produce specific patterns of consumption. When we examine consumption from a larger structural perspective, we see that it is linked to nationality, region, race/ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, age, ability/disability, and other social attributes and characteristics. Learning to study how people think, live, work and play is at the core of all sociological inquiry. This investigation is closely linked to social change and a better understanding of how social differences and inequalities originate, persist, and sometimes change over time and place. For example, recent studies have found that higher-income people in the United States spend money on different things. Even among those with similar wealth,

consumer patterns vary by region and by city. In Manhattan affluent people spend more money on luxury watches and shoes than in cities such as Boston, where people with similar economic resources are more likely to spend their money on private-school tuition and elite college education (Currid-Halkett, 2014). To explain this, some social analysts have said, “Geography is consumer destiny,” meaning that where individuals live affects how they will spend money.

How can we analyze spending patterns by city and region to learn what people value? What can we learn about how people attempt to secure or enhance their social position through what they buy? (Currid-Halkett, 2014). Think about your own city: How do the spending patterns compare for high-, middle-, and low-income persons in relation to clothing, entertainment, and transportation? Do spending patterns reflect economic and social conditions in your community?

Although excessive consumerism may contribute to the individual's personal financial problems, larger economic conditions are linked to national and global instability. In this chapter you will see how the sociological perspective helps us examine complex questions such as this, as well as learning how sociologists look at difficulties associated with studying human behavior generally. Before reading on, take the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz, which examines a number of commonsense notions about consumption and credit card debt.





**Define sociology and explain how it can contribute to our understanding of social life.**

## Putting Social Life into Perspective

**Sociology** is the systematic study of human society and social interaction. It is a *systematic* study because sociologists apply both theoretical perspectives and research methods (or orderly approaches) to examinations of social behavior. Sociologists study human societies and their social interactions to develop theories of how human behavior is shaped by group life and how, in turn, group life is affected by individuals.

To better understand the scope of sociology, you can compare it to other social sciences, such as anthropology, psychology, economics, and political science. Like anthropology, sociology studies many aspects of human behavior; however, sociology is particularly interested in contemporary social organization, relations, and social change. Anthropology primarily concentrates on the study of humankind in all times and spaces. It focuses on both traditional and contemporary societies and the development of diverse cultures. Closest to sociology is cultural anthropology—the comparative study of cultural similarities and differences that looks for patterns in human behavior, beliefs, and practices that are typical in groups of people. By contrast, psychology primarily focuses on *internal* factors relating to the individual in its explanations of human behavior and mental processes, such as how the human mind thinks, remembers, and learns. Social psychology is most akin to sociology because social psychologists examine how we perceive ourselves in relation to the rest of the world and how this affects our choices, behavior, and beliefs. Sociology specifically focuses on *external* social factors, such as the effects of groups, organizations, and social institutions on individuals and social life. Although sociology examines all major social institutions, including the economy and politics, the fields of economics and political science concentrate primarily on a single institution—the economy or the political

system. Topics of mutual interest to economics and sociology include issues such as consumerism and debt, which can be analyzed at global, national, and individual levels. As you can see from these examples, sociology shares similarities with other social sciences but offers a distinct approach for gaining greater understanding of our social world.

## Why Should You Study Sociology?

Sociology helps you gain a better understanding of yourself and the social world. It enables you to see how the groups to which you belong and the society in which you live largely shape behavior. A **society** is a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations, such as the United States, Mexico, or Nigeria. Many changes are occurring in the twenty-first century. Many societies have not only dominant cultural groupings and expectations but also many smaller groupings that have their own unique cultural identities. Migration and interdependence have shifted the meaning of society in the twenty-first century.

Examining the world order helps us understand that we are all affected by *global interdependence*—a relationship in which the lives of all people everywhere are intertwined closely and any one nation's problems are part of a larger global problem. Environmental problems are an example. People throughout the world share the same biosphere. When environmental degradation, such as removing natural resources or polluting the air and water, takes place in one region, it may have an adverse effect on people around the globe.

You can make use of sociology on a more personal level. Sociology enables us to move beyond established ways of thinking, thus allowing us to gain new insights into ourselves and to develop a greater awareness of the connection between our own “world” and that of other people. Sociology provides new ways of approaching problems and making decisions in everyday life. For this reason, people with knowledge of sociology are employed in a variety of fields that apply sociological insights to everyday life (see • Figure 1.1).

Health and Human Services	Business	Communication	Academia	Law
Medicine Nursing Physical Therapy Occupational Therapy Counseling Education Social Work	Advertising Labor Relations Management Marketing	Broadcasting Public Relations Journalism Social Media	Anthropology Economics Geography History Information Studies Media Studies/ Communication Political Science Psychology Sociology	Law Criminal Justice Mediation Conflict Resolution

**FIGURE 1.1 Fields That Use Social Science Research**

In many careers, including jobs in health and human services, business, communication, academia, and law, the ability to analyze social science research is an important asset.

Source: Based on Katzner, Cook, and Crouch, 1991.

Sociology promotes understanding and tolerance by enabling each of us to look beyond intuition, common sense, and our personal experiences. Many of us rely on intuition or common sense gained from personal experience to help us understand our daily lives and other people's behavior. *Commonsense knowledge* guides ordinary conduct in everyday life. However, many commonsense notions are actually myths. A *myth* is a popular but false notion that may be used, either intentionally or unintentionally, to perpetuate certain beliefs or "theories" even in the light of conclusive evidence to the contrary.

By contrast, sociologists strive to use scientific standards, not popular myths or hearsay, in studying society and social interaction. They use systematic research techniques and are accountable to the scientific community for their methods and the presentation of their findings. Whereas some sociologists argue that sociology must be completely value free—free from distorting subjective (personal or emotional) bias—others do not think that total objectivity is an attainable or desirable goal when studying human behavior. However, all sociologists attempt to discover patterns or commonalities in human behavior. When they study consumerism, such as regional spending habits or credit card abuse, for example, they look for recurring patterns of behavior in individuals and groups. Consequently, we seek the multiple causes and effects of social issues and analyze the impact of the problem not only from the standpoint of the people directly involved but also from the standpoint of the effects of such behavior on all people.



**Identify** what is meant by the sociological imagination.

## The Sociological Imagination

Do you wonder how your daily life compares to what other people are doing? Our interest in Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media sites reflects how fascinated we are by what other people are thinking and doing. But how can you really link your personal life with what is going on with other people in the larger social world? You can make an important linkage known as the sociological imagination.

Sociological reasoning is often referred to as the *sociological imagination*—the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society (Mills, 1959b). The sociological imagination is important to each of us because having this awareness enables us to understand the link between our personal experiences and the social contexts in which they occur. Each of us lives in a society, and we live out a biography within some historical setting. Throughout your life, you contribute to the shaping of society and to its history, even as you are made by society and the historical events that take place during your lifetime. The sociological imagination will enable you to grasp the relationship between history at the societal level

and your own biography at the individual level. It also helps you distinguish between personal troubles and social (or public) issues. *Personal troubles* are private problems that affect individuals and the networks of people with whom they associate regularly. As a result, individuals within their immediate social settings must solve those problems. For example, one person being unemployed or having a high level of credit card debt may be a personal trouble. *Public issues* are problems that affect large numbers of people and often require solutions at the societal level (Mills, 1959b). Widespread unemployment and extensive consumer debt are public issues. The sociological imagination helps us place seemingly personal troubles into a larger social context, where we can distinguish whether and how personal troubles may be related to public issues. Let's compare the two perspectives by looking at overspending.

**Overspending as a Personal Trouble** Have you heard someone say, "He has no one to blame but himself" for some problem? In everyday life we often blame people for "creating" their own problems. Although individual behavior can contribute to social problems, our individual experiences are often largely beyond our own control. They are determined by society as a whole—by its historical development and its organization. If a person sinks into debt because of overspending or credit card abuse, other people often consider the problem to be the result of the individual's personal failings. However, thinking about it this way overlooks debt among people in low-income brackets who have no other way than debt to acquire basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, and housing. By contrast, at middle- and upper-income levels, overspending takes on a variety of meanings typically dictated by what people think of as essential for their well-being and associated with the so-called "good life" that is so heavily marketed and flaunted by high-end consumers. But across income and wealth levels, larger-scale economic, political, and social problems may affect the person's ability to pay for consumer goods and services (•Figure 1.2).

