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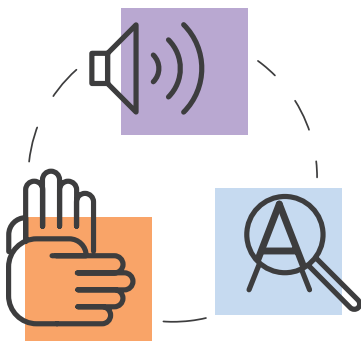
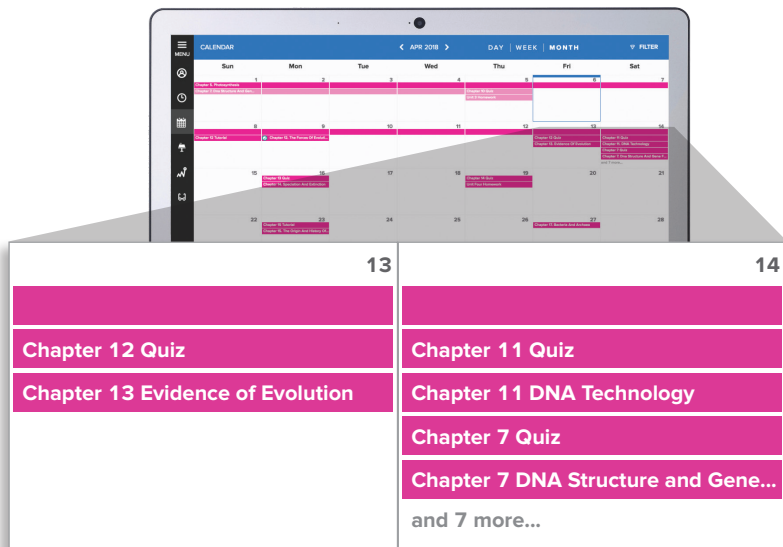
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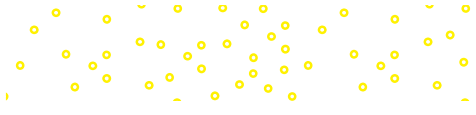
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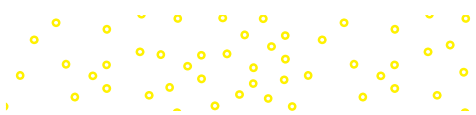


EXPERIENCE

SOCIOLOGY

FOURTH EDITION

DAVID CROTEAU
WILLIAM HOYNES





EXPERIENCE SOCIOLOGY, FOURTH EDITION

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DEDICATION

To all the dedicated instructors of introductory sociology courses and to the students who inspire them.
—DAVID CROTEAU

To Ben and Nick Hoynes, who have taught me more about sociology than they know.
—WILLIAM HOYNES

About the AUTHORS



©David R. Croteau

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In addition to various journal articles and book chapters on public broadcasting in the United States, Professor Hoynes is the author of *Public Television for Sale: Media, the Market, and the Public Sphere*, which was awarded the Goldsmith Book Prize from the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

CROTEAU and HOYNES are coauthors of *Media/Society*, which was published in a revised sixth edition in 2019; *The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest*, which won the Robert Picard Award for best new book in media economics by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication; and *By Invitation Only: How the Media Limit Political Debate*. They are also coeditors, with Charlotte Ryan, of *Rhyming Hope and History: Activists, Academics, and Social Movement Scholarship*.



Dear Colleagues

Now more than ever, we want to help a diverse range of students grasp the basic concepts of the discipline, see the relevance of those concepts to their everyday lives, and apply what they learn to the world around them. We want students to see the familiar in a new way and realize that sociology's tools can help them better understand their rapidly changing social world. In other words, we want students to see the world from a sociological perspective and to actively use their sociological imagination. We want them to experience sociology.

What's unique about *Experience Sociology*?

CULTURE. STRUCTURE. POWER. *Experience Sociology* engages students with a clear framework for understanding their world based on three familiar terms at the heart of sociology: culture, structure, and power. Through the lenses of these three concepts, students learn from their first class to see the world from a sociological perspective and to grasp the significance of sociology for their own lives. For every topic in the book—from the family to the economy to the environment—they learn to recognize the effects of the culture they have been taught, see the structures that constrain or empower them, and notice how power operates at every level of society.

How is theory covered?

Theory has a role in every chapter in *Experience Sociology*. We know how important it is for students not only to be able to apply concepts to their lives, but also to understand and be able to apply sociological theory. With its innovative organization around primary sociological concepts, *Experience Sociology* emphasizes the common ground that informs a basic sociological perspective. But every chapter also addresses the way differing theoretical perspectives illuminate various facets of these key sociological concepts, letting instructors and students go beyond conventional theoretical boundaries and the either-or framing of theoretical perspectives to see how each can contribute to our understanding of the social world.

What's the full Experience?

The fourth edition of *Experience Sociology* is much more than this text alone. Incorporating the work of many sociology instructors, it is instead a comprehensive instructional program that combines digital and print resources to promote student learning. Integrated with McGraw-Hill's Connect Sociology, including SmartBook's adaptive technology and learning resources, *Experience Sociology* helps you manage assignments and makes learning and studying more engaging and efficient for your students.

We wrote *Experience Sociology* because we want students to be able to experience their world differently through the insights of sociology. We hope these resources will help you in introducing your students to the excitement of sociology.

Sincerely,





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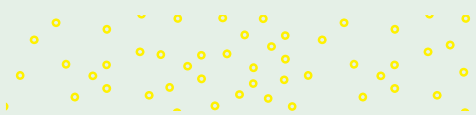
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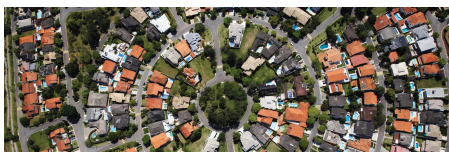
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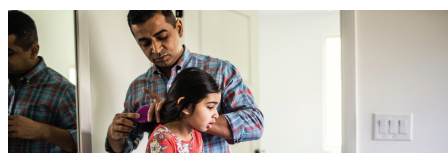
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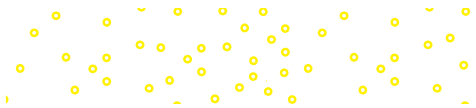
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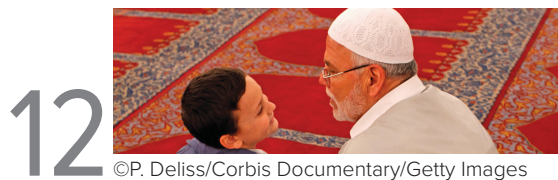
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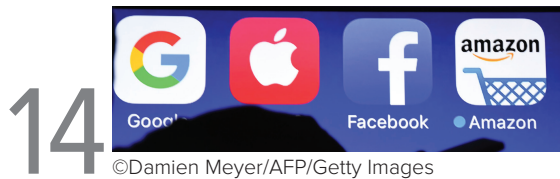
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Give your students a clearer picture of their world

WHY THE GLASSES?

We want students to see their familiar world in a clearer and deeper way. *Experience Sociology*, Fourth Edition, uses the lenses of culture, structure, and power to encourage students to move beyond an individual perspective while developing their own sociological imagination.



How were you socialized into your society's **culture**?

How do agents of socialization reproduce social **structure**?


How does **power** shape your daily life and your sense of self?


Using the lenses of **CULTURE**, **STRUCTURE**, and **POWER**, *Experience Sociology* shows students the significance of sociology for their own lives.


CULTURE, **STRUCTURE**, and **POWER** help students explore sociological theory in ways that go beyond conventional theoretical boundaries.


EXPERIENCE SOCIOLOGY includes a variety of boxed features and in-text learning aids to help students appreciate the range of sociology's insights and their relevance to today's fast-changing social world, and to apply sociology's concepts and theories to their own lives.


BOXED FEATURES

 **Sociology in Action** boxes highlight the contributions of sociological research to public policy and to the efforts of public interest organizations, social movements, and others to effect social change.

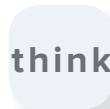
 **Sociology Works** boxes profile people who studied sociology in college and are now using sociology's insights in diverse work settings. These high-interest stories feature people working in fields such as health care, criminal justice, social work, labor unions, business, mass media, government, and the military.


 **Through a Sociological Lens** boxes demonstrate how sociology can provide distinctive insights into contemporary social issues. Students can see how sociological research reveals information that can both surprise and empower them in their everyday lives.


 **Fast-Forward** boxes illuminate the ever-evolving nature of our social world. These brief, engaging features—illustrated with photographs, advertisements, or other images—show students how change has been a constant feature of social life.

 **A Changing World** sections conclude each chapter with a look at the influence of changing social conditions on some aspect of the chapter topic. Examples include culture and globalization, increasing inequality in the United States, social structure and privacy, and convergence in gender and sexuality.

IN-TEXT LEARNING AIDS

 **Thinking About** notes help students connect chapter content to their own experience. These brief notes, found at the bottom of text pages, prompt students to consider how the three core concepts of **culture**, **structure**, and **power** apply to their own lives and views on issues, thus encouraging students to think sociologically.

 **Core Concepts Challenge** questions encourage students to apply their sociological imagination to what they are learning. Appearing with selected figures, tables, and photographs, these questions prompt students to apply **culture**, **structure**, and **power** in thinking about an issue as well as to think critically about the graphic, table, or image.

 **Spotlight** notes prompt students to consider social theories that are discussed within the text. These notes help students use the three concepts to apply theory to their own lives.

Help Your Students Succeed with *Connect*

McGraw-Hill Education Connect® is an integrated educational platform that includes assignable and assessable quizzes, exercises, and interactive activities, all associated with learning objectives for *Experience Sociology, Fourth Edition*. Videos, interactive assessments, links to news articles about current issues with accompanying questions (“NewsFlash”), and scenario-based activities engage students and add real-world perspective to the introductory sociology course. In addition, printable, exportable reports show how well each student or section is performing on each course segment.

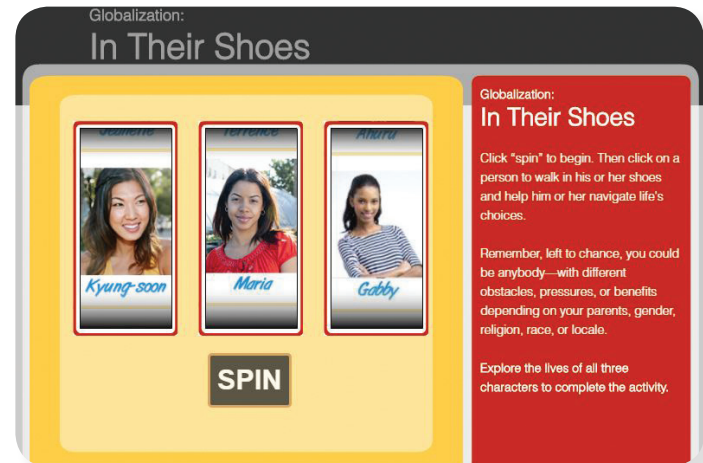
Here are some of the media-rich activities that will help your students succeed in the introductory sociology course:

In Their Shoes. In Their Shoes develops students’ sociological imagination by walking them through the situation, challenges, and crises in the character’s life. Covering topics such as “Deviance and Social Control,” “Racial and Ethnic Inequality,” and “Socialization and the Life Course,” these activities prompt students to explore and navigate life choices in another’s shoes.

Applying the Perspectives. In Applying Their Perspectives, students examine a problem—global inequality, gender stratification, or family and intimate relationships—from three sociological perspectives and apply their critical-thinking skills to align theories with the appropriate perspective.

Concept Clips. Concept Clips are animations designed to engage students and walk them through some of the more complex concepts in the course. Each clip concludes with assessment questions to test student understanding. Topics include research variables, functions of religion, and power and authority.

Put students first with Connect’s intuitive mobile interface, which gives students and instructors flexible, convenient, anytime-anywhere access to all components of the Connect platform. It provides seamless integration of learning tools and places the most important priorities up front in a new “to-do” list with a calendar view across all Connect courses. Enjoy on-the-go access with the new mobile interface designed for optimal use of tablet functionality.



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Applying the Perspectives: What is Sociology?

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Concept Clip: Sociology as a Science

Watch the Concept Clip and then respond to the following questions.



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Available within Connect, **SmartBook** makes study time as productive and efficient as possible by identifying and closing knowledge gaps. SmartBook is powered by the proven LearnSmart® engine, which identifies what an individual student knows and doesn't know based on the student's confidence level, responses to questions, and other factors. It then provides focused help through targeted learning resources (including videos, animations, and other interactive activities).

SmartBook builds an optimal, personalized learning path for each student, so students spend less time on concepts they already understand and more time on those they don't. As a student engages with SmartBook, the reading experience continuously adapts by highlighting the most impactful content a student needs to learn at that moment in time. This ensures that every minute spent with SmartBook is returned to the student as the most value-added minute possible. The result? More confidence, better grades, and greater success.

New to this edition, SmartBook is now optimized for phones and tablets and accessible for students with disabilities using interactive features. Just like our new ebook and ReadAnywhere app, SmartBook is available both online and offline.