**Overspending as a Public Issue** Let's apply the sociological imagination to the problem of overspending and credit card debt by looking at it first as a public issue—a societal problem. In 2015 consumer debt in the United States added up to more than \$1.26 trillion for student loans, \$8.36 trillion for mortgages, and \$1.1 trillion for auto loans. Debt on credit card balances alone was more than \$729 billion. (El Issa, 2016.)

### sociology

the systematic study of human society and social interaction.

### society

a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.

### sociological imagination

C. Wright Mills's term for the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society.



**FIGURE 1.2** Because of an overreliance on credit, many Americans now owe more than they can pay back. This couple is signing up for debt consolidation, a somewhat controversial process that may help them avoid bankruptcy.

Sociologically speaking, why do you think this is considered to be a public issue? Consumerism is a way of life in the United States and most nations around the world. Through media and popular culture, people are continually encouraged to buy goods and services that they do not necessarily need. They are bombarded with more and more choices, and many items they own, such as smartphones and tablets, are declared outdated and obsolete not long after they purchase them. A shiny new device is available for them to purchase, and the rapid cycle of buy-and-replace continues into the future. Marketing and advertising encourages people to “buy now and pay later.” The credit card industry stands ready to help people buy what they want and sometime more than they can pay off. Card users are encouraged by credit card companies to carry large balances on their cards, pay high interest rates month after month, and transfer balances to newly issued cards. Spending and overspending are encouraged by the values of society. Similarly, government policies and laws may favor credit card issuers over individual credit card holders when it comes to rights pertaining to debt collection and the handling of lawsuits.

The sociological imagination is useful for examining such issues because it integrates microlevel (individual and small-group) troubles with macrolevel (larger social institutions and social forces) issues on a global basis.

**L03** Describe how we can develop a global sociological imagination.

## The Importance of a Global Sociological Imagination

How is it possible to think globally when you live in one location and have been taught to think a certain way? Although we live in one country and rely heavily on Western sociological theory and research, we can access the world beyond the United States and learn to develop a more comprehensive *global* approach for the future. One way we can do this is to reach beyond studies that have focused primarily on the United States to look at the important challenges that we face in a rapidly changing world. These issues range from political and economic instability to environmental concerns, natural disasters, and terrorism. We can also examine the ways in which nations are not on equal footing when it comes to economics and politics (see • Figure 1.3).

The world’s **high-income countries** are nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income. Examples include the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the countries of Western Europe.

As compared with other nations of the world, many high-income nations have a high standard of living and a lower death rate because of advances in nutrition and medical technology. However, everyone living in a so-called high-income country does not necessarily have these advantages.

In contrast, **middle-income countries** are nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income. Examples of middle-income countries include the nations of Eastern Europe and many Latin American countries.

**Low-income countries** are primarily agrarian nations with little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income. Examples of low-income countries include many of the nations of Africa and Asia, particularly the People’s Republic of China and India, where people typically work the land and are among the poorest in the world. However, generalizations are difficult to make because there are wide differences in income and standards of living within many nations (see Chapter 9, “Global Stratification”).

Throughout this text we will continue to develop our sociological imaginations by examining social life in the United States and other nations. The future of our nation is deeply intertwined with the future of all other nations of the world on economic, political, environmental, and humanitarian levels.





High income: New York, United States



Low income: Congo



Middle income: China



**FIGURE 1.3 The World's Economies in the Twenty-First Century**

High-income, middle-income, and low-income countries.

Photos: © Cengage Learning. Photos, left to right: John Berry/Syracuse Newspapers/The Image Works; Gable/Alamy; philipbigg/Alamy.

Whatever your race/ethnicity, class, sex, or age, are you able to include in your thinking the perspectives of people who are quite different from you in experiences and points of view? Before you answer this question, a few definitions are in order. *Race* is a term used by many people to specify groups of people distinguished by physical characteristics such as skin color. *Ethnicity* refers to the cultural heritage or identity of a group and is based on factors such as language or country of origin. *Class* is the relative location of a person or group within the larger society, based on wealth, power, prestige, or other valued resources. *Sex* refers to the biological and anatomical differences between females and males. By contrast, *gender* refers to the meanings, beliefs, and practices associated with sex differences, referred to as *femininity* and *masculinity*. Although these terms sound very precise, they often do not have a precise meaning and are, instead, social constructions that people use to justify social inequalities. When we refer to something as a “social construction,” we mean that race, ethnicity, class, and gender do not really indicate anything apart from the social meaning that people in a given society confer on them. However, the result is that we may—either intentionally or unintentionally—privilege some categories of people over others who are placed in disadvantaged or subordinate positions. In sum, a “social construction of reality” occurs when large

numbers of people act and respond as if these categories exist in reality instead of being socially created.

**LO4**

**Describe the historical context in which sociological thinking developed.**

## The Development of Sociological Thinking

Throughout history, social philosophers and religious authorities have made countless observations about human behavior. However, the idea of observing how people lived, finding out what they thought, and doing so in a systematic

### high-income countries

(sometimes referred to as **industrial countries**) nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income.

### middle-income countries

(sometimes referred to as **developing countries**) nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income.

### low-income countries

(sometimes referred to as **underdeveloped countries**) primarily agrarian nations with little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income.



## Global Walmartization: From Big-Box Stores to Online Supermarkets in China

Did you know that:

- Walmart has more than 11,500 stores worldwide and that more than half of all Walmart stores worldwide are located outside the United States?
- In China, Walmart operates 420 stores, including supercenters, neighborhood markets, and Sam's Clubs, and many more facilities are being built?
- Walmart serves the rising middle class in China and continues to be a major player in the credit card business in China?

Although most of us are aware that Walmart stores are visible in virtually every city in the United States, we are

An exciting aspect of studying sociology is comparing our own lives with those of people around the world. Global consumerism, as evidenced by the opening of a Walmart Supercenter in Shanghai, China, provides a window through which we can observe how issues such as shopping and credit affect all of us. Which aspects of this photo reflect local culture? Which aspects reflect a global cultural phenomenon?

less aware of the extent to which Walmart and other big-box stores are changing the face of the world economy as mega-corporations such as this expand their operations into other nations and into the credit card business.

The strategic placement of Walmart stores both here and abroad accounts for part of the financial success of this retailing giant, but another U.S. export—credit cards—is also part of the company's business plan. Credit cards are changing the way that people shop and



Top Photo Corporation/Alamy



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**FIGURE 1.4** As the Industrial Revolution swept through the United States beginning in the nineteenth century, children being employed in factories became increasingly common. Soon social thinkers began to explore such new social problems brought about by industrialization.

manner that could be verified did not take hold until the nineteenth century and the social upheaval brought about by industrialization and urbanization.

**Industrialization** is the process by which societies are transformed from dependence on agriculture and handmade products to an emphasis on manufacturing and related industries. This process occurred first during the Industrial Revolution in Britain between 1760 and 1850, and was soon repeated throughout Western Europe. By the mid-nineteenth century, industrialization was well under way in the United States (• Figure 1.4). Massive economic, technological, and social changes occurred as machine technology and the factory system shifted the economic base of these nations from agriculture to manufacturing: textiles, iron smelting, and related industries. Many people who had labored on the land were forced to leave their tightly knit rural communities and sacrifice well-defined social relationships to seek employment as factory workers in the emerging cities, which became the centers of industrial work.

**Urbanization** is the process by which an increasing proportion of a population lives in cities rather than in rural areas. Although cities existed long before the Industrial Revolution, the development of the factory system led to a rapid increase in both the number of cities and the size of their



how they think about spending money in emerging nations such as China. For example, Walmart China continues to aggressively seek both shoppers and credit card holders. By encouraging people to spend money now rather than save it for later, corporations such as Walmart gain in two ways: (1) people buy more goods than they would otherwise, thus increasing sales; and (2) the corporation whose “brand” is on the credit card increases its earnings as a result of the interest the cardholder pays on credit card debt.

The motto for the original Walmart credit card in China was “Maximizing value, enjoying life,” and this idea encouraged a change in attitude from the past, when—regardless of income level—most residents of that country did not purchase items on credit or possess a credit card. Introduction of the credit card brought a corresponding surge in debt in China. This change has been partly attributed to aggressive marketing of goods and services by transnational retailers, but it also relates to credit card companies encouraging consumers to “buy now, pay later.”

Throughout this course, you will see that many issues we discuss, such as consumerism and globalization, have positive and negative effects on people’s daily lives. Global consumerism, whether in big-box stores or through credit cards or electronic commerce, provides a window

through which we can observe how an issue such as shopping affects all of us. Among the poor and those who have been most hard-hit by difficult economic times, the lack of ability to purchase basic necessities is a central litmus test for analyzing quality of life and social inequality. Among persons in the middle classes, purchasing power is often used to determine social mobility (the ability to move into) or social stability (the ability to stay on) the middle rungs of a society’s ladder of income and wealth. Among persons in the upper classes, high rates of luxury consumerism are often seen as an outward sign of “having it all,” but such behaviors reveal much more than this from a sociological perspective. As you look around you, what important social issues do you think are revealed by *what* people purchase? Or *why* they buy specific items and not others?

## REFLECT & ANALYZE

Are people in the United States unique in how we view consumerism? In how we view Walmart and other big-box stores? What do you think?

Sources: Based on Walmart, 2014; and Walmart China, 2014.

populations. People from very diverse backgrounds worked together in the same factory. At the same time, many people shifted from being *producers* to being *consumers*. For example, families living in the cities had to buy food with their wages because they could no longer grow their own crops to eat or to barter for other resources. Similarly, people had to pay rent for their lodging because they could no longer exchange their services for shelter.

These living and working conditions led to the development of new social problems: inadequate housing, crowding, unsanitary conditions, poverty, pollution, and crime. Wages were so low that entire families—including very young children—were forced to work, often under hazardous conditions and with no job security. As these conditions became more visible, a new breed of social thinkers tried to understand why and how society was changing.

## The Development of Modern Sociology

At the same time that urban problems were growing worse, natural scientists had been using reason, or rational thinking, to discover the laws of physics and the movement of the planets. Social thinkers started to believe that by applying the methods developed by the natural sciences, they

might discover the laws of human behavior and apply these laws to solve social problems. Historically, the time was ripe because the Age of Enlightenment had produced a belief in reason and humanity’s ability to perfect itself.

LO5

**Discuss why early social thinkers were concerned with social order and stability.**

## Early Thinkers: A Concern with Social Order and Stability

Early social thinkers—such as Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer, and Emile Durkheim—were interested in analyzing social order and stability, and many of their ideas have had a dramatic and long-lasting

### industrialization

the process by which societies are transformed from dependence on agriculture and handmade products to an emphasis on manufacturing and related industries.

### urbanization

the process by which an increasing proportion of a population lives in cities rather than in rural areas.

influence on modern sociology. The first of these, Auguste Comte, focused primarily on continuity in societies, but his theorizing also highlights how societies contain forces for change as well.

**Auguste Comte** The French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) coined the term *sociology* from the Latin *socius* (“social, being with others”) and the Greek *logos* (“study of”) to describe a new science that would engage in the study of society. Even though he never actually conducted sociological research, Comte is considered by some to be the “founder of sociology.” Comte’s theory that societies contain *social statics* (forces for social order and stability) and *social dynamics* (forces for conflict and change) continues to be used in contemporary sociology. In fact, we can trace the origins of applied sociology (which focuses on social change and intervention) to the 1850s, when Comte divided sociology into two areas: theories of stability (social statics) and the practice of social interventionism (social progress and development). Although many contemporary social theorists and researchers participate in academic studies and influence public debate through their writing and presentations, *applied sociologists* are practitioners and social activists who adapt sociological thinking to real-life situations (typically outside academic settings) and help formulate social policy that may promote social change (Perlstadt, 2007).

Comte stressed that the methods of the natural sciences should be applied to the objective study of society. He sought to unlock the secrets of society so that intellectuals like him could become the new secular (as contrasted with religious) “high priests” of society. For Comte, the best policies involved order and authority. He envisioned that a new consensus would emerge on social issues and that the new science of sociology would play a significant part in the reorganization of society.

Comte’s philosophy became known as **positivism**—a belief that the world can best be understood through scientific inquiry. He believed that positivism had two dimensions: (1) methodological—the application of scientific knowledge to both physical and social phenomena—and (2) social and political—the use of such knowledge to predict the likely results of different policies so that the best one could be chosen.

Social analysts have praised Comte for his advocacy of sociology and his insights regarding linkages between the social structural elements of society (such as family, religion, and government) and social thinking in specific historical periods. However, a number of contemporary sociologists argue that Comte contributed to an overemphasis on the “natural science model” and focused on the experiences of a privileged few, to the exclusion of all others.

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) (oil on canvas), Éliez, Louis Jules (1810–1889)/Temple de la Religion de l’Humanité, Paris, France/The Bridgeman Art Library



**Harriet Martineau** Comte’s works were made more accessible for a wide variety of scholars through the efforts of the British sociologist Harriet Martineau (1802–1876). Until fairly recently, Martineau received no recognition in the field of sociology, partly because she was a woman in a male-dominated discipline and society. Not only did she translate and condense Comte’s works, but she was also an active sociologist in her own right. Martineau studied the social customs of Britain and the United States, analyzing the consequences of industrialization and capitalism. In *Society in America* (1962/1837), she examined religion, politics, child rearing, slavery, and immigration, paying special attention to social distinctions based on class, race, and gender. Her works explore the status of women, children, and “sufferers” (persons who are considered to be criminal, mentally ill, handicapped, poor, or alcoholic).

Martineau was also an advocate of social change, encouraging greater racial and gender equality. She was also committed to creating a science of society that would be grounded in empirical observations and be widely accessible to people. She argued that sociologists should be impartial in their assessment of society but that it is entirely appropriate to compare the existing state of society with the principles on which it was founded. Martineau believed that a better society would emerge if women and men were treated equally, enlightened reform occurred, and cooperation existed among people in all social classes (but led by the middle class).



Spencer Arnold/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

**Herbert Spencer** Unlike Comte, who was strongly influenced by the upheavals of the French Revolution, the British social theorist Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was born in a more peaceful and optimistic period in his country’s history. Spencer’s major contribution to sociology was an evolutionary perspective on social order and social change. Evolutionary theory helps to explain how organic and/or social change occurs in societies. According to Spencer’s Theory of General Evolution, society, like a biological organism, has various interdependent parts (such as the family, the economy, and the government) that work to ensure the stability and survival of the entire society.

Spencer believed that societies develop through a process of “struggle” (for existence) and “fitness” (for survival), which he referred to as the “survival of the fittest.” Because this phrase is often attributed to Charles Darwin, Spencer’s view of society is known as **social Darwinism**—the belief that those species of animals, including human beings, best adapted to their environment survive and prosper, whereas those poorly adapted die out. Spencer equated this process of *natural selection* with progress because only the “fittest” members of society would survive the competition.

Critics believe that Spencer's ideas are flawed because societies are not the same as biological systems; people are able to create and transform the environment in which they live. Moreover, the notion of the survival of the fittest can easily be used to justify class, racial-ethnic, and gender inequalities.

**Emile Durkheim** French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) stressed that people are the product of their social environment and that behavior cannot be understood fully in terms of *individual* biological and psychological traits. He believed that the limits of human potential are *socially* based, not *biologically* based.

In his work *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1964a/1895), Durkheim set forth one of his most important contributions to sociology: the idea that societies are built on social facts. **Social facts** are patterned ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that exist outside any one individual but that exert social control over each person. Durkheim believed that social facts must be explained by other social facts—by reference to the social structure rather than to individual attributes.