Prepare Students for Higher-Level Thinking

Aimed at the higher level of Bloom's taxonomy, **Power of Process for Sociology** helps students improve critical thinking skills and allows instructors to assess these skills efficiently and effectively in an online environment. Available through Connect, preloaded readings are available for instructors to assign. Using a scaffolded framework that includes synthesizing and analyzing, Power of Process moves students toward higher-level thinking.

Power of Process for Sociology



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Access Performance Data Just in Time



Connect Insight® is Connect's one-of-a-kind visual analytics dashboard, now available for both instructors and students, that provides at-a-glance information regarding student performance, which is immediately actionable. By presenting assignment, assessment, and topical performance results, together with a time metric that is easily visible for aggregate or individual results, Connect Insight gives the user the ability to take a just-in-time approach to teaching and learning, which was never before available. Connect Insight presents data that empowers students and helps instructors improve class performance in a way that is efficient and effective.

A Revision Informed by Student Data

Ever since students began using it, Connect Sociology's SmartBook for *Experience Sociology*, has been collecting anonymous data on students' performance on specific learning objectives. This aggregated data, displayed in the form of **heat maps**, graphically identifies challenging "hot spots" in the text, helping guide the revision of both core content and assessment activities for the Fourth Edition. This heat-map-directed revision is reflected primarily in Chapters 5, 14, and 16.

Highlights of the Fourth Edition

The text has been refreshed throughout with references to recent scholarship, and figures, maps, and tables have been updated throughout with the most recent available data. Revisions in response to heat-map data are indicated by ✓.

CHAPTER 1

- New chapter-opening vignette on bilingual education
- Clearer explanation of the concept of sociological theory
- Revised discussion of postmodern society, with updates reflecting current events, such as the Trump presidency and the global economy
- Significantly updated Sociology in Action box, “Working to Reduce Homelessness”

CHAPTER 2

- New chapter-opening vignette on research into urban violence “hot spots”
- New data on voting rates in the 2016 election
- Revised discussion of qualitative research methods, utilizing new study on homeless young adults
- Revised discussion on explaining data, referencing new study on “tagging” ✓
- Up-to-date analysis of Pew Research Center’s 2017 American Trends Panel survey
- Revised discussions of focus groups and research utilizing existing sources, including new examples ✓
- Updated Sociology in Action box, “The U.S. Census Bureau,” addressing proposal to include citizenship question on 2020 questionnaire
- Updated Changing World feature, “Technology and Social Research,” discussing research into massively multiplayer online games

CHAPTER 3

- Updated discussion of the means through which values change over time ✓
- New Map 3.1, “The 2016 Election: Red and Blue or Purple?”
- New example of attempts to preserve culture by revitalizing dying languages
- Updated Fast Forward feature, incorporating a new graphic antismoking ad
- Updated coverage of the criticisms of multiculturalism ✓

CHAPTER 4

- Revised introduction to social structure, utilizing the aftermath of Hurricane Maria as an example ✓
- New example of parent-teacher conferences in discussion of conversation analysis

- Updated Through a Sociological Lens box on organizational structure and school violence
- Updated section “Globalization and the Structure of Work” to reflect current events ✓
- Updated Sociology in Action box featuring Ruth Milkman
- Updated discussion of mobile phones in Africa
- Revised Changing World section on loneliness and the changing structure of friendship ✓

CHAPTER 5

- New chapter-opening vignette on the power struggle between the movement for gun control and the National Rifle Association
- Expanded discussions of feminist approach to understanding power and intersectionality ✓
- Revised discussion of class in capitalist systems ✓
- Rewritten Fast Forward feature, “Social Change and Class Segregation” ✓
- New Sociology Works box, “Leveraging Power for Economic Justice”
- New Changing World feature, “Algorithms and the Power of Tech Companies” ✓

CHAPTER 6

- Updated chapter-opening vignette on Melanie Matchett Wood and the gender gap in mathematics
- Revised discussion of “media” as an agent of socialization ✓
- Updated discussion of adolescence and adulthood ✓
- New information in epigenetics section ✓

CHAPTER 7

- Discussion of the Thomas Theorem revised for clarity ✓
- Discussion of the partisan divide as an example of an in-group/out-group dynamic
- Revised section on social network analysis ✓
- Revised and updated discussion of networks and groups in the digital age
- Updated and revised “A Changing World” section on privacy and social media

CHAPTER 8

- Updated material on the impact of contact with the police on middle school students

- Significantly rewritten section on “Surveillance and Social Control in the Digital Age,” addressing current topics such as digital tracking on Facebook and through GPS, the use of “scraping” to link data about online and offline activities, the 2018 revelations regarding Cambridge Analytica’s use of Facebook data, government use of digital surveillance, and recent discussions regarding privacy concerns ✓
- New figure, “Personal Data Likely Collected and Stored about You (a partial list)”
- Updated data on crime rates, incarceration rates, and capital punishment in the United States
- New coverage of the popularity and impact of “deviant leisure” ✓

CHAPTER 9

- Updated statistics on social classes In the United States
- Updated data and new figure on the distribution of income and wealth in the United States
- Updated list of occupations with the largest projected job growth
- Revised Through a Sociological Lens box on growing inequality among African Americans
- Comprehensively revised and updated discussion of the relationship between class and education ✓
- Updated discussion of U.S. poverty rates, including new statistics ✓
- Revised and updated discussion of wages, labor laws, and labor union decline, including a new figure ✓

CHAPTER 10

- New chapter-opening vignette on the Trump presidency and race relations in the United States
- Updated data on racial and ethnic diversity in the U.S. population
- Updated data on the foreign-born population in the United States
- Revised discussion of unauthorized immigration ✓
- Revised and updated coverage of racial and ethnic inequality today ✓
- Expanded discussion of implicit bias
- Significantly revised section on multiracial and multi-ethnic identities

CHAPTER 11

- Updated data on gender stratification in leadership positions in the United States, college graduation rates by gender, and women in the workforce
- New coverage of #MeToo movement

- Updated coverage of human trafficking and globalization
- Updated coverage of same-sex relationships, including new map, “Sexual Orientation Laws around the World”

CHAPTER 12

- New chapter-opening vignette on a minister who left his religion
- Updated data on marriage and cohabitation rates, the average age of first marriage, and the U.S. divorce rate
- Revised discussion of unmarried and single parents ✓
- New figure, “U.S. Fertility Rate (Total Births Per Woman)”
- Updated data on the religious composition of the United States
- Updated discussion of secularism in the United States

CHAPTER 13

- Updated data on global literacy rates, educational attainment and median income, graduation rates, and college cost and student debt
- Revised discussion of the effects of cultural capital ✓
- Updated discussion of the increasing segregation of U.S. schools ✓
- Updated coverage of standardized testing, including new map, “Common Core in the United States”
- Updated discussions of charter schools, online learning, for-profit colleges, and cyberbullying
- New coverage of 2018 teacher strikes in various states
- Updated coverage of emotional labor in the U.S. workplace
- Updated discussions of outsourcing, the sharing economy, and precarious work

CHAPTER 14

- New chapter-opening vignette on the data Facebook gathers from its users
- Significant revisions for clarity throughout, including new organizational structure, clearer and more logical headings, and new figures and tables ✓
- New figures include “Daily Time Spent with Select Media by Generation,” “Racial and Ethnic Representation on Prime-Time Broadcast TV Networks by Season,” “Digital Divide: U.S. Adults Who Do Not Use the Internet, 2018,” and “Global Internet Usage, 2018” ✓
- New tables include “Types of Media and Their Usual Characteristics” and “Select Media-Related Companies by Revenue, 2017” ✓
- Updated discussion of college students’ credit card debt

- Expanded and updated coverage of product integration and stealth advertising ✓
- Significantly revised and updated Changing World section, “Targeting Consumers in the Digital Age” ✓

CHAPTER 15

- Clarifying revisions made to the sections on nomadic life and rural life
- New material on the “urban renaissance”
- Updated material in the sections on suburban and rural life ✓
- Updated material on environmental threats

CHAPTER 16

- New chapter-opening vignette on filling low-paid teaching jobs with foreign workers
- Clarified explanation of what sociologists mean when they use the terms *politics* and *power* ✓
- Updated coverage of the Democracy Index, including updated map and discussion of falling ratings worldwide
- Updated and clarified explanation of the “spiral of silence,” including discussion of its relation to the 2016 presidential election ✓

- New section, “Cultural Values and Political Ideologies” ✓
- Updated coverage of campaign contributions to the 2016 presidential election
- New coverage of 2017 tax cut, including new figure “Average Annual Federal Tax Savings by Income Group, 2017 Tax Cuts and Job Act”
- New material on the effects of cynicism and alienation on a democracy ✓
- Updated coverage of U.S. military spending and military engagements around the world
- New Through a Sociological Lens box on what motivated people to vote for Trump
- New “A Changing World” section on populism ✓

CHAPTER 17

- New data on world population structures and international migration
- Updated coverage of changing U.S. demographics, including the effects of immigration and an aging population
- New material on the documented decline in internet freedom

Teaching and Learning with *Experience Sociology*

TEACHING RESOURCES

Instructor's Manual. The Instructor's Manual includes detailed chapter outlines and chapter summaries, learning objectives, a chapter-by-chapter bulleted list of new content, key terms, essay questions, and critical-thinking questions.

PowerPoint Slides. The PowerPoint Slides include bulleted lecture points, figures, and maps. They can be used as is or modified to meet the instructor's individual needs. Now WCAG compliant.

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 Catherine Felton, Central Piedmont Community College
 Leticia Fernandez, University of Texas at El Paso
 Richard Fey, Arizona State University
 Lauralee Finley, Florida Atlantic University
 Kevin Fitzpatrick, University of Alabama at Birmingham
 Dona Fletcher, Sinclair Community College
 Martha Flores, El Paso Community College–Valle Verde
 Tammie Foltz, Des Moines Area Community College–Boone
 Murray Fortner, Tarrant County College Northeast
 Tony Foster, Lone Star College–Kingwood
 John Gannon, College of Southern Nevada–North Las Vegas
 Beverly Gartland, Youngstown State University

David Gay, University of Central Florida
 Marie L. Germain, City College–Miami
 Steve Glennon, Iowa Western Community College–Council Bluffs
 Sergio Gomez, Chaffey College
 Natasha Gouge, Cape Fear Community College
 Kyra Greene, San Diego State University
 Mike Greenhouse, Middlesex County College
 Sara Grineski, University of Texas at El Paso
 Elke Grogg, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana
 Heather Guevara, Portland Community College–Sylvania
 Jeffrey Hall, University of Alabama at Birmingham
 Bram Hamovitch, Lakeland Community College
 Carl Hand, Valdosta State University
 Sara Hanna, Oakland Community College–Highland Lakes
 Peggy Hargis, Georgia Southern University
 Terri Hardy, Indiana University East
 Kalynn Heald, Northwest Arkansas Community College
 Nina Heckler, University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa
 Garrison Henderson, Tarrant County College Southeast
 Kimberly Hennessee, Ball State University
 Marta T. Henriksen, Central New Mexico Community College
 Pablo Hernandez, Lansing Community College
 Teresa Hibbert, University of Texas at El Paso
 Carmon Weaver Hicks, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana
 Tonya Hilligoss, Sacramento City College
 Candace Hinson, Tallahassee Community College
 Carol Hodgson, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College
 Donna Holland, Indiana University–Purdue University
 Kathleen Holmes, Darton College
 Mark Horowitz, University of Texas at Brownsville
 Nils Hovik, Lehigh Carbon Community College
 Erica Hunter, State University of New York at Albany
 Ronald Huskin, Del Mar College
 Creed Hyatt, Lehigh Carbon Community College
 Peter Iadicola, Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne
 Denise Ingram, Mercer County Community College
 Michael Itagaki, Fullerton College

Jennifer Jackson, Cincinnati State Technical & Community College
 Ron Jacobs, State University of New York at Albany
 Timothy Jacobs, Naugatuck Valley Community College
 Jennifer Jacobson, Yavapai College
 Laura Jamison, Parkland College
 Randy Jarvis, South Texas College
 J. Craig Jenkins, Ohio State University–Columbus
 Mark Jepson, University of California–Los Angeles
 Dennis Johnson, Craven Community College
 Jim Jones, Mississippi State University
 Ali Kamali, Missouri Western State University
 Irwin Kantor, Middlesex County College
 Michael Kaune, Saint Francis College
 Henry Keith, Delaware Technical Community College
 Margaret Kelly, University of Minnesota–Minneapolis
 Paul Ketchum, University of Oklahoma–Norman
 Steve Keto, Kent State University
 William Kimberlin, Laini County Community College
 Brian Klocke, State University of New York at Plattsburgh
 James Knapp, Southeastern Oklahoma State University
 Michelle Knoles, Cowley County Community College
 Jamee Kristen, University of Nebraska–Lincoln
 Lorien Lake, University of Arizona
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 Nicole Loftus, Saddleback College
 Royal Loresco, South Texas College
 Joleen Loucks, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
 Michael Loukinen, Northern Michigan University
 Gregory Lukasik, Florida Atlantic University–Boca Raton