Durkheim observed that rapid social change and a more specialized division of labor produce *strains* in society. These strains lead to a breakdown in traditional organization, values, and authority and to a dramatic increase in **anomie**—a condition in which social control becomes ineffective as a result of the loss of shared values and of a sense of purpose in society. According to Durkheim, anomie is most likely to occur during a period of rapid social change. In *Suicide* (1964b/1897), he explored the relationship between anomic social conditions and suicide, a concept that remains important in the twenty-first century.

Durkheim's contributions are so significant that he is considered to be one of the crucial figures in the development of sociology as an academic area of study. He is one of the founding figures in the functionalist theoretical tradition, but he also made important contributions to other perspectives, particularly symbolic interactionism. Later in this chapter, we look at these theoretical approaches.

Although critics acknowledge Durkheim's important contributions, some argue that his emphasis on societal stability, or the "problem of order"—how society can establish and maintain social stability and cohesiveness—obscured the *subjective meanings* that individuals give to religion, work, and suicide. From this view, overemphasis on *structure* and the determining power of "society" resulted in a corresponding neglect of *agency* (the beliefs and actions of the actors involved) in much of Durkheim's theorizing.



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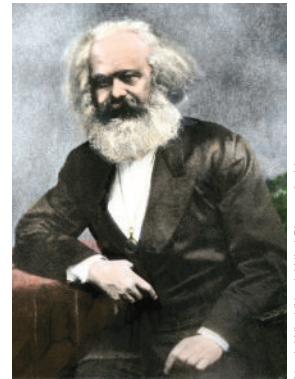


**Identify reasons why many later social thinkers were concerned with social change.**

## Differing Views on the Status Quo: Stability or Change?

Together with Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel, Durkheim established the direction of modern sociology. We will look first at Marx's and Weber's divergent thoughts about conflict and social change in societies and then at Georg Simmel's microlevel analysis of society.

**Karl Marx** In sharp contrast to Durkheim's focus on the stability of society, German economist and philosopher Karl Marx (1818–1883) stressed that history is a continuous clash between conflicting ideas and forces. He believed that conflict—especially class conflict—is necessary in order to produce social change and a better society. For Marx, the most important changes are economic. He concluded that the capitalist economic system was responsible for the overwhelming poverty that he observed in London at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Marx and Engels, 1967/1848).



North Wind/North Wind Picture Archives

In the Marxian framework, *class conflict* is the struggle between the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalist class, or *bourgeoisie*, is those who own and control the means of production—the tools, land, factories, and money for investment that form the economic basis of a society. The working class, or *proletariat*, is those who must sell their labor because they have no other means to earn a livelihood. From Marx's viewpoint, the capitalist class controls and exploits the masses of struggling workers by paying less than the value of their labor. This exploitation results in the workers' *alienation*—a feeling of powerlessness and

### positivism

a term describing Auguste Comte's belief that the world can best be understood through scientific inquiry.

### social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer's belief that those species of animals, including human beings, best adapted to their environment survive and prosper, whereas those poorly adapted die out.

### social facts

Emile Durkheim's term for patterned ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that exist *outside* any one individual but that exert social control over each person.

### anomie

Emile Durkheim's designation for a condition in which social control becomes ineffective as a result of the loss of shared values and of a sense of purpose in society.





## SOCIOLOGY & SOCIAL POLICY

### Online Shopping and Your Privacy

Motorcycle jacket for kid brother on the Internet—\$300  
Monogrammed golf balls for dad on the Internet—\$50  
Vintage smoking robe for husband on the Internet—\$80  
Not having to hear “attention shoppers”—not even once—priceless.

The way to pay on the Internet and everywhere else you see the MasterCard logo: MasterCard.

—MasterCard advertisement (qtd. in Manning, 2000: 114)

Clearly, this older advertisement for MasterCard taps into a vital source of revenue for companies that issue credit cards: online customers. Earlier, we mentioned that industrialization and urbanization were important historical factors that brought about significant changes in social life. Today, social life has changed as the Internet has become an integral part of our daily lives, including how we gather information, communicate with others, shop, and view our privacy.

Shopping online raises important questions: Who is watching your online activity? How far do companies go in “snooping” on those who visit their websites? Companies that sell products or services on the Internet are not required to respect the privacy of shoppers. According to the American Bar Association (2012), “When you buy something online, that company collects information about you. The information it collects is not necessarily limited to what the company needs to

process your order. . . .”

This means the data on which visit, which

seller may collect site pages you products you buy,



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**Do you feel comfortable shopping online? Do you care if retailers use your private information for their own purposes? Why or why not?**

#### REFLECT & ANALYZE

Are you responsible for protecting your own privacy online, or should federal law require that companies obtaining information about you let you know exactly what data they are collecting and why? How can sociology make us more aware of key social policy issues—such as this—that affect our everyday life?

Source: Based on American Bar Association, 2012.

estrangement from other people and from oneself. Marx predicted that the working class would become aware of its exploitation, overthrow the capitalists, and establish a free and classless society.

Overall, Marx’s ideas are still influential in contemporary societies where alienation is viewed as a pressing

problem and where social movements call people’s attention to large economic disparities brought about by the emergence of global capitalism. Marx specifically linked alienation to social relations that are inherent in the *production* side of capitalism. Because of his emphasis on the negative effects of production under capitalism, social



scientists for many years focused primarily on problems associated with production and social organization in industrial societies. However, some theorizing and research have shifted to the issue of rampant global consumerism. The effects of consumerism are examined on both the macrolevel and the microlevel. At the macrolevel, there is concern about issues such as environmental degradation and national debt. At the microlevel, studies often focus on why individuals and families spend more money than they can afford in hopes of finding personal happiness, gaining approval of others, and elevating their own social importance. Industrialization and urbanization were not only important influences in production but also in how societies consume, and this is reflected in the works of Max Weber and Georg Simmel.

**L07** Discuss how industrialization and urbanization influenced the theories of Max Weber and Georg Simmel.

**Max Weber** German social scientist Max Weber (pronounced VAY-ber) (1864–1920) was also concerned about the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Although he disagreed with Marx’s idea that economics is *the* central force in social change, Weber acknowledged that economic interests are important in shaping human action. Even so, he thought that economic systems were heavily influenced by other factors in a society.



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Unlike many early analysts who believed that values could not be separated from the research process, Weber emphasized that sociology should be *value free*—research should be done scientifically, excluding the researcher’s personal values and economic interests. However, Weber realized that social behavior cannot be analyzed by purely objective criteria, so he stressed that sociologists should employ *verstehen* (German for “understanding” or “insight”) to gain the ability to see the world as others see it. In contemporary sociology, Weber’s idea is incorporated into the concept of the sociological imagination (discussed earlier in this chapter).

Weber was also concerned that large-scale organizations (bureaucracies) were becoming increasingly oriented toward routine administration and a specialized division of labor, which he believed were destructive to human vitality and freedom. According to Weber, rational bureaucracy, rather than class struggle, is the most significant factor in determining the social relations between people in industrial societies. From this view, bureaucratic domination can be used to maintain powerful (capitalist) interests in society. As discussed in Chapter 6 (“Groups and

Organizations”), Weber’s work on bureaucracy has had a far-reaching impact.

Weber also provided important insights on the process of rationalization, on religion, and on many other topics. In his writings, Weber was more aware of women’s issues than many of the scholars of his day. Perhaps his awareness at least partially resulted from the fact that his wife, Marianne Weber, was an important figure in the women’s movement in Germany.

**Georg Simmel** At about the same time that Durkheim was developing the field of sociology in France, the German sociologist Georg Simmel (pronounced ZIM-mel) (1858–1918) was theorizing about the importance of social change in his own country and elsewhere. Simmel was also focusing on how society is a web of patterned interactions among people (• Figure 1.5). In *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (1950/1902–1917), he described how social interactions are different based on the size of the social group. According to Simmel, interaction patterns differ between a *dyad* (a social group with two members) and a *triad* (a group with three members) because the presence of an



The Granger Collection, New York



Bill Reitzel/Plush Studios/Blend Images/Getty Images

**FIGURE 1.5** According to the sociologist Georg Simmel, society is a web of patterned interactions among people. If we focus on the behavior of individuals only, we miss the underlying forms that make up the “geometry of social life.”

additional person often changes the dynamics of communication and the overall interaction process. Simmel also developed *formal sociology*, an approach that focuses attention on the universal social forms that underlie social interaction. He referred to these forms as the “geometry of social life.”

Like the other social thinkers of his day, Simmel analyzed the impact of industrialization and urbanization on people’s lives. He concluded that class conflict was becoming more pronounced in modern industrial societies. He also linked the increase in individualism, as opposed to concern for the group, to the fact that people now had many cross-cutting “social spheres”—membership in a number of organizations and voluntary associations—rather than the singular community ties of the past.

Simmel’s contributions to sociology are significant. He wrote more than thirty books and numerous essays on diverse topics, leading some critics to state that his work is fragmentary and piecemeal. However, his thinking has influenced a wide array of sociologists, including the members of the “Chicago School” in the United States.

## The Beginnings of Sociology in the United States

From Western Europe, sociology spread in the 1890s to the United States, where it thrived as a result of the intellectual climate and the rapid rate of social change. The first departments of sociology in the United States were located at the University of Chicago and at Atlanta University, then an African American school.

**The Chicago School** The first department of sociology in the United States was established at the University of Chicago, where the faculty was instrumental in starting the American Sociological Society (now known as the American Sociological Association). Robert E. Park (1864–1944), a member of the Chicago faculty, asserted that urbanization has a disintegrating influence on social life by producing an increase in the crime rate and in racial and class antagonisms that contribute to the segregation and isolation of neighborhoods (Ross, 1991). George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), another member of the faculty at Chicago, founded the symbolic interaction perspective, which is discussed later in this chapter.

**Jane Addams** Jane Addams (1860–1935) is one of the best-known early women sociologists in the United States because she founded Hull House, one of the most famous settlement houses, in an impoverished area of Chicago. Throughout her career, she was actively engaged in sociological endeavors: She lectured at numerous colleges, was a charter member of the American Sociological Society, and published a number of articles and books. Addams was one of the authors of *Hull-House*



AP Images

*Maps and Papers*, a groundbreaking book that used a methodological technique employed by sociologists for the next forty years. She was also awarded a Nobel Prize for her assistance to the underprivileged. In recent years, Addams has received greater recognition from contemporary sociologists because of her role as an early theorist of social change who influenced later feminist theorists and activists.

## W. E. B. Du Bois and Atlanta University

The second department of sociology in the United States was founded by W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) at Atlanta University. He created a laboratory of sociology, instituted a program of systematic research, founded and conducted regular sociological conferences on research, founded two journals, and established a record of valuable publications. His classic work, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1967/1899), was based on his research into Philadelphia’s African American community and stressed the strengths and weaknesses of a community wrestling with overwhelming social problems. Du Bois was one of the first scholars to note that a dual heritage creates conflict for people of color. He called this duality *double-consciousness*—the identity conflict of being both a black and an American. Du Bois pointed out that although people in this country espouse such values as democracy, freedom, and equality, they also accept racism and group discrimination. African Americans are the victims of these conflicting values and the actions that result from them. The influence of Du Bois continues to grow in contemporary studies of inequality, social justice,



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and the need for change in race/ethnic and class relations in the United States and worldwide.



## Contemporary Theoretical Perspectives

Given the many and varied ideas and trends that influenced the development of sociology, how do contemporary sociologists view society? Some see it as basically a stable and ongoing entity; others view it in terms of many groups competing for scarce resources; still others describe it based on the everyday, routine interactions among individuals. Each of these views represents a method of examining the same phenomena. Each is based on general ideas about how social life is organized and represents an effort to link specific observations in a meaningful way. Each uses a **theory**—a set of logically interrelated statements that attempts to describe, explain, and (occasionally) predict social events. Each theory helps interpret reality in a distinct way by providing a framework in which observations may be logically ordered. Sociologists refer to this theoretical framework as a **perspective**—an overall approach to or viewpoint on some subject. Three major theoretical perspectives have been predominant in U.S. sociology: the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives. Other perspectives, such as postmodernism and globalization, have emerged and gained acceptance among social thinkers. Before turning to the specifics of these perspectives, we should note that some theorists and theories do not fit neatly into any of these perspectives. Although the categories may be viewed as oversimplified by some people, most of us organize our thinking into categories and find it easier for us to compare and contrast ideas if we have a basic outline of key characteristics associated with each approach (see the Concept Quick Review at the end of this section).

### Functionalist Perspectives

Also known as *functionalism* and *structural functionalism*, **functionalist perspectives** are based on the assumption that society is a stable, orderly system. This stable system is characterized by *societal consensus*, whereby the majority of members share a common set of values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations. According to this perspective, a society is composed of interrelated parts, each of which serves a function and (ideally) contributes to the overall stability of the society. Societies develop social structures, or institutions that persist because they play a part in helping society survive. These institutions

include the family, education, government, religion, and the economy. If anything adverse happens to one of these institutions or parts, all other parts are affected, and the system no longer functions properly.

### Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton

Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), perhaps the most influential contemporary advocate of the functionalist perspective, stressed that all societies must meet social needs in order to survive. Parsons (1955) suggested, for example, that a division of labor (distinct, specialized functions) between husband and wife is essential for family stability and social order. The husband/father performs the *instrumental tasks*, which involve leadership and decision-making responsibilities in the home and employment outside the home to support the family. The wife/mother is responsible for the *expressive tasks*, including housework, caring for the children, and providing emotional support for the entire family. Parsons believed that other institutions, including school, church, and government, must function to assist the family and that all institutions must work together to preserve the system over time (Parsons, 1955).



Pictorial Parade/Archive Photos/Getty Images

Functionalism was refined further by Robert K. Merton (1910–2003), who distinguished between manifest and latent functions of social institutions. **Manifest functions** are intended and/or overtly recognized by the participants in a social unit. In contrast, **latent functions** are unintended functions that are hidden and remain unacknowledged by participants (• Figure 1.6). For example, a manifest function of education is the transmission of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next; a latent function is the establishment of social relations and networks. Merton noted that all features of a social system may not be functional at all times; *dysfunctions* are the undesirable consequences of any element of a society. A dysfunction of education in the United States is the perpetuation of gender, racial, and class inequalities.

#### theory

a set of logically interrelated statements that attempts to describe, explain, and (occasionally) predict social events.

#### functionalist perspectives

the sociological approach that views society as a stable, orderly system.

#### manifest functions

functions that are intended and/or overtly recognized by the participants in a social unit.

#### latent functions

unintended functions that are hidden and remain unacknowledged by participants.



St Petersburg Times/ZUMAPRESS/Newscom

**FIGURE 1.6** Shopping malls are a reflection of a consumer society. A manifest function of a shopping mall is to sell goods and services to shoppers; however, a latent function may be to provide a communal area in which people can visit friends and enjoy an event.

Such dysfunctions may threaten the capacity of a society to adapt and survive.

### Applying a Functional Perspective to Shopping and Consumption

How might functionalists analyze shopping and consumption? When we examine the part-to-whole relationships of contemporary society in high-income nations, it immediately becomes apparent that each social institution depends on the others for its well-being. For example, a booming economy benefits other social institutions, including the family (members are gainfully employed), religion (churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples receive larger contributions), and education (school taxes are higher when property values are higher). A strong economy also makes it possible for more people to purchase more goods and services. By contrast, a weak economy has a negative influence on people's opportunities and spending patterns. For example, if people have "extra" money to spend and can afford leisure time away from work, they are more likely to dine out, take trips, and purchase things they might otherwise forgo. However, in difficult economic times, people are more likely to curtail family outings and some purchases.