Bradford Lyman, Baltimore City Community College

Jean Lynch-Brandon, Lansing Community College

Joanna Maata, Pennsylvania State University

Anne MacLellan, Community College of Baltimore County—Catonsville

I. Ross Macmillan, University of Minnesota—Minneapolis

Sherry Mader, Western Technical College

M. Wilbrod Madzura, Normandale Community College

Cheryl Maes, University of Nevada—Reno

Lori Maida, Westchester Community College

Farshad Malek-Ahmadi, Naugatuck Valley Community College

Susan Mann, University of New Orleans

Nick Maroules, Illinois State University

Ronald Matson, Wichita State University

Deborah McCarthy, College of Charleston

Dorothy McCawley, University of Florida

Karen McCue, Central New Mexico Community College

Victor McCullum, Triton College

Marian McWhorter, Houston Community College—Central College

Ronald Meneses, University of Florida

Chadwick L. Menning, Ball State University

Melinda Messineo, Ball State University

Janet Michello, LaGuardia Community College

Harvest Moon, University of Texas at Arlington

Mel Moore, University of Northern Colorado

Marcillino Morales, East Los Angeles College

John Morra, Quinnipiac University

Edward Morris, University of Kentucky—Lexington

Kelly Mosel-Talavera, Texas State University—San Marcos

Brian Moss, Oakland Community College—Highland Lakes

Sepandar Mossadeghi, Palm Beach State College—Eissey Campus

Dan Muhwezi, Bultor Community College

Lynn Newhart, Rockford College

Bruce Nicometo, Northwest Arkansas Community College

Claire Nivens-Blower, Cape Cod Community College

Nelda Nix, Community College of Baltimore County—Essex

Cheryl North, Tarrant County College Northeast

Kwaku Obosu-Mensah, Lorain County Community College

Patricia O'Brien, Elgin Community College

Bob O'Neil, Louisiana State University—Baton Rouge

Jacob Oni, Cape Cod Community College

Takamitsu Ono, Anne Arundel Community College

Robert Orrange, Eastern Michigan University

Diane Owsley, Elizabethtown Community College

Bruce Pabian, Delaware Technical Community College—Stanton

Frank Page, University of Utah—Salt Lake City

Chris Papaleonardos, Ohio State University—Columbus

Elizabeth Pare, Oakland University

Caroline Parham, Craven Community College

Kathrin Parks, Loras College

Kevin Payne, Park University—Parkville

Douglas Peck, Stark State

Lisa Pellerin, Ball State University

Jane Penney, Eastfield College

Narayan Persaud, Florida A&M University

Nancy Pietroforte, Rockland Community College

Peggy Preble, Thomas Nelson Community College

Paul C. Price, Pasadena City College

William Price, North Country Community College

Ariane Prohaska, University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa

Adrian Rapp, Lone Star College—North Harris

Todd Rasner, Hudson Valley Community College

Roblyn Rawlins, College of New Rochelle

Kent Redding, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

Nancy Reeves, Gloucester County College

John Rice, University of North Carolina—Wilmington

Ray Rich, College of Southern Nevada—West Charles

Cecelia Rivers, Northwest Florida State College

Gregg Robinson, Grossmont College

Christine Rodriguez, East Los Angeles College

Fatima Rodriguez, Rutgers University

Robyn Rodriguez, Reedley College

Luis Rodriguez-Abad, University of Texas at Brownsville

Richard Rosell, Westchester Community College

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Andreas Schneider, Texas Tech University

Rachel Schneider, University of Akron

David Schjott, Northwest Florida State College

Sarah Bill Schott, North Central College—Naperville

Terri Schrantz, Tarrant County College

Ron Schultz, Gateway Technical College

Jeff Schultz, Central Community College—Grand Island

Megan Seely, Sierra College

Lystra Seenath, Palm Beach State College—Lake Worth

Barbara Seiter, Raritan Valley Community College

Patricia Seitz, Central New Mexico Community College

Charles Selengut, County College of Morris

Monissa Shackelford, Pensacola Junior College

Robert Shelly, Ohio University—Athens

Marie Sheneman, Marshalltown Community College

Anson Shupe, Indiana University—Purdue University Fort Wayne

Denise Shuster, Owens Community College

Mike Sickels, Winthrop University

Edward Silva, El Paso Community College—Valle Verde

Toni Sims, University of Southwestern Louisiana

Amy Slater, MCC—Blue River Community College

Steven Sloan, Gateway Technical College

Michael Smith, Lakeland Community College

Michelle Smith, Southwestern Illinois College

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Ryan Spohn, Kansas State University

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Dan Stalder, University of Wisconsin—Whitewater

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Rachael Stehle, Cuyahoga Community College Western—Parma

Lawrence Stern, Collin County Community College–Plano	Timothy Tuinstra, Kalamazoo Valley Community College	Gordon Whitman, Tidewater Community College–Norfolk
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Jill Stiemsma, Moraine Park Tech College	Steven Vassar, Minnesota State University–Mankato	Cleon Wiggins, Kansas City Kansas Community College
Beverly Stiles, Midwestern State University	Ray Von Robertson, Lamar University	Marion Willetts, Illinois State University
Randolph Ston, Oakland Community College–Auburn Hills	Vu-Duc Vuong, De Anza College	Gerald Williams, Camden County College
Michael Stupak, Milwaukee Area Technical College	Sally Vyain, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana	L. Sue Williams, Kansas State University
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Gary Titchener, Des Moines Area Community College	Shonda Whetstone, Blinn College	Erica Yeager, Anne Arundel Community College
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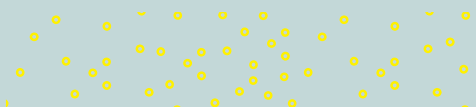
Culture

looking AHEAD

What is **culture**, and how can you use the sociological perspective to understand its impact on your life?

How can **culture** both promote consensus and create conflict?

Why is **cultural** diversity increasing today?





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When writer John Wray visited his cousin, an aid worker among the Amazonian Shuar community in a part of Ecuador accessible only by canoe or small plane, he was greeted as an honored guest. His hosts in the village of Pampansa invited him to the home of a local community leader, where they would share a bowl of *chicha*, an alcoholic beverage

traditionally offered as a friendly greeting to visitors (Wray 2010).

While Wray was honored by the warm welcome and knew that his hosts were offering him a traditional drink as a gesture of friendship, he reports that he would “have given almost anything to escape.” That’s because in Pampansa, women prepare *chicha* by chewing on fermented yucca root and spitting into a large barrel, where the beverage accumulates before being transferred into a ceramic bowl for drinking.

After Wray’s cousin Martin downed his bowlful of *chicha*, which their hosts described proudly as the best in the region, a newly refilled bowl was placed in front of Wray, who paused, wondering how he had ended up in this situation. After all, a year earlier he had visited Martin in a neighboring village and had managed to take only a sip of ceremonial *chicha*. This time, Wray found the *chicha*’s odor overpowering, likening the smell to “an old man’s false teeth.” Now, out of respect for his hosts, he was faced with guzzling the entire bowl.

In search of a way forward in this unfamiliar—and, for Wray, very unappetizing—situation, Wray recalled something that made the idea of drinking *chicha* more familiar and eased his sense of anxiety. He thought of all the times he had tasted someone else’s saliva: “Hadn’t I tasted spit countless times before? What was *chicha* drinking, after all, but French kissing once removed?” With the inspiration of this familiar activity in mind, Wray quietly gulped down his portion of *chicha*, paying respect to his host’s generosity.

What we drink and eat, and how we prepare our food, is a familiar—and often vivid—illustration of how culture works. When we are part of a culture, our way of life seems natural, and we take it as a given; we are like fish in water. However, a cultural practice taken for granted by insiders may appear to outside observers as interesting, odd, curious, disturbing, or even threatening.

This chapter explores the central role of culture in social life and its pervasive influence on who we are as human beings.

It considers some of the opportunities and challenges posed by our contemporary world, as people of many different cultures interact with increasing frequency and cultural diversity becomes a fact of daily life. As we gain a better understanding of the meaning of culture, we are able not only to analyze its impact on our own lives but also to prepare for a lifetime of interactions with people from cultures other than our own.

Defining Culture

Culture is one of sociology’s core concepts. Indeed, it is an essential part of the very definition of **society**—*a group of people who live together in a specific territory and share a culture*. Many people associate the word *culture* with museums and symphonies, a connection that is understandable because one definition of the term does involve the “cultivation” of the mind by studying the “best” a society has to offer. In the West, *culture* in this sense generally refers to such attributes as education and refinement in the arts and such artifacts as great works of literature and classical music. For sociologists and anthropologists, however, culture has a much broader, more inclusive meaning. **Culture** is the collection of values, beliefs, knowledge, norms, language, behaviors, and material objects shared by a people and socially transmitted from generation to generation. Sometimes culture is simply referred to as a way of life.

Culture must be learned; it is not biologically based. In fact, we can think of culture as all aspects of society that are transmitted socially rather than biologically. That you may be tall is a biological reality. That you use your height to advantage when you play basketball is a result of cultural influences. The process through which people learn about their culture is called *socialization*, a topic we explore in Chapter 6.

Culture operates at multiple levels, from everyday actions by individuals (micro level), to the norms that operate within an organization such as a school or business (meso level), to the beliefs and practices associated with very large groups of people, including entire societies (macro level). At each level, the elements of culture influence how people live.

At any level, culture can serve as a source of both consensus and conflict in society. Regardless of the size of a particular group, its culture serves as a common ground connecting group members to one another. As we see later in this chapter, however, cultural differences can also contribute to tension and cause clashes among groups within a society and between different societies.

The Elements of Culture

Cultures consist of both material and nonmaterial elements. **Material culture** refers to *the physical objects produced by people in a particular culture, including tools, clothing, toys, works of art, and housing*. **Nonmaterial culture** refers to *the ideas of a culture, including values and beliefs, accumulated knowledge about how to understand and navigate the world, and standards or “norms” about appropriate behavior*. Nonmaterial culture exists in the world of thoughts and ideas; by contrast, material culture is physically real—it can be observed or touched. Collectively, the ideas and practices of a culture make up an entire way of life, affecting how people eat, work, love, think, worship, dress, learn, play, and live.

Because material objects can have symbolic (nonmaterial) meaning, the material and nonmaterial aspects of culture are often interconnected. For example, at the heart of many religions are sacred texts, such as Judaism’s Torah, Christianity’s Bible, and Islam’s Qur’an (or Koran). These writings relate the central beliefs of each faith, thus comprising an essential part of the faith’s nonmaterial culture. At the same time, the books themselves are often considered sacred as physical objects, to be treated with great respect as a part of the material culture. The books (Bibles, Qur’ans) are physical objects (material culture), but they also have symbolic (nonmaterial) significance. For example, most U.S. presidents have taken the oath of office with one hand on a Bible.

Let’s consider how the various aspects of culture work together by looking at a much less serious topic: the everyday activity of grooming hair. Most people put at least some thought into what their hair looks like. Whether unkempt or coolly styled, our hair often expresses who we are. Hairstyles also reflect cultural values; we learn what is considered attractive and what meaning different hairstyles convey. We may think we are making purely individual statements when we style our hair, but in fact we are likely to be influenced heavily by the ideas and practices of our culture.

Often, we are so familiar with our own culture that we have a hard time recognizing its various elements or their significance. If we take a sociological perspective, however, we can see the often hidden ways that cultural ideas and practices help define our identities and our relationship to various communities. The elements of culture—to which we now turn—are summarized in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1 ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

Values: Deeply held principles or standards by which people make judgments about the world, especially in terms of what is desirable or worthwhile (for example, wealth equals success, family is important)

Beliefs: Convictions or opinions that people accept as true (for example, my country is good, God exists, the gods exist)

Knowledge: Information, awareness, and understanding that helps people navigate the world (for example, language, mathematics, sociological insight)

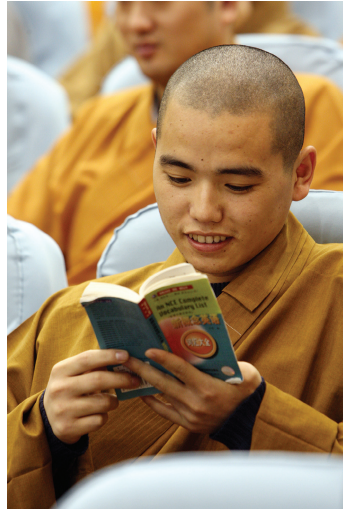
Norms: Rules and expectations for “appropriate” behavior (for example, how to dress, what standards of hygiene to maintain)

Behaviors: The actions associated with a group that help reproduce a distinct way of life (for example, “appropriate” sexual practices, the pursuit of formal education)

Objects and artifacts: The physical items that are created and associated with a culture (for example, food, clothing, music)

Symbols: Anything—a sound, a gesture, an image, an object—that represents something else (for example, a handshake, a corporate logo)

Language: An elaborate system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another in complex ways (for example, English, Spanish, Chinese, American Sign Language)



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Cultures develop different ideas about what constitutes a desirable appearance. These seem perfectly “normal” from the perspective of those inside a culture but can seem odd from the outside. Which hairstyles appear strange to you? Are there appearance norms in your culture that might seem unusual to outsiders?