Clearly, a manifest function of shopping and consumption is purchasing necessary items such as food, clothing,

household items, and sometimes transportation. But what are the latent functions of shopping? Consider, shopping malls, for example: Many young people go to the mall to "hang out," visit with friends, and eat lunch at the food court. People of all ages go shopping for pleasure, relaxation, and perhaps to enhance their feelings of self-worth. ("If I buy this product, I'll look younger/beautiful/handsome/sexy, etc.!") However, shopping and consuming may also produce problems or dysfunctions. Some people are "shopaholics" or "credit card junkies" who cannot stop spending money; others are kleptomaniacs, who steal products rather than pay for them.

The functionalist perspective is useful in analyzing consumerism because of the way in which it examines the relationship between part-to-whole relationships. How the economy is doing affects individuals' consumption patterns, and when the economy is not doing well, political leaders often encourage us to spend more to help the national economy and keep other people employed.

### Conflict Perspectives

According to *conflict perspectives*, groups in society are engaged in a continuous power struggle for control of scarce resources. Conflict may take the form of politics, litigation, negotiations, or family discussions about financial





**FIGURE 1.7** This multimillion-dollar penthouse is an example of conspicuous consumption. What examples of conspicuous consumption do you see in your community?

matters. Simmel, Marx, and Weber contributed significantly to this perspective by focusing on the inevitability of clashes between social groups. Today, advocates of the conflict perspective view social life as a continuous power struggle among competing social groups.

**Max Weber and C. Wright Mills** As previously discussed, Karl Marx focused on the exploitation and oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Max Weber recognized the importance of economic conditions in producing inequality and conflict in society, but he added *power* and *prestige* as other sources of inequality. Weber (1968/1922) defined *power* as the ability of a person within a social relationship to carry out his or her own will despite resistance from others, and *prestige* as a positive or negative social estimation of honor (Weber, 1968/1922).

C. Wright Mills (1916–1962), a key figure in the development of contemporary conflict theory, encouraged sociologists to get involved in social reform. Mills encouraged everyone to look beneath everyday events in order to observe the major resource and power inequalities that exist in society (• Figure 1.7). He believed that the most important decisions in the United States are made largely behind the scenes by the *power elite*—a small clique of top corporate, political, and military officials. Mills’s power elite theory is discussed in Chapter 14 (“Politics and Government in Global Perspective”).

The conflict perspective is not one unified theory but one with several branches. One branch is the neo-Marxist approach, which views struggle between the classes as

inevitable and as a prime source of social change. A second branch focuses on racial–ethnic inequalities and the continued exploitation of members of some racial–ethnic groups. A third branch is the feminist perspective, which focuses on gender issues.

### The Feminist Approach

A feminist theoretical approach (or “feminism”) directs attention to women’s experiences and the importance of gender as an element of social structure. This approach is based on a belief in the equality of women and men and the idea that all people should be equally valued and have equal rights. According to feminist theorists, we live in a *patriarchy*, a system in which men dominate women and in which

things that are considered to be “male” or “masculine” are more highly valued than those considered to be “female” or “feminine.” The feminist perspective assumes that gender is socially created and that change is essential in order for people to achieve their human potential without limits based on gender. Some feminists argue that women’s subordination can end only after the patriarchal system becomes obsolete. However, feminism is not one single, unified approach; there are several feminist perspectives, which are discussed in Chapter 11 (“Sex, Gender, and Sexuality”).

### Applying Conflict Perspectives to Shopping and Consumption

How might advocates of a conflict approach analyze the process of shopping and consumption? A contemporary conflict analysis of consumption might look at how inequalities based on racism, sexism, and income differentials affect people’s ability to acquire the things they need and want. It might also look at inequalities regarding the issuance of credit cards and access to “cathedrals of consumption” such as mega shopping malls and tourist resorts (see Ritzer, 1999: 197–214).

However, one of the earliest social theorists to discuss the relationship between social class and consumption patterns was the U.S. social scientist Thorstein Veblen

#### conflict perspectives

the sociological approach that views groups in society as engaged in a continuous power struggle for control of scarce resources.



# YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## Thinking Less About Things and More About People

We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant trip-lets of racism, militarism and economic exploitation are incapable of being conquered.

—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., April 1967  
(qtd. in Postman, 2011)

Almost fifty years ago, Dr. King encouraged people to find fulfillment in social relationships with other people rather than in new technologies or in making more money. Since King's era, the United States has had periods of economic boom and bust, accompanied by unparalleled consumerism. Many analysts believe that consumerism and constant pressures to “buy, buy, buy more!” have created financial havoc for many individuals and families. We are continually surrounded by advertisements, shopping malls, and online buying opportunities that set in front of us a veritable banquet of merchandise to buy. However, shopping that gets out of hand is a serious habit that may have lasting psychological and economic consequences. If we are aware of these problems, we may be able to help ourselves or others avoid hyperconsumerism.

Do you know the symptoms of compulsive overspending and debt dependency? Consider these questions:



Stan Rohrer/Alamy

These students are spending a day of service, helping to build a home. Many colleges and universities have similar service days to help their communities. What projects could you and your peers undertake?

- Do you or someone you know spend large amounts of time shopping or thinking about going shopping?
- Do you or someone you know rush to the store or to the computer for online shopping when feeling frustrated, depressed, or otherwise “out of sorts”?

(1857–1929). In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1967/1899), Veblen described early wealthy U.S. industrialists as engaging in *conspicuous consumption*—the continuous public display of one's wealth and status through purchases such as expensive houses, clothing, motor vehicles, and other consumer goods. According to Veblen, the leisurely lifestyle of the upper classes typically does not provide them with adequate opportunities to show off their wealth and status. In order to attract public admiration, the wealthy often engage in consumption and leisure activities that are both highly visible and highly wasteful. Examples of conspicuous consumption range from Cornelius Vanderbilt's 8 lavish mansions and 10 major summer estates in the Gilded Age to a contemporary \$85 million mansion formerly owned by the Spelling family in Los Angeles, which has 56,500 square feet, 14 bedrooms, 27 bathrooms, and a two-lane bowling alley, among many other luxurious amenities. By contrast, however, some of today's wealthiest people engage in *inconspicuous consumption*, perhaps to maintain a low public profile or out of fear for their own safety or that of other family members.

Conspicuous consumption has become more widely acceptable at all income levels, and many families live on credit in order to purchase the goods and services that they would like to have. According to conflict theorists, the

economic gains of the wealthiest people are often at the expense of those in the lower classes, who may have to struggle (sometimes unsuccessfully) to have adequate food, clothing, and shelter for themselves and their children. Chapter 8 (“Class and Stratification in the United States”) and Chapter 9 (“Global Stratification”) discuss contemporary conflict perspectives on class-based inequalities.



**Identify** key differences in contemporary symbolic interactionism and postmodernist perspectives on social life.

### Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives

The conflict and functionalist perspectives have been criticized for focusing primarily on macrolevel analysis. A *macrolevel analysis* examines whole societies, large-scale social structures, and social systems instead of looking at important social dynamics in individuals' lives. Our third perspective, symbolic interactionism, fills this void by examining people's day-to-day interactions and their behavior in groups. Thus, symbolic interactionist approaches are based on a *microlevel analysis*, which focuses on small groups rather than large-scale social structures.

- Do you or someone you know routinely argue with parents, friends, or partners about spending too much money or overcharging on credit cards?
- Do you or someone you know hide purchases or make dishonest statements—such as “It was a gift from a friend”—to explain where new merchandise came from?

According to economist Juliet Schor (1999), who has extensively studied the problems associated with excessive spending and credit card debt, each of us can empower ourselves and help others as well if we follow simple steps in our consumer behavior. Among these steps are *controlling desire* by gaining knowledge of the process of consumption and its effect on people, *helping to make exclusivity uncool* by demystifying the belief that people are “better” simply because they own excessively expensive items, and *discouraging competitive consumption* by encouraging our friends and acquaintances to spend less on presents and other purchases. Finally, Schor suggests that we should *become educated consumers* and *avoid use of shopping as a form of therapy*. By following Schor’s simple steps and encouraging our friends and relatives to do likewise, we may be able to free ourselves from the demands of a hyperconsumer society that continually bombards us with messages indicating that we should spend more and go deeper in debt on our credit cards.