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Culture in Our Heads: Values, Beliefs, Knowledge, and Norms

Let’s look more closely at the ideas of culture—the particular values, beliefs, knowledge, and norms that lend a culture its unique character. Together, they shape how people think, behave, and view their world.

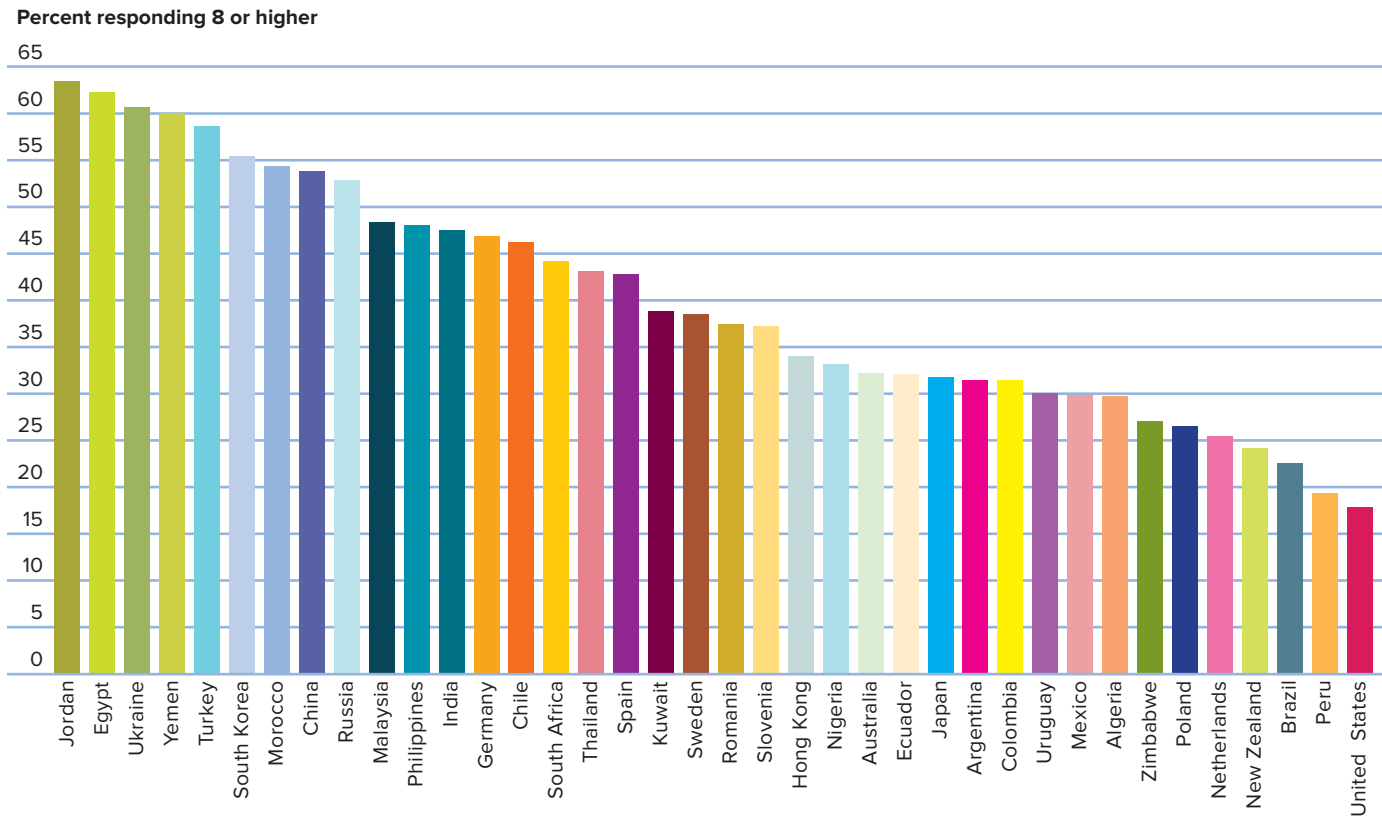
Values: What Is Desirable? A **value** is a deeply held principle or standard that people use to make judgments about the world, especially in deciding what is desirable or worthwhile. People in the United States, for example, tend to value individual freedom above collective responsibility (Bellah et al. 2007), and they see success as largely a product of a person’s own effort rather than a consequence of outside forces. In one global survey, a full 57 percent of people in the United States *disagreed* that “success in life is pretty much determined by forces outside our control,” a higher percentage than in all but

one country (Venezuela) of the 44 countries surveyed (Pew Research Center 2014b).

Values such as individualism can translate into public policy. Compared to Europeans, people in the United States are more likely to believe individuals are responsible for their own fate, and not surprisingly Americans are less likely to support the kind of social programs that in many European democracies provide citizens with a strong government safety net (Pew Research Center 2011). European social programs, on the other hand, are more consistent with a collective value of mutual responsibility than with the individualism that distinguishes the United States. Global comparisons provide similar results. In one survey, for example, U.S. respondents were the least likely of those in 60 countries (with the exception of Bahrain) to agree that taxing the rich to assist the poor is an essential feature of democracy (Figure 3.1) (World Values Survey 2010–2014a).

Sociologists are often reluctant to label the major values of a given society because they do not want to imply that values are unchanging or universal. The most widely cited sociological description of American values appears in the classic book

FIGURE 3.1 | SUPPORT IN SELECT COUNTRIES FOR TAXING THE RICH TO ASSIST THE POOR



For this survey, respondents in 60 countries were asked to rate—on a scale from 1 to 10—the degree to which they felt taxing the rich to assist the poor was an essential feature of democracy. The graph shows the percentage who responded 8 or higher in 30 of those countries. With the exception of Bahrain, the United States had the lowest percentage for all 60 countries surveyed.

Source: World Values Survey, 2010–2014. Wave 6. OFFICIAL AGGREGATE v.20150418. World Values Survey Association. Aggregate File
Producer: Asep/JDS, Madrid SPAIN. Retrieved from: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>.

American Society: A Sociological Interpretation by Robin Williams (1970). Williams identified 15 basic value orientations as central to post-World War II society in the United States:

Achievement and success	Freedom
Activity and work	Conformity
Moral orientation	Science and secular rationality
Humanitarian mores	Nationalism-patriotism
Efficiency and practicality	Democracy
Progress	Individual personality
Material comfort	Racism and related-group
Equality	superiority

This wide array of value orientations includes contradictory pairings such as “individual personality” and “conformity” or “equality” and “racism.” Acknowledging these contradictions, Williams described his list of values as tendencies, not absolutes and suggested (1970, 453) that we ask questions about each of them rather than taking them as given. He would have us ask, for example, “What groups or subcultures are the main bearers of the value, and what groups or subcultures are indifferent or opposed?” And how do the various value systems “work towards or against the integration of the culture as a whole?”

Like Williams, more recent American sociologists acknowledge both the variety of values that coexist in American society (Ceruleo 2008) and their influence on people’s lives. As Robert Wuthnow noted in a summary of research on values (2008), “study after study” confirms the important role values continue to play in social life. For example, “people with conservative values voted Republican, people with religious values attended religious services, people with altruistic values did volunteer work, and so on” (337).

But values change over time, and cannot fully account for people’s behavior. The economic development of the post-World War II era, for example, created broad economic security that enabled such cultural changes as a shift in values toward more individual autonomy, gender equality, and democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Conversely, as we will explore in Chapter 16, the recent rise in economic inequality triggered populist and authoritarian movements that call for strong leaders, in-group solidarity, and the rejection of those perceived to be outsiders. Such movements helped elect Donald Trump in the United States, pass the Brexit referendum that led the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, and advance right-wing causes across Europe (Inglehart 2018).

Although values vary a great deal from culture to culture, research shows that some are widespread. A series of studies in dozens of countries over more than two decades by Shalom

Schwartz and his colleagues (Davidov et al. 2008; Schwartz 1992) identified 10 such values that are widely shared and similarly understood across cultures (Schwartz et al. 2001, 2017):

Power	Universalism (appreciation of and concern for all humanity)
Achievement	
Hedonism (the seeking of personal pleasure)	Benevolence (generosity and compassion)
Stimulation (the seeking of excitement and personal challenge)	Tradition
	Conformity (the desire to blend in)
Self-direction	Security

Of course, the relative importance of each value on this list differs from culture to culture, and the values do not always coexist easily. People’s basic personal values tend to influence the political ideologies and policies they favor. For example, people who value security and power tend to favor policies that promise national strength and security more than do people who value universalism (Schwartz et al. 2010, 2014). Collectively, different cultures prioritize values differently, and these differences can be a major source of conflict between cultures. For example, theocratic societies such as Iran or Saudi Arabia, which are ruled or dominated by religious authorities, value tradition and conformity. They often dislike what they perceive to be the values of secular Western democracies, such as self-direction, stimulation, and relative hedonism as exemplified by popular notions of “rugged individualism,” the widespread promotion of consumption, and the prevalence of sexualized media content.

When differences over which values are most important occur *within* a society, conflict emerges. In a classic work from

the 1990s, sociologist James Davison Hunter (1991, 1994) argued that the United States was in the midst of an ongoing **culture war**, *an intense disagreement about core values and moral positions*. Debates about gay rights, abortion, prayer in school, gun rights, sex education, immigration, and the role of religion in public life became extraordinarily heated—and even spilled over into violence sometimes—because they were rooted in profound differences in values. Even today, similar debates about social and political issues—from gun rights and immigration policy to transgender rights and antiterrorism policies—continue to dominate political campaigns, cable programs, the internet, and talk radio, and are often seen as part of a political divide that has contributed to gridlock in national politics (Jacoby 2014).

But scholars question whether the differences in how various groups prioritize values in the United States are so profound that they warrant the label *culture war*. Some scholars argue that it is the political elites—politicians seeking to mobilize voters and raise money and political commentators trying to attract audiences and sell books—who highlight differences in values and encourage polarization and extremism (Lelkes 2016). Ordinary citizens are actually far more ambivalent about their own views and more tolerant of others (Baker 2005; Fiorina 2011; Koch and Steelman 2009).

Journalists who use the familiar shorthand “red state” and “blue state” to describe differences between conservative and liberal regions of the United States encourage the notion of a culture war. Identifying each state as simply red or blue implies that each state is fundamentally conservative or liberal and that the two types of states have little in common with each other. In reality, however, each state includes communities with differing views and values that reflect varying degrees of conservatism and liberalism. A map reflecting the complexity of value preferences in the United States would consist of various shades of purple rather than stark reds and blues (see Map 3.1).

Key cultural issues remain subject to debate. Observers point out, however, that culture wars—past and present—are largely the product of conservatives lamenting the changes that followed from the turmoil of the 1960s and, more recently, from the increasing diversity of the country’s population. These changes resulted in increased tolerance, declining religious orthodoxy, and a reduction in the intensity of cultural conflict (Hartman 2015; Prothero 2016).

Beliefs: What Is True? Whereas a culture’s values are usually a set of broad principles, its **beliefs** are *the specific convictions or opinions that its people generally accept as being true*. Our cultural beliefs encourage us to understand fundamental issues in the world in a particular way. Is democracy the best form of government? Should marriage be based on love, or is it primarily an economic arrangement? What constitutes “success” in life? Is violence justifiable in pursuing an important goal? Are all people created equal? Does God exist? The way people answer these questions depends, in part, on their cultural beliefs. What people believe is, in turn, deeply influenced by the culture of which they are a part.

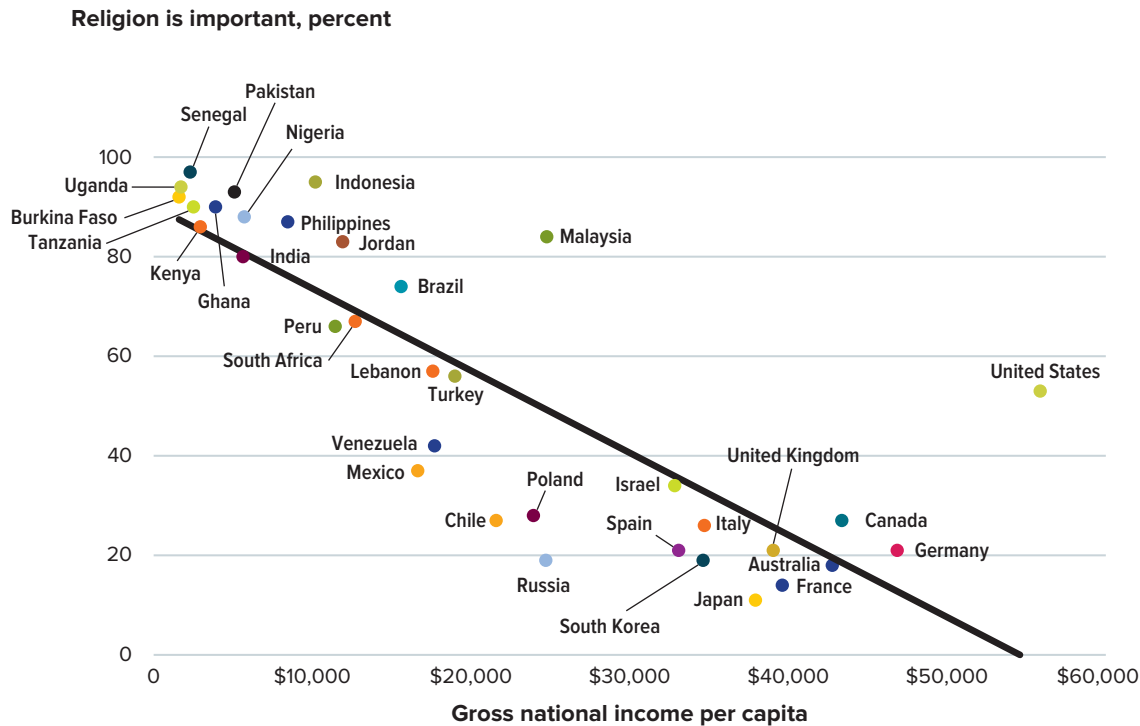
Belief in a god and concern for religion are widespread but more so in some societies than in others. In general, the



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Humanitarian efforts reflect the generosity and compassion characteristics of benevolence—one of the values that has similar meaning across cultures. Here, Turkish Coast Guard members help Syrian refugees, whose boat sank as they were trying to reach the Greek islands

FIGURE 3.2 | THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PER CAPITA INCOME AND THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION



This graph shows the relationship between per capita income (that is, average income per person) and the percentage of people in select countries who said religion was “very important” to them. The trend line is clear: as income increases (left to right), the importance of religion declines. However, the United States is an exception to this trend. It has the highest average per capita income of the countries surveyed (\$55,860), but at 53 percent, it is in the middle of the pack for respondents who say religion is “very important” in their lives. **Source:** Pew Research Center. 2015. Global Attitudes Project. <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2015/11/Pew-Research-Center-Democracy-Report-FINAL-November-18-2015.pdf>; World Bank Database. 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD/countries>.

as a bridge between a culture’s ideas and its practices since they suggest which practices are appropriate. To think God exists, for example, is to share a cultural belief. To attend weekly religious services, in contrast, is to follow a cultural norm because it reflects expected behavior. Norms can tell people what they *should* do as well as what they should *not* do. However, norms are not fixed or rigid. For example, smoking in public places—once a practice taken for granted in our culture—now increasingly violates informal norms and local laws.

As society changes, culture evolves to address new situations. Users of the internet, for example, created new norms for behavior online—sometimes referred to as “netiquette”—contributing to an emergent culture that is always evolving. Some internet norms are well established. You should never post IN ALL CAPS; that’s the online equivalent of shouting. Don’t ask a question in a forum until you’ve read the FAQs (frequently asked questions) page. And don’t feed the trolls—people who seek attention by making outrageously provocative posts will not be convinced by your logical argument for why they should stop, so it’s usually best to ignore them. If you are a regular internet user, such norms may seem obvious to you now, but they had to be created over time. Like all new users, you had to learn them at some point. If some online norms are clear-cut, however, others may be less so. How many selfies on Snapchat or Instagram is too many? Do emoticons belong in a formal e-mail to your

instructor or a prospective employer? These norms are likely fluid or evolving.

Social norms do not always keep up with technological change. In the 1920s, sociologist William Ogburn (1922) coined the term **cultural lag** to describe *the ways that new technological developments often outpace the norms that govern our collective experiences with these new technologies*. For instance, digital photography and high-speed internet access have made it extremely easy to post photos and videos online for wide public viewing. However, the norms that define what is appropriate to make public and what privacy means in this context are still catching up to the technology. Perhaps this concept helps explain the posting of photos of alcohol-fueled high school parties on Facebook or the “sexting” of nude photos among teenagers. As these examples suggest, cultural definitions of what is—or should be—public and private information are lagging behind the development of the internet. New norms and behaviors will undoubtedly emerge and solidify as we advance further into the digital age.

Cultural norms for social interaction vary depending on whether the interaction is face-to-face, over the telephone, via e-mail, on social media platforms, or through text messaging. When we interact face-to-face, we use more than words to communicate; we use our tone of voice, hand gestures, and facial expressions, as well. When we send e-mail and text messages, we do not have these additional means of expression, which is why



The flags of Indonesia (*left*) and Poland (*right*) are both horizontal blocks of red and white, the same shapes and colors. But they are distinct flags, with specific meanings to their citizens.

CORE CONCEPTS CHALLENGE Can you think of other **culturally** specific symbols that look very similar but have different meanings? Or one symbol that has different meanings to different people?

Similarly the same symbol can have different meanings in different cultures. In Mexico, raising your hand with a circle formed by the thumb and forefinger is an obscene gesture; in the United States it represents “OK.” A “thumbs-up” gesture has a positive connotation in some societies but is an insult (“Up yours!”) in Australia, Russia, Greece, Iraq, and much of Western Africa. In many societies, nodding your head up and down means yes, whereas turning it from left to right means no, but in Bulgaria the opposite is true.

Culture is fundamentally symbolic, and it is through symbols that we communicate and reinforce the elements of our culture to one another and pass them on to our children. As the Through a Sociological Lens box makes clear, cultural symbols in many forms can evoke emotionally powerful associations. However, one form of symbolic communication, language, is our primary vehicle for cultural transmission.

Language A **language** is an elaborate system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another in complex ways. Other animals have call systems that allow them to alert each other about their immediate environment—the presence of predators, for example. Human language, in contrast, is unique in its ability to convey information about objects and situations that are not immediately present. With language we can converse about events that happened in the past and plans we are making for the future, and we can even relate stories about imaginary people and occurrences. Language allows us to accumulate and store information, pass it on to one another, and forge a shared history. It is no wonder, then, that efforts to maintain marginalized cultures threatened with extinction often focus on preserving those cultures’ languages. Sometimes groups try to revive dying or extinct languages as a form of cultural preservation. For example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) documented how the forced removal of many indigenous children from their families to attend residential schools in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was “cultural genocide” (1). It called for government action to preserve and revitalize the Aboriginal languages that children had been discouraged or prohibited from speaking.

Sharing a language, however, does not necessarily mean sharing a culture. English, for example, is spoken in many countries worldwide, in some as a first language and in many others as a nearly universal second language, but the people of these countries do not all share a common culture. They usually do, however, speak a particular dialect of English. A **dialect** is a variant of a language with

its own distinctive accent, vocabulary, and in some cases grammatical characteristics. For example, what Americans call a “stove,” the English call a “cooker.” Further, a “truck” and an “elevator” in the United States would be called a “lorry” and a “lift” in England.

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis The principle of *linguistic relativity*, developed by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf and popularly known as the **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis**, suggests that because of their different cultural content and structure, languages affect how their speakers think and behave. For example, researchers have found that people more easily identify color differences when they have a language to describe different shades of similar colors (Kay and Kempton 1984). That is, having words to differentiate distinct colors in the red spectrum (including scarlet, crimson, rose, magenta, and maroon) helps us see those different colors.

This hypothesis is controversial, however. Many scholars believe it overstates the influence of language on thought (Pinker 2007). They point out that, like other aspects of culture, languages adapt to changing circumstances and that speakers absorb or invent new vocabulary for things as they become culturally important.

Nonetheless, language reflects the broader cultural contexts in which it evolved. As a result, every culture tends to develop unique words, phrases, and expressions that are difficult, if not impossible, to translate into another language. In that sense, language helps shape how we see the world. For example, the Mandarin word *guanxi* (pronounced “gwan-shee”) translates literally as something like “connection,” but it refers to a sort of social currency in traditional Chinese society. People can accumulate *guanxi* by doing good deeds for others or by giving them gifts, and they can “spend” their *guanxi* by asking for favors owed. In a society in which bonds of obligation form a crucial part of social life, such a word has a significant cultural meaning that cannot be translated easily into English (Moore 2004).

Language and Social Interaction As we saw in Chapter 1, the *symbolic interactionist perspective* emphasizes micro-level interactions—people’s everyday behaviors—as the building blocks of society. Rather than focusing on large-scale institutions and processes, symbolic interactionists look at how people make sense of the world through the meanings they attach to their own and others’ actions. As a result, sociologists working in this tradition are particularly attuned to the importance of the role of symbols and language in human interaction.

For example, through intensive interviews with clinically depressed adults, sociologist David Karp (2017) found that the specific language that they use helps define their reality. This self-definition in turn shapes the actions people with depression can envision and, ultimately, initiate. Early

SPOTLIGHT

on social theory

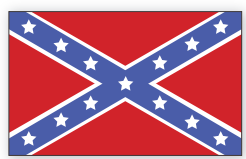
Consider the experience of the people Karp interviewed. How have you reached a greater understanding of some situation by finding the right name for it, or finding the best way to describe it? How does this relate to the role of language as emphasized by **symbolic interactionists**?

THROUGH A SOCIOLOGICAL LENS

How We See Powerful Symbols

Symbols can be a powerful means of representing cultural beliefs, especially in the areas of religion and politics. The meaning we give a particular symbol can vary by culture, however. When the symbol is a potent one, the various meanings can be a source of confusion and sometimes conflict.

One of the most controversial symbols in recent American history has been the “Southern Cross.” This flag (left) was

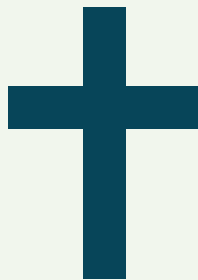


never the official flag of the Confederacy but rather was one of a number of battle flags used by Confederate forces during the Civil War. In the 1940s the Ku Klux Klan adopted the flag, and in the 1950s supporters of racial segregation

used the flag as a prominent symbol of their cause. Today, various white supremacist groups still use the flag as their emblem. As a result, for many in the United States the flag symbolizes the fight to maintain slavery as well as recent and contemporary racist movements. For some Southerners, however, the contemporary use of the flag is not racist. To them it represents “heritage not hate.”

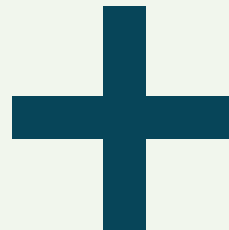
Sociologist Lori Holyfield and her colleagues (Holyfield, Moltz, and Bradley 2009) sought to untangle the complex meanings of the Confederate flag. They conducted focus group discussions with white college students at a large southern university. After reading aloud a news article about a controversy involving the Confederate flag in Leesburg, Virginia, groups discussed their views of the controversy and opinions of the flag.

The authors heard only rare instances of overt racism in these focus groups. Instead, they found that white students typically sought to downplay the racial meanings associated with the Confederate flag or became defensive and diverted the discussion away from racial issues. In fact, faced with a highly charged symbol, most of these white students had difficulty explaining their own understanding of southern heritage or the meaning of the flag, even as they denied the implication that the flag is a racist symbol. In analyzing the ways these focus groups largely ignored history and disregarded persistent differences in



power and privilege, Holyfield and her colleagues (2009) suggest that, even if unintended, the use of such symbols can convey racist messages. They write, “participants need not approve of uses of the Confederate Flag or racism in order to participate in and perpetuate racist discourses” (525).

The controversy over the Confederate flag is part of a long history of symbols carrying multiple—and sometimes conflicting—meanings.



For example, many Christians use the cross, symbolizing the crucifixion of Jesus (below left), as a sign of their faith. But the cross has been used by other, non-Christian cultures as well. In ancient Egypt the cross (above) was a sign of life. The ancient Greek cross (left)—with vertical and horizontal arms of equal length—represented the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water.

Perhaps the most reviled symbol of the past century is the swastika (right), now forever linked with Nazism. But the swastika is an ancient symbol used in many different cultures. For example, it was a variation on the Christian cross; a Hindu symbol associated with the ferocious goddess Kali; and a Navajo symbol related to healing rituals.



think about it

1. *What symbols do you encounter in daily life? In what other contexts are they used?*
2. *There has been a great deal of debate in recent years about whether statehouses and other government buildings in the South should fly the flag associated with the Confederacy. Where do you stand on this issue? Do you think the flag is simply a symbol of the South's heritage, or do you see it as a symbol of hate?*

in their experiences, respondents often did not have an adequate vocabulary for naming their trouble.

By eventually coming to name their condition as “depression,” they began to see it in a new light. In naming their experience depression, Karp’s respondents developed a new sense of self, which shaped their response to their pain. Their illness identity also influenced how they interacted with family and friends, and helped break the social isolation that is at the center of the depression experience. They also had to grapple with the exact meaning of this new label, however. One of Karp’s interviewees says:

“I think of it less as an illness and more something that society defines. That’s part of it, but then, it *is* physical. Doesn’t that make it an illness? That’s a question I ask myself a lot. Depression is a special case because everyone gets depressed. . . . I think that I define it as not an illness. It’s a condition. . . . It’s something that I can deal with. It’s something that I can live with. I don’t have to define it as a problem” (Karp 1996, 53). In contrast, other interviewees were comfortable with the definition of depression as “mental illness” and worked to find a “cure”—both distinctly medical ways to define and interpret the situation.