How might we think more about people? Some analysts suggest that we should make a list of things that are more important to us than money and material possessions. These might include our *relationships* and *experiences* with family, friends, and others whom we encounter in daily life. Are we so engrossed in our own life that we fail to take others into account? Around school, are we so busy texting or talking on our cell phone that we fail to speak to others? During holidays and special occasions, do we make time for friends and loved ones even if we think we have “better” things to do?

Other suggestions for thinking about others might include *looking for ways, small and large, to help others*. Small ways to help others might be opening a door for someone whose hands are full, letting someone go before us in a line or while driving in traffic, or any one of a million small kindnesses that might brighten someone else’s day as well as our own. Large ways of helping others would include joining voluntary organizations that assist people in the community, including older individuals, persons with health problems, children who need a tutor or mentor, or many others you might learn of from school organizations, social service agencies, or churches in your area. Are you up to the challenge? Many who have tried thinking less about things and more about people highly recommend this as a life-affirming endeavor for all involved.

Source: Schor, 1999.

We can trace the origins of this perspective to the Chicago School, especially George Herbert Mead and the sociologist Herbert Blumer (1900–1986), who is credited with coining the term *symbolic interactionism*. According to ***symbolic interactionist perspectives***, society is the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups. Theorists using this perspective focus on the process of *interaction*—defined as immediate reciprocally oriented communication between two or more people—and the part that symbols play in communication. A *symbol* is anything that meaningfully represents something else. Examples include signs, gestures, written language, and shared values. Symbolic interaction occurs when people communicate through the use of symbols—for example, a ring to indicate a couple’s engagement. But symbolic communication occurs in a variety of forms, including facial gestures, posture, tone of voice, and other symbolic gestures (such as a handshake or a clenched fist).

Symbols are instrumental in helping people derive meanings from social interactions (• Figure 1.8). In social encounters each person’s interpretation or definition of a given situation becomes a *subjective reality* from that person’s viewpoint. We often assume that what we consider to be “reality” is shared by others; however,

this assumption is often incorrect. Subjective reality is acquired and shared through agreed-upon symbols, especially language. If a person shouts “Fire!” in a crowded movie theater, for example, that language produces the same response (attempting to escape) in all of those who hear and understand it. When people in a group do not share the same meaning for a given symbol, however, confusion results: People who do not know the meaning of the word *fire* will not know what the commotion is about. How people *interpret* the messages they receive and the situations they encounter becomes their subjective reality and may strongly influence their behavior.

#### macrolevel analysis

an approach that examines whole societies, large-scale social structures, and social systems instead of looking at important social dynamics in individuals’ lives.

#### microlevel analysis

sociological theory and research that focus on small groups rather than on large-scale social structures.

#### symbolic interactionist perspectives

the sociological approach that views society as the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups.



## Applying Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives to Shopping and Consumption

Sociologists applying a symbolic interactionist framework to the study of shopping and consumption would primarily focus on a microlevel analysis of people's face-to-face interactions and the roles that people play in society. In our efforts to interact with others, we define any situation according to our own subjective reality. This theoretical viewpoint applies to shopping and consumption just as it does to other types of conduct. For example, when a customer goes into a store to make a purchase and offers a credit card to the cashier, what meanings are embedded in the interaction process that takes place between the two of them? The roles that the two people play are based on their histories of interaction in previous situations. They bring to

the present encounter symbolically charged ideas, based on previous experiences. Each person also has a certain level of emotional energy available for each interaction. When we are feeling positive, we have a high level of emotional energy, and the opposite is also true. Every time we engage in a new interaction, the situation has to be negotiated all over again, and the outcome cannot be known beforehand.

In the case of a shopper-cashier interaction, how successful will the interaction be for each of them? The answer to this question depends on a kind of social marketplace in which such interactions can either raise or lower one's emotional energy. If the customer's credit card is rejected, he or she may come away with lower emotional energy. If the customer is angry at the cashier, he or she may attempt to "save face" by reacting in a haughty manner regarding the rejection of the card. ("What's wrong with you? Can't you do anything right? I'll never shop here again!") If this type of encounter occurs, the cashier may also come out of the interaction with a lower level of emotional energy, which may affect the cashier's interactions with subsequent customers. Likewise, the next time the customer uses a credit card, he or she may say something

Joe Robbins/Getty Images



**FIGURE 1.8** Sporting events are a prime location for seeing how college students use symbols to convey shared meanings. The colors of clothing and the display of the school logo emphasize these students' pride in their school.

like "I hope this card isn't over its limit; sometimes I lose track," even if the person knows that the card's credit limit has not been exceeded. This is only one of many ways in which the rich tradition of symbolic interactionism might be used to examine shopping and consumption. Other areas of interest might include the social nature of the shopping experience, social interaction patterns in families regarding credit card debts, and why we might spend money to impress others.

## Postmodern Perspectives

According to *postmodern perspectives*, existing theories have been unsuccessful in explaining social life in contemporary societies that are characterized by postindustrialization, consumerism, and global communications. Postmodern social theorists reject the theoretical perspectives we have previously discussed,

as well as how those theories were created (Ritzer, 2011).

Postmodern theories are based on the assumption that large-scale and rapid social change, globalization, and technology are central features of the postmodern era. Moreover, these conditions tend to have a harmful effect on people because they often result in ambiguity and chaos. One evident change is a significant decline in the influence of social institutions such as the family, religion, and education on people's lives. Those who live in postmodern societies typically pursue individual freedom and do not want the structural constraints that are imposed by social institutions. As social inequality and class differences increase, people are exposed to higher levels of stress that produce depression, fear, and ambivalence. Problems such as these are found in nations throughout the world.

Postmodern (or "postindustrial") societies are characterized by an *information explosion* and an economy in which large numbers of people either provide or apply information, or are employed in professional occupations (such as attorneys and physicians) or service jobs (such as



fast-food servers and health care workers). There is a corresponding *rise of a consumer society* and the emergence of a *global village* in which people around the world instantly communicate with one another.

Jean Baudrillard, a well-known French social theorist, has extensively explored how the shift from production of goods to consumption of information, services, and products has created a new form of social control. According to Baudrillard's approach, capitalists strive to control people's shopping habits, much like the output of factory workers in industrial economies, to enhance their profits and to keep everyday people from rebelling against social inequality (1998/1970). How does this work? When consumers are encouraged to purchase more than they need or can afford, they often sink deeper in debt and must keep working to meet their monthly payments. Consumption comes to be based on factors such as our "wants" and our need to distinguish ourselves from others. We will return to Baudrillard's general ideas on postmodern societies in Chapter 3 ("Culture").

Postmodern theory opens up broad new avenues of inquiry by challenging existing perspectives and questioning current belief systems. However, postmodern theory has also been criticized for raising more questions than it answers.

### Applying Postmodern Perspectives to Shopping and Consumption

According to some social theorists, the postmodern society is a consumer society. The focus of the capitalist economy has shifted from production to consumption: The emphasis is on getting people to consume more and to own a greater variety of things. As previously discussed, credit cards may encourage people to spend more money than they should, and often more than they can afford (Ritzer, 1998). Television shopping networks, online shopping, and mobile advertising and shopping devices make it possible for people to shop around the clock without having to leave home or encounter "real" people. As Ritzer (1998: 121) explains, "So many of our interactions in these settings . . . are simulated, and we become so accustomed to them, that in the end all we have are simulated interactions; there are no more 'real' interactions. The entire distinction between the simulated and the real is lost; simulated interaction *is* the reality" (see also Baudrillard, 1983).

For postmodernists, social life is not an objective reality waiting for us to discover how it works. Rather, what we experience as social life is actually nothing more or less than how we think about it, and there are many diverse ways of doing that. According to a postmodernist perspective, the Enlightenment goal of intentionally creating a better world out of some knowable truth is an illusion. Although some might choose to dismiss postmodern approaches, they do give us new and important questions to think about regarding the nature of social life.