Karp alludes repeatedly to the importance of language throughout his study. He points out that the ideas of “anxiety” and “depression” do not exist in many languages and, therefore, that people who speak those languages cannot use them to define their reality. Even the title of Karp’s study—*Speaking of Sadness*—alludes to the importance of language.

Reproducing Culture: Behavior

In the context of culture, **behaviors** are *the actions associated with a group that help reproduce a distinct way of life*. When parents remind their children to tuck in their shirt, greet people with a firm handshake, and say “thank you” in response to a gift or an act of kindness, they are helping encourage a particular set of behaviors considered worthwhile in U.S. culture. These are small matters, but the accumulation of people’s many small, everyday actions—at home, at work, at play, at worship—helps distinguish one culture from another.

Behavior also calls attention to the difference between **ideal culture**, *what the members of a culture report to be their values, beliefs, and norms*, and **real culture**, *what they actually do, which may or may not reflect the ideal*. For example, gender equality is an increasingly professed cultural value in American society, but in most two-career households, women do more housework than men (Baxter and Tsui-O 2016; Hook 2010).

Although culture is a social phenomenon, it also permeates our most private and intimate behaviors. Take the case of body hair. Do you shave your legs? Your underarms? Your pubic hair? Your head? Your face? In most cases, your answers to those questions are influenced heavily by cultural norms. Since World War I, for example, most women in the United States have shaved their legs and underarms, a behavior that seems “normal” to them. Yet this practice is less common in many European nations (where in some cases it is associated with prostitution), and it is unheard of in other parts of the world. Similarly, men’s shaving their faces (but not their underarms or legs) is the norm in much of contemporary U.S. society but was much less common before the twentieth century.

Even sexual behavior—perhaps the most intimate of all human activity—varies significantly from culture to culture. Cultures differ in their attitudes toward masturbation, premarital sex, homosexuality and bisexuality, prostitution, and other forms of sexual behavior. Even feeling discomfort, awkwardness, or titillation at reading about topics like body hair and sexual practices reflects a culture-laden response. Although advertisers routinely appeal to cultural norms about hair removal to sell products, and sexual imagery permeates the popular media, most people in the United States rarely engage in frank discussion about such topics.

Cultural behavior also encompasses larger-scale, organized phenomena such as religious and political rituals (the president’s annual State of the Union address), theatrical entertainment (rock concerts), and sports spectacles (Super Bowl). Indeed, the widespread popularity of the Super Bowl—and the behaviors

surrounding it, including those of viewers as well as the athletes and other participants—likely reflects some unique features of U.S. culture that Americans may take for granted but that may well appear odd to someone from a different culture. Thinking sociologically, what is the meaning of such an event for viewers? What might the popularity of the Super Bowl—even among people who don’t like football—tell us about the ideas and values of U.S. culture? In short, understanding culture requires us to examine the complex ways people derive meaning from the cultural behaviors of everyday life. People both create culture and are shaped by it.

Objects: The Artifacts of Culture

Sociologists often refer to the principal elements of material culture as **cultural objects** (also sometimes called “cultural artifacts”), which are *the physical items that are created by and associated with people who share a culture*. Cultural objects are often variations on basic items found in daily life. Consider the many varieties of bread, for instance. Tortillas, baguettes, bagels, and puri bread are cultural objects commonly associated with Mexican, French, Jewish, and Indian cultures, respectively. We live in a culture in which electronic devices of all sorts—such as laptops, smartphones, and tablets—are significant cultural objects, in part because they symbolize a lifestyle and can be linked to our identity. How much of the popularity of iPhones, for example, is due to the brand and what it suggests about the owner, rather than any specific features of the product?

Cultural objects are found not only in your home, however. Highly prized creations such as works of art or religious icons are also cultural objects. Museums are filled with both ordinary and extraordinary objects that help tell the story of a particular culture. And the museums themselves, as well as other public buildings, people’s homes, the streets and highways that connect them, gas stations, water reservoirs, and indeed any aspect of the landscape used or modified by humans—are also cultural objects.

Popular media products—such as books and magazines, films and television programs, songs and photographs—are also cultural objects. Analyzing popular media content often reveals a good deal of information about the culture that produced it at a particular moment in history. At the same time, it can be difficult to see the underlying assumptions embedded in the popular media of one’s own culture.

Culture, Ideology, and Power

We have seen how culture helps define our world, providing models for appropriate attitudes and behavior. How we dress and speak, whom we admire and despise, and how we mourn

thinking about culture

What is the meaning of World Cup Soccer in U.S. **culture**? Does this vary by subculture? What do you think its prospects are for becoming a media event comparable to the Super Bowl? Explain.



©Loop Images/Alan Novelli/Getty Images

The National Museum of African American History, near the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., tells “the American story through the African American lens.”

and mark holidays are all shaped by our immersion in a particular culture. Since people are typically deeply embedded within their own culture, they usually find it difficult to see its underlying ideas. Sociologists have long paid attention to the assumptions built into any culture, arguing that what people take for granted is one of the keys to recognizing how culture and power are intertwined. One way to understand the meeting of culture and power is to understand ideology.

Ideology is a tricky term that is used in a variety of ways. Sociologists typically define **ideology** as *a system of meaning that helps define and explain the world and that makes value judgments about that world*. Simply put, an ideology is a comprehensive worldview. When we think sociologically about a culture’s ideology, we pay close attention to the most basic assumptions the people living within that culture make, and the consequences of those assumptions.

Within each culture, there is a **dominant ideology**, *a widely held and regularly reinforced set of assumptions that generally support the current social system and serve the interests of authorities*. Even when most people within a culture agree about how the world works, though, most scholars concur that a dominant ideology cannot prevent the emergence of alternative worldviews. Instead, different ideological perspectives, representing different interests with unequal power, engage in a kind of cultural contest.

In considering how culture works through ideology, we need to remember that our commonsense assumptions, the things we take for granted, suggest a particular understanding of the social world, and such assumptions have consequences. In the United States, for example, many people believe that it is simply a matter of common sense that women are better nurturers than men, that education is a route to economic success, and that the United States promotes democracy around the world—although each of these assertions is debatable. When people adopt such commonsense assumptions—as they do with a wide range of ideas—they are also accepting a certain set of beliefs, or an ideology, about the social world.

Similarly, ideology shapes what we define as “natural.” We generally think that what is natural is more enduring and stable than what is created by humans. As a result, the structures we define as natural come to be seen as permanent and therefore difficult to challenge. Consider some examples of social relationships that are often seen as natural. Is it natural that some people are rich and others are poor, that most citizens are disconnected from politics, or that people prefer to live in neighborhoods with others of the same racial or ethnic background? If all these situations are simply natural, then we have little reason to be concerned about economic inequality, political apathy, or residential segregation because they are not social problems but the natural order of things. What people think of as natural and normal, then, is fundamentally about ideology.

To effectively wield power, those with power within a culture must continually reinforce the idea that certain assumptions are simply “common sense” and “natural” because people’s life experiences are likely to lead them to question these assumptions. (In Chapter 5 we explore this link between culture and power, especially as it relates to justifying inequality.) In recent years, for example, widespread cultural assumptions about the definition of marriage have changed. Gay and lesbian activists demanding the right to same-sex marriage challenged the longstanding belief that marriage is restricted to a relationship between a man and a woman. Now, in the United States and some other countries, same-sex marriage is legally recognized, marking a change from what was once considered “natural.”

In addition, even in the most repressive societies, some people will not accept the dominant ideology, some people may resist it, and changing historical conditions will undermine certain aspects of it. Ultimately, when we look at ideology from a sociological point of view, we can see the ways that culture is a contested arena that defines our underlying, and often changing, conceptions of the world.

Cultural Diversity

For much of human history, travel was difficult, expensive, and often dangerous, and only a few people interacted with people from cultures other than their own. Today, widespread mobility, a global economy, large-scale immigration, and technological advances have brought people from diverse cultures into frequent and often sustained contact. Many colleges and universities recognize that students benefit from learning about and working with people from different backgrounds as they prepare for an increasingly diverse social world and the increasingly diverse workplaces into which they will graduate. Many schools have offices devoted to promoting “inclusiveness” and celebrating “multiculturalism,” and they strive to achieve a diverse student body. College campuses today often include people from a variety of racial and ethnic groups, from many nations, and from a variety of social class backgrounds. They include people with a variety of life experiences, such as veterans and working adults. They include students with a variety of religious affiliations or none at all. And they include students with a range of sexual preferences and gender identities—gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender.

SOCIOLOGY in ACTION

Cultural Competence and Health Care

Lia Lee was a Hmong child living in California. The Hmong are an ethnic group from the Southeast Asian country of Laos whose culture is rooted in a rural way of life. When Lia was born in a California county hospital, her mother spoke no English, and the medical staff spoke no Hmong. At just three months old, Lia experienced fainting episodes, which doctors attributed to epileptic seizures. Over the next four years, Lia's doctors struggled to control her symptoms by prescribing a dozen different drugs in dosages and combinations that changed more than 20 times.

This dizzying array of treatments would have been confusing to anyone, but Lia's family was especially ill-prepared to understand the process. Illiterate even in their own Hmong language, they were able to follow their doctor's advice only intermittently. Instead, they turned for relief to their culture's familiar religious beliefs about illness. According to that tradition, Lia's fainting spells were caused by the temporary departure of her soul from her body, a condition whose name roughly translates as "the spirit catches you and you fall down." Lia's parents sent away to Thailand for sacred charms to protect her and changed the child's name to fool the evil spirits (Underwood and Adler 2005).

As U.S. society becomes ever more culturally diverse, health care workers are increasingly treating people like Lia and her family, whose beliefs about sickness and health differ dramatically from those of mainstream Western medicine. To treat these patients effectively, health care workers need to pay close attention to their cultural beliefs and traditions. Unfortunately, the Western doctors did not understand the Hmong culture, and Lia's family did not understand the doctors' efforts. As a result, the medical treatment was ineffective. Four years after her initial symptoms, Lia experienced a massive seizure that left her in a vegetative state for decades. She died in 2012 at the age of 30.

Lia's story is perhaps an extreme example, but dealing with gaps in communication between patients and health

care workers caused by cultural differences is a very real and growing challenge. The federal government, along with several universities, private foundations, and organizations representing health care providers, has launched a variety of public and private initiatives to promote and ensure *cultural competence*—the ability to understand and address the needs of people from different cultures (Rees and Ruiz 2003). For example, some states have enacted regulations that require medical facilities to provide culturally competent care to groups that make up a certain percentage of the community's population. As one key element of this care, facilities are required to make interpreters available who are fluent in the language and cultural traditions of different groups. Organizations such as Resources for Cross Cultural Health Care (diversityrx.org) have stepped up to the challenge. One study found that medical interpreters, those who facilitate bilingual communication in hospitals, often act as an essential part of a medical team, becoming informal co-diagnosticians, even though these interpreters lack formal medical training (Hsieh 2007).

As part of their training, medical students are also learning about the important role of culture in their patients' lives. One book has become required reading in more than 100 medical schools. Titled *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, it's the tragic story of Lia Lee (Fadiman 2012).

think about it

1. Have you or your family ever had trouble communicating with a doctor or been uncertain about what is happening at a hospital? If so, do you think cultural differences help explain why?
2. How might cultural differences cause problems with communication in school or at work?

As the college experience reflects, understanding cultural diversity is more important now than ever before. (For a tragic example of what can happen due to a lack of cultural understanding, see the Sociology in Action box.) But to understand cultural diversity, it helps to take a closer look at the various types of cultures within our own and other societies, their positions in relation to one another, and how they interact in what has become an increasingly multicultural world.

Dominant Culture, Subcultures, and Countercultures

When we talk about societies—our own or those of other countries—it is common to speak about them as sharing a single

culture (for example, "U.S. culture" or "Afghan culture"). To a degree, this is true; societies share basic cultural features. However, societies are large-scale, complex arrangements that inevitably contain internal differences, as well. Competing cultural systems exist even in what appear to be homogeneous societies.

Rather than consisting of a single culture, most societies contain a **dominant culture**, a culture that permeates the society and that represents the ideas and practices of those in positions of power, as well as a number of **subcultures**, cultures associated with smaller groups in the society that have distinct norms, values, and lifestyles that set them apart from the dominant culture.

The dominant culture in the United States has long been associated with relatively affluent, white, heterosexual males, often of Protestant Anglo-Saxon (English) ancestry. Disproportionately, these were the people in positions of political, corporate,

and military power. They led universities, the media, religious organizations, and major museums. Their accomplishments were taught in classrooms, and their worldview tended to be reflected in popular media. The ideas and views of other segments of society, although rarely excluded entirely by the dominant culture, tended to be marginalized. Evidence of this marginalization can be found in terms like “the black community,” “women’s history,” “gay bar,” and “working-class literature” because they call attention to a deviation from the dominant white, male, heterosexual, middle-class norm. In contrast, rarely, if ever, would you come across terms like “the white community,” “straight bar,” “middle-class literature,” or “men’s history,” because those were the already unspoken standard in the dominant culture.

The makeup of the U.S. population has been changing rapidly, however, and social movements have given previously marginalized groups a greater voice than they had before, helping to displace the traditional white heterosexual male culture—and generating a conservative cultural backlash. There is a long way to go before corporate boardrooms and other institutions of power accurately reflect the diversity of the population as a whole, but the dominant culture has broadened its embrace.

A society’s dominant culture coexists with many subcultures. For example, Americans in general are enthusiastic about technological advancements (a feature of the country’s dominant culture), but the Amish—an orthodox Protestant sect living primarily in Pennsylvania and Ohio—reject the use of most modern technology, resulting in a distinct way of life. Skateboarders also form a subculture. They define and use public spaces in innovative ways, turning roads and sidewalks, steps and hand railings, into a skating space, while developing a distinctive attitude about risk-taking and authority. Since subcultures often highlight their differences from the mainstream, their members often accept, even celebrate, their nonconformist beliefs or behaviors (Gelder 2005; Haenfler 2014).

Members of a subculture, then, share a common identity, whether they are members of a particular demographic group, extreme-sports enthusiasts, science fiction fans, or Civil War reenactors. Although subcultures typically do not have a formal membership structure, they usually develop a specialized language or style and specific behaviors and objects relevant to their culture. Survivalists, for example, are part of a subculture that emphasizes the need to prepare for extreme emergencies, ranging from natural disasters to widespread social and political upheavals, and even to religiously tinged “doomsday” scenarios. Using specialized language, members share information online and at in-person “prepper shows” about the best tactics, weapons, and equipment needed to survive such disasters. These include preparing a “bug out bag” with portable emergency supplies and planning a strategy for how to deal with “zombies”—people who have not prepared but who will want to “feed off” of the survivalists.

Work and school organizations can develop their own cultural traits, too. Thus we might speak about the corporate culture at Walmart or the organizational culture at a government agency such as NASA. If your school has a significant sports program, take a look around you at the next big game you attend. College athletics—complete with school colors, uniforms, mascots, cheers, and rituals—are part of the distinct cultures of many schools. Special moments in the school’s sports history—winning a championship, pulling off a huge upset, a star athlete’s choking in a key game—all become part of the lore of that school’s culture.

At the micro level, even groups of close friends who live in the same neighborhood can develop a subculture. As they grow up, their common experiences foster similar values and beliefs. They may like the same style of clothing, music, and leisure activities. Over time their shared adventures give them a common history, filled with incidents, terminology, and characters that have little meaning for people outside the group. “Inside” jokes and references help build a sense of solidarity and belonging.

A subculture that organizes itself in opposition to the dominant culture may be categorized as a **counterculture**, which *champions values and lifestyles distinctly opposed to those of the dominant culture*. Members of countercultures challenge widely held values and attitudes and reject mainstream cultural norms.

In the past half century, a series of youth-based countercultures have challenged aspects of the dominant culture in U.S. society. For example, young hippies in the 1960s had a



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A New York City firefighter poses in his Harlem apartment with some of his “End of the World” supplies he has assembled to enable him and his family to survive for up to 10 months after an emergency. These include combat knives, medicine, tools, water, and much more. Survivalists come in many varieties but they form a subculture with distinctive beliefs, knowledge, and practices. Even the language used by these “preppers” can be unique.

thinking about culture

Do you belong to a particular subculture or know someone who does? If so, what features of this subculture set it apart from the dominant **culture**? Do you think aspects of this subculture are likely to be incorporated into mainstream culture in your lifetime? Explain.

distinctive lifestyle and language. They challenged traditional authority by experimenting with recreational drugs, practicing communal living, rejecting materialism, espousing “free love,” and protesting against the Vietnam War. Punks in the 1970s developed their own particular style, including then-atypical piercings and provocative hairstyles, along with a defiant attitude. In turn, hip-hop introduced new music, language, dance, and fashion while some within hip-hop culture advanced a powerful critique of racism and racial discrimination.

Subcultures—including countercultures—often introduce innovation and change to mainstream culture. Features of a subculture that might appear radical or threatening may over time be incorporated into the dominant culture. Hip-hop—once a provocative subculture—is now firmly a part of mainstream U.S. culture. Similarly, tattoos were once found exclusively among various subcultures such as sailors and bikers but have long since moved into the U.S. mainstream. Access to birth control, racial intermarriage, equal rights for women, and a host of other social reforms began their life as part of the beliefs and values of political subcultures, only to achieve broad mainstream acceptance eventually.

High Culture and Popular Culture

Societies contain not only a dominant culture and various subcultures, but also different cultural expressions that are related to people’s position in society. Sociologists have in fact long recognized the relationship between culture and economic inequality. **High culture** refers to *cultural forms associated with—and especially valued by—elites*. Examples of high culture include art galleries, the opera, classical music, and literature. Historically, high culture has been the domain of the wealthy and highly educated. Although others may not be formally excluded from these activities, their expense and the specialized knowledge that is often needed to understand and enjoy them can serve to restrict access to those who are able to afford them.

Proponents of high culture may define these cultural forms as the best and most enduring representations of a society’s culture. After all, disciplines that study high culture such as art history and music education are typically part of the high school and college curriculum, and many people associate the very idea of becoming “cultured” with visiting museums or attending the symphony. In contrast, **popular culture** refers to *cultural forms that are widespread and commonly embraced within a society*. Popular culture includes such widely accessible forms as television programs, Hollywood films, rock concerts, spectator sports, and amusement parks. To enjoy popular culture, a person generally does not need a substantial amount of money or specialized knowledge.



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The distinction between high and popular culture was once sharp and reflected a fundamental conflict in worldviews (Gans 1999). Now, though, the line between the two is blurry. More people, including elites, consume a diverse mixture of high and popular culture. Nevertheless, the distinction between high and popular culture remains helpful since the cultural choices people make are still influenced significantly by their social standing.

Culture can also be influenced by people’s physical location. The term *folk culture* indicates traditional practices, often passed on orally from generation to generation, that reflect lifestyles in specific—often rural—areas. Unlike pop culture that is widely communicated and easily available in a diverse society, folk culture is produced and consumed locally, often by working-class and poor people. In music, for example, Mississippi Delta blues and the early country and bluegrass of the rural South were distinct folk cultures closely associated with the places and people that produced them. As those examples illustrate, too, folk culture often goes on to influence popular culture.

Battani, Hall, and Neitz (2003, 91) note that, while still vibrant in some isolated rural parts of the world, “in a pluralistic world where every corner has been subjected to the gaze of the mass media and everything has its price, folk culture acquires a narrow meaning. . . . [In the contemporary United States] it is almost a genre of arts and crafts, defined by cultural transmission and learning outside of schools or books.” The Smithsonian Institution operates the American Folklife Center (2018), which collects and documents traditional folk culture examples of the “everyday and intimate creativity that all of us share and pass on to the next generation,” including recipes, music, stories, ways of speaking, games, crafts, and work traditions. The fact that American folk culture is now showcased in a museum reflects the dominant role that commercial popular culture now holds.

The Commercialization of Culture

A 2010 Lady Gaga and Beyoncé music video for the song “Telephone” is notorious—not for the music or its clichéd women’s prison theme but for the sheer number of product placements crammed into it. Shots linger on a pair of Heartbeats headphones, a Virgin Mobile telephone, cans of Diet Coke, a Beats branded

HP laptop with the Plenty of Fish dating site open on its screen, a Chevrolet pickup truck, a Polaroid camera, Wonder Bread, and even a jar of Miracle Whip. The video is one example of how cultural creations not only are sold but also are used to sell other products. Not content to insert their products into new music videos, advertisers now even use digital tricks to retroactively insert them into classic music videos (Newman 2014). Similarly, popular music is often used in the background of television commercials, but commercials are also

inserted into songs in the hope that the songs will become popular. Rap songs, for example, are loaded with references to brands like Mercedes, Gucci, Glock, Cristal, and Nike, sometimes placed there by companies like Maven Strategies that negotiate deals between major corporate advertisers and hip-hop artists (Williams 2005). And the trend has exploded in recent years. One study found that, between 2000 and 2010, more brand names were mentioned in pop songs than in the prior four decades combined, and many of those mentions were paid for (Gloor 2014). This type of product placement, which continues today, is just one of many ways that *commercialism*—the marketing and sale of products—has become entrenched in contemporary popular culture.

Today, many cultural objects are commodities—products to be bought and sold—produced by corporate conglomerates (Mosco 2009; Noam 2016; Schor 2004). The stories children learn and the music people listen to are produced and marketed by multinational corporations like Disney and Sony. Corporations sponsor a broad range of cultural creations, from rock concerts to museum exhibits (Rectanus 2002). From expensive tickets to major events to streaming video from Netflix, we spend much of our lives—and many of our dollars—buying cultural products. This seems utterly unremarkable to us, but it represents a relatively recent shift in the nature of cultural production, which used to be created noncommercially as part of the traditions of everyday life.

This focus on commerce has meant that the language and images of advertising have increasingly entered public and private space, surrounding us with pictures and symbols whose primary purpose is to get us to buy something. Some communities see this as a problem and are fighting back, however. In 2007, new “Clean City” laws went into effect in São Paulo, Brazil—a city of almost 12 million people—that essentially banned all outdoor advertising. As the president of the city council noted, “What we are aiming for is a complete change of culture [. . .] things were out of hand and the population has made it clear it wants this” (Rohter 2006). Since then, the law has been widely seen as a positive development that has helped beautify the city and encouraged flourishing mural and graffiti art communities.

With the ever-growing influence of commercialism, people increasingly tend to measure the value of most cultural objects by their profitability. How many copies of that book were sold? What were the box office standings for movies released this past weekend? Such concerns reflect a culture in which the dollar sign increasingly denotes “success.” As we see throughout this book, especially in Chapter 14, the commercialization of cultural and social life—its packaging, promotion, and sale by major corporations—is an important feature of our changing world, both in the United States and globally.

Multiculturalism

When more than 110 million viewers watched the iconic Super Bowl 50 halftime show in 2016, they got a lesson in multiculturalism.

Three musical acts performed—the white musicians of the British group Coldplay; Latino artist Bruno Mars (born Peter Hernández), whose ancestry includes Puerto Ricans and Filipinos; and pop icon Beyoncé, who has African American and Creole roots. In a nod to the LGBT community, Coldplay’s performance featured a multicolored stage set and rainbow flags. Beyoncé sang “Formation,” a song that celebrates her multicultural heritage and the video of which includes a reference to the Black Lives Matter movement. She and her dancers wore leather costumes and berets reminiscent of the uniforms of the Black Panthers (who, like the Super Bowl, originated in 1966), while the dancers moved in an X formation (perhaps suggesting Malcolm X) and threw up a Black Power fist pump. The sequence ended with flashback images of diverse musical performances from earlier years, and then all three acts shared the stage while audience members held placards that created a huge rainbow-colored slogan: “Believe in Love.” The phrase was likely a reference to the legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States less than a year earlier, as well as to a recent video released by Pope Francis celebrating religious diversity in which people of different faiths all said, “I believe in love.” More generally, the entire spectacle was a call for multicultural tolerance. The event would have been unthinkable 50 years earlier at the first Super Bowl, but in the twenty-first-century United States, its multicultural themes were right at home.

Multiculturalism, *the recognition, valuing, and protection of the distinct cultures that make up a society*, has become increasingly relevant in a world of growing cultural diversity and cultural interaction within and among societies. Rather than assume that all people will adopt the ideas and practices of the dominant culture—a process known as *assimilation*—multicultural societies accept, accommodate, and even celebrate differences



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A multicultural society accommodates various cultural groups. One way such societies cope is by making voting materials, health care information, signs in public places, and other important information available in the languages spoken in the local community.

thinking about culture

Which policies does your college have that promote multiculturalism? In Chapter 10, we explore how **culture** helps us understand how various racial and ethnic groups have interacted in the United States throughout its history.



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The Super Bowl is a cultural phenomenon that has as much to do with the extravaganza as it does with football. Major corporations unveil new advertising campaigns during the broadcast, international pop stars perform in choreographed halftime shows, and the U.S. Air Force stages a high-profile flyover just before kick-off each year. Watching the Super Bowl has become an annual ritual for millions of Americans—even those who don't necessarily like football very much.

CORE CONCEPTS CHALLENGE *Put yourself in the shoes of someone from a different culture who watches a football game in the United States for the first time. What would that person make of the game? Might it seem violent, for example? Now, think of how you might react if you were to watch a game you are unfamiliar with, like cricket, a wildly popular sport in much of the rest of the world.*

in language, religion, customs, dress, traditions, and beliefs. Institutions that acknowledge and accommodate different cultures, such as certain businesses and universities, can also be considered multicultural. As the Sociology Works box illustrates, understanding cultural diversity is crucial in today's business world.