The Concept Quick Review reviews all four of the major sociological perspectives. Throughout this book we will be using these perspectives as lenses through which to view our social world.

## CONCEPT QUICK REVIEW

### The Major Theoretical Perspectives

Perspective	Analysis Level	View of Society
<b>Functionalist</b>	Macrolevel	Society is composed of inter-related parts that work together to maintain stability within society. This stability is threatened by dysfunctional acts and institutions.
<b>Conflict</b>	Macrolevel	Society is characterized by social inequality; social life is a struggle for scarce resources. Social arrangements benefit some groups at the expense of others.
<b>Symbolic Interactionist</b>	Microlevel	Society is the sum of the interactions of people and groups. Behavior is learned in interaction with other people; how people define a situation becomes the foundation for how they behave.
<b>Postmodernist</b>	Macrolevel/ Microlevel	Societies characterized by postindustrialization, consumerism, and global communications bring into question existing assumptions about social life and the nature of reality.

### Looking Ahead: Are Theory and/or Practice in Your Future?

One of the themes of *Sociology in Our Times* is that we live in a world that is constantly changing. Some people might argue that sociological theory has not changed sufficiently to adequately describe these social changes. Others believe that newer perspectives, such as postmodernism and globalization, adequately address the changes and continuities we are seeing today. Now it is time for you to consider how useful sociology and its theories might be to you not only in this course but in the future.

As previously discussed, the sociological imagination will help you gain a better understanding of yourself, other people, and the larger social world. We have discussed consumerism as an example of sociological inquiry in this chapter because it is a reflection of both social continuity and change in our nation and world. Consumerism is underpinned by power relationships, and studying it reveals how economic structures

#### postmodern perspectives

the sociological approach that attempts to explain social life in contemporary societies that are characterized by postindustrialization, consumerism, and global communications.

such as capitalism have an inescapable influence on all aspects of our lives. Today, consumerism is a rapidly growing area of inquiry in both academic and applied sociology. Jobs in applied sociology include project managers, urban development specialists, human rights officers, case managers, health planners, research coordinators, and a myriad of other careers in which sociological thinking and research can help people gain a better understanding of their work, clients, and pressing social issues facing their organizations.

Studying consumerism reveals something very important about sociology: Theory for its own sake is useless. We need to explore ways that theory can provoke thought and debate. What are the practical implications for theory in the social world? Practical sociological knowledge can be divided into five roles, one or more of which you might have in the future:

1. The *decision maker* who uses social science to shape public policy decisions.
2. The *educator* who teaches sociology to students.
3. The *commentator and social critic* who writes for the public through books, articles, and blogs and other social media.

4. The *researcher for clients* who works with public or private organizations (such as health care institutions or mental health groups).
5. The *consultant* who works for specific clients to answer questions or solve problems that are of interest to that client. (based on Zetterberg, 2002/1964)

People in roles 4 and 5 are classified as applied sociologists.

The “pure” sociology of the past has been joined by those who engage in applied sociology and public sociology. In the twenty-first century, *public sociology* aims to engage nonacademic audiences—such as people in grassroots environmental organizations or neighborhood activist groups—in informed public discussions through which both sides gain a better understanding of public issues (Burawoy, 2005).

If you are thinking about how to use sociology in your own life, it is exciting to realize that there are a variety of paths you might follow, using academic and nonacademic applications of what you are learning in this course. The future of the sociological perspective may be linked to your future as well!

## CHAPTER REVIEW Q & A

### LO1 What is sociology, and how can it contribute to our understanding of social life?

Sociology is the systematic study of human society and social interaction. We study sociology to understand how human behavior is shaped by group life and, in turn, how group life is affected by individuals. Our culture tends to emphasize individualism, and sociology pushes us to consider more-complex connections between our personal lives and the larger world.

### LO2 What is meant by the sociological imagination, and how can it be used?

The sociological imagination helps us understand how seemingly personal troubles, such as debt or unemployment, are actually related to larger social forces. It is the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society.

### LO3 How can we develop a global sociological imagination?

We must reach beyond past studies that have focused primarily on the United States to develop a more comprehensive global approach for the future. It is important to have a global sociological imagination because the future of this nation is deeply intertwined with the future of all nations of the world on economic, political, and humanitarian levels.

### LO4 What was the historical context in which sociological thinking developed?

The origins of sociological thinking as we know it today can be traced to the beginnings of industrialization and urbanization, trends that increased rapidly in the late eighteenth century and attracted the attention of social thinkers.

### LO5 Why were many early social thinkers concerned with social order and stability?

Early social thinkers—such as Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer, and Emile Durkheim—were interested in analyzing social order and stability because they were concerned about the future of the nations in which they lived. Order and stability seemed functional for everyone’s well-being in a rapidly changing world, and as such, many of these early sociologists’ ideas had a dramatic influence on consensus and order perspectives in contemporary sociology. Auguste Comte coined the term *sociology* to describe a new science that would engage in the study of society. Comte’s works were made more accessible for a wide variety of scholars through the efforts of the British sociologist Harriet Martineau. Herbert Spencer’s major contribution to sociology was an evolutionary perspective on social order and social change. Durkheim argued that societies are built on social facts, that rapid social change produces strains in society, and that the loss of shared values and purpose can lead to a condition of anomie.

## **LO6** Why were many later social thinkers concerned with social change?

In sharp contrast to Durkheim's focus on the stability of society, German economist and philosopher Karl Marx stressed that history is a continuous clash between conflicting ideas and forces. He believed that conflict—especially class conflict—is necessary in order to produce social change and a better society. Although he disagreed with Marx's idea that economics is *the* central force in social change, German social scientist Max Weber acknowledged that economic interests are important in shaping human action.

## **LO7** How did industrialization and urbanization influence theorists such as Weber and Simmel?

Weber was concerned about the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the influences these changes had on human behavior. In particular, Weber was concerned that large-scale organizations were becoming increasingly oriented toward routine administration and a specialized division of labor, which he believed were destructive to human vitality and freedom. Whereas other sociologists primarily focused on society as a whole,

Simmel explored small social groups and social life in urban areas, arguing that society is best seen as a web of patterned interactions among people.

## **LO8** What are key differences in contemporary functionalist and conflict perspectives on social life?

Functionalist perspectives assume that society is a stable, orderly system characterized by societal consensus. Conflict perspectives argue that society is a continuous power struggle among competing groups, often based on class, race, ethnicity, or gender.

## **LO9** What are key differences in contemporary symbolic interactionism and postmodernist perspectives on social life?

Interactionist perspectives focus on how people make sense of their everyday social interactions, which are made possible by the use of mutually understood symbols. From an alternative perspective, postmodern theorists believe that entirely new ways of examining social life are needed and that it is time to move beyond functionalist, conflict, and interactionist approaches.

## **KEY TERMS**

anomie 13

conflict perspectives 18

functionalist perspectives 17

high-income countries 8

industrialization 10

latent functions 17

low-income countries 8

macrolevel analysis 20

manifest functions 17

microlevel analysis 20

middle-income countries 8

positivism 12

postmodern perspectives 22

social Darwinism 12

social facts 13

society 6

sociological imagination 7

sociology 6

symbolic interactionist perspectives 21

theory 17

urbanization 10

## **QUESTIONS for CRITICAL THINKING**

**1** What does C. Wright Mills mean when he says the sociological imagination helps us “to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society”? (Mills, 1959b: 6). How might this idea be applied to today's consumer society?

**2** As a sociologist, how would you remain objective yet see the world as others see it? Would you make subjective decisions when trying to understand the perspectives of others?

**3** Early social thinkers were concerned about stability in times of rapid change. In our more-global world, is stability still a primary goal? Or is constant conflict important for the well-being of all humans? Use the conflict and functionalist perspectives to bolster your analysis.

**4** Some social analysts believe that college students relate better to commercials, advertising culture, and social media than they do to history, literature, or probably anything else. How would you use the various sociological perspectives to explore the validity of this assertion in regard to students on your college campus?