Because they live in a multicultural society, many people in the United States are exposed regularly to a number of different cultures. Restaurants, fairs, and festivals celebrate the food, dress, music, and dances of various cultures. More significantly, in communities that are home to a variety of cultural groups, you are also likely to find institutions associated with these groups, such as temples, mosques, churches, and other places of worship. Businesses such as sari shops and halal butchers sell products not available in mainstream dress shops and grocery stores. In addition, today's major cities are home to people who

speak dozens of different languages—and their school systems must cope with this linguistic diversity.

Because of the nature of a multicultural society, a significant number of people within it grow up and live their lives defined by more than one culture. If a student speaks English at school but a different language at home, that bilingual capability is a sure sign that he or she lives in two different cultures at the same time. In countries around the world, some immigrant families straddle the society and culture of their birth and those of their new home (Dimitrova, Bender, and van de Vijver 2014). Some travel back and forth to their countries of origin; others send money to aid relatives there. Some are even involved in the political affairs of their native countries (Boruchoff 2013; Levitt 2004). Television and the internet help people stay in touch with the news and entertainment culture of their native countries, even while they live in their newly adopted homes. For example,

SOCIOLOGY WORKS

Dean Foster and the Business of Cultural Diversity

As an undergraduate, Dean Foster didn't have a clue what he would do with sociology, but he thought the subject was fascinating. He found especially appealing the basic premise that "we can understand how we work as cultural and social beings and use this understanding to improve our collective lives." When he looks back today and considers the benefits he gained from sociology, his list is extensive: "my professional career, cross-cultural friendships, life goals, and purpose."

Foster is the founder and president of DFA (Dean Foster Associates) Intercultural Global Solutions. DFA helps organizations and businesses working with other cultures around the globe develop intercultural competencies. Foster spends much of his time traveling to present intercultural seminars, give speeches, and conduct interviews around the world. Describing his work as the "perfect job," Foster notes that "I meet wonderful people from places I only could have dreamed I would visit and work in as a child. I help deal with important cross-cultural challenges in ways that I like to believe change people's lives."

When working internationally, businesses must anticipate and address some common differences among cultures. For example, different cultures have various ideas about time. Some value punctuality; in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland being late is considered a sign of disrespect and incompetence. In the countries of Latin America, by contrast, there is more latitude when it comes to meeting times and deadlines.

In addition, norms governing appropriate relationships between employers and their employees can vary a great deal from one culture to another. In some countries, employees are expected to be deferential to their bosses, avoiding eye contact with them and obeying instructions without comment. In other countries, employees are expected to be candid with, although still respectful of, their bosses, giving their input on the task at hand. In all these cases, global businesses must understand the cultural norms within a given society—and convey that understanding to their employees—

"I work with cross-cultural challenges in ways that I like to believe change people's lives."

if they are to communicate and work successfully in international settings.

A cottage industry of diversity training specialists such as Dean Foster—often with backgrounds in sociology, anthropology, and psychology—has emerged in response to businesses' need for cultural awareness in today's global economy. Foster notes, however, that when he was a student, "there was no such field as intercultural training, so there were no internships, mentors, or courses of study." By the mid-1980s, though, he had

used his sociological knowledge to start one of the first intercultural training consultancies.

Foster says his work forces him "to constantly expect that which cannot be imagined, a testament to the power of culture, and the limits it places on us as cultural beings. I find this is the same kind of challenge that sociology places on us when we try to imagine how is it that we are who we are and behave as we behave. I deal with this question professionally every day."



Courtesy of Dean Foster
Dean Foster

think about it

1. *What do international businesspeople who come to the United States need to know about culturally specific work routines that people in this country are likely to take for granted?*
2. *In your travels, have you experienced uncertainty about basic cultural norms? If so, what happened? What did you learn as a result?*

the satellite service Dish Network offers a variety of packages with channels based on countries and regions such as Africa, China, South Asia, and Israel, and programming in languages such as French, German, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Farsi, Arabic, and Urdu.

People who live in a multicultural society have an extraordinary opportunity to learn about and appreciate the rich diversity of human cultures. Diversity also brings with it challenges and problems, however, as people with different ways of life attempt to coexist. Unfortunately, cultural difference often leads to inequality and conflict as groups with more power oppress,

exploit, or otherwise discriminate against those who are different and who have less power. The long, ugly history of religious conflict, ethnic clashes, racist violence, and warfare between nations is one result of this tendency. Therefore, to understand culture more fully, we must inevitably study conflict, relations of power (a topic explored in Chapter 5), and the domination of some groups by others.

Culture: Consensus and Conflict People from the same culture may share the same language, religion, worldview, history, and traditions. When this happens, cultures

nurture and promote consensus, cohesiveness, and solidarity through a shared collective identity. However, just as the common bond of culture creates a sense of “us,” it can also create a sense of “them”—those outside the culture who are different in some way. Perhaps the outsiders speak a different language, practice a different religion, dress differently, or are from a different social class. Whatever the distinction, as those who share a culture increase the sense that they have a common bond, they tend to marginalize, belittle, or even demonize “outsiders” who have a different culture.

Cultural conflict is most likely to emerge when values and beliefs differ among different cultures. Contrasting beliefs about religion and clashes over core values have been the source of or justification for many conflicts over the centuries. Unlike questions that can be answered with scientific evidence, disputes about values and beliefs cannot be resolved by appeals to reason. The cultural conflicts that result from these disputes can be intense and ongoing.

One source of cultural conflict is **ethnocentrism**, *the judging of other cultures by the standards of one’s own on the assumption that one’s own is superior*. Ethnocentrism can have harsh and even violent consequences if members of one culture act upon a conviction that their ideas, values, and way of life are superior to those of another culture. An ethnocentric worldview can be the source of **xenophobia**, *the unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners or people from other cultures*, which, at its extreme, can result in *genocide*—the deliberate and systematic destruction of a cultural, racial, or political group.

Much of the history of colonialism, in which one country conquers or dominates others, is the story of ethnocentrism in action. The Europeans who conquered much of the world from the sixteenth century into the twentieth were confident that their way of life was superior to that of the people whose lands they colonized. They often sought to “civilize” the native

peoples, teaching them their language, and converting them to Christianity. As the native peoples resisted to protect their way of life, the result was centuries of conflict.

In contrast to ethnocentrism, **cultural relativism** is *the practice of understanding a culture by its own standards*. Cultural relativism does

not require adopting or agreeing with the ideas and practices of another culture, but rather making the effort to understand the culture on its own terms and with a willingness to acknowledge it as a viable alternative to one’s own. In other words, to practice cultural relativism we need to *understand* a culture, not *judge* it, as, for example, when we seek to learn about religious rituals or family traditions in a different culture.

Studying cultures other than their own (an especially important task in this era of globalization) often requires sociologists to practice cultural relativism so that they can focus their attention on a group’s unique values, beliefs, and practices. Such cross-cultural understanding is difficult to achieve; it is hard for any of us to operate outside of the logic of our own culture. At the same time, once we are able to recognize our own values and beliefs—key dimensions of our own culture—we have taken an important first step toward understanding the experiences of people who live in very different societies.

SPOTLIGHT

on social theory

According to **conflict theorists**, more powerful groups within society dominate less powerful ones. Can you think of an example of a powerful group’s demonizing or belittling a less powerful group’s culture? Why would the powerful group find it advantageous to do so?

The Critics of Multiculturalism Less than two weeks after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush framed the assault in cultural terms by telling Congress and the



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The infamously xenophobic Ku Klux Klan, which had several million members during its heyday in the 1920s, appropriated Christian symbolism to promote a white supremacist agenda that asserted the superiority of white Protestants and attacked the supposedly alien influence of blacks and most immigrants, including non-Protestant whites. Today, some Muslim extremists similarly invoke religious symbolism in calling for attacks against perceived threats from the alien cultural influence of nonbelievers. Just as most Christians rejected the Klan, most Muslims reject these extremist views.

people of the United States that the members of Al-Qaeda, the Islamic fundamentalist group that had claimed responsibility, had attacked because “they hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other” (Bush 2001). That quotation came to symbolize one way of thinking about the ongoing conflict between Western secular societies and Islamic societies. It suggested the conflict was based on fundamentally incompatible cultures. President Donald Trump appeared to follow this approach, making numerous statements widely seen as anti-Muslim, re-tweeting a fake anti-Muslim propaganda video, and pursuing a travel ban on visitors from several Muslim-majority countries (Baker and Sullivannov 2017).

One of the best-known discussions of this concept of a “culture clash” came from political scientist Samuel Huntington (1993, 1998), who argued that after the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, most new global conflicts would now take place between cultures rather than countries. He went on to describe what he saw as eight basic cultures (which he termed “civilizations”) in the world: Western (United States, Australia, and Western Europe), Eastern Orthodox (Russia), Latin American, Islamic, Japanese, Chinese, Hindu (India), and African. These civilizations, he contended, are based on fundamentally different religious and other cultural beliefs. The Islamic world, for example, has few democratic institutions because it does not have a cultural history of separating religious and secular authority, of valuing social pluralism, and of protecting individual rights and civil liberties from the power of the state. In this way, it differs fundamentally from Western civilization. Huntington maintained that as long as globalization results in more frequent contacts between people living in these civilizations, we are doomed to experience more frequent cultural conflict.

There is no doubt that increased contact between vastly different cultures can result in conflict. However, if we analyze Huntington’s thesis from a sociological perspective, we can quickly expose some of its shortcomings. For one thing, it oversimplifies the complex mix of cultures around the world and glosses over the enormous variation *within* each of these cultures (Arnason 2001). None of the so-called civilizations Huntington identifies has a single unified culture. As globalization advances and more people, products, and ideas flow across national borders, cultures continue to blend. Also, by focusing exclusively on culture, Huntington’s theory ignores the ways that longstanding inequalities in the distribution of privilege and power have helped fuel global conflict (Evans 1997).

In addition, many different cultures *do* share common values. President Bush recognized these shared values when he told a graduating class at West Point, “The peoples of the Islamic nations want and deserve the same freedoms and opportunities as people in every nation.” His earlier quotation about hating our freedoms targeted the Al-Qaeda extremists who attacked the United States. However, violent Islamic extremists do not represent the broader Islamic culture, which encompasses a range of beliefs and values. Indeed, intense debates within Muslim societies regarding democracy, the role of women, and other cultural matters take place every day.

The results of global public opinion surveys show that democracy is widely popular in both Western and Islamic cultures. However, those same surveys show significant differences in the degree of support for gender equality, social tolerance, and freedom of speech (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Pew Research Center 2013e; Welzel and Inglehart 2010), indicating that the reality is complicated, not just a matter of a simple clash of civilizations or an idealized belief that all societies share a unified set of cultural values.

As we have seen, different cultures within a society can also encounter the problem of incompatible values or beliefs. Feminist political philosopher Susan Okin (1999, 117) argued that “many cultures oppress some of their members, in particular women, and . . . they are often able to socialize these oppressed members so that they accept, without question, their designated cultural status.” For example, clitoridectomy (the removal of the clitoris) and other forms of genital cutting and the prearranged marriage of children are accepted practices within some cultures. What, if anything, should be done when people from such cultures move to Western societies, where those practices are considered violations of individual rights? Should their adoptive countries accept these practices out of respect for different cultural traditions? Or should Western notions of individual freedom, human rights, and gender equality trump these traditional customs? Such questions are often debated in Europe where, for example, countries have considered policies that prohibit Muslim women from wearing face-covering veils in public places. France and Belgium imposed such bans nationally; other countries allow local jurisdictions to do so, although sometimes only in certain settings such as schools. The reasons given for these bans include concerns that veils undermine gender equality, clash with secular values, and—in the case of full-body burkas—may even be used to hide weapons or explosives for terrorist acts (BBC 2014). This issue raises complex questions about incompatible cultural values and practices and challenges us to consider whether it is legitimate to condemn cultural practices we find offensive and whether we can articulate a universal standard of human rights.

Some U.S. critics of multiculturalism are not concerned with such questions because they reject its value entirely. Instead of encouraging people from diverse cultural traditions to coexist peacefully, these critics argue that new immigrants must assimilate into the dominant culture of their adoptive country; otherwise, they maintain, the common ground that is essential to unite a nation will be lost (Huntington 2005; Schmidt 1997). Some of these critics call for teaching Christian values in schools, the adoption of “English-only”

laws, an end to bilingual education, and strict limits on immigration, among other measures, to shore up the dominant culture. Anti-Muslim sentiments are sometimes expressed as fear that “sharia law” will be imposed in the United States. In fact, sharia is a set of guiding principles

SPOTLIGHT

on social theory

Emile Durkheim, whose work was influential for the proponents of **functionalism**, focused on social solidarity—on how cultural values serve to unite people. How do you see this process working today in multicultural societies like that of the United States?

based on Muslim teachings—not laws—and its incorporation into the U.S. legal code is a far-fetched proposition, but it still fuels considerable anxiety. Several states have even enacted “foreign law” legislation banning sharia from being used in U.S. courts (Quraishi-Landes 2016). As we will explore in Chapter 10, these arguments are similar to those made a century ago when new Irish, Russian, Italian, Polish, and other European immigrants arrived in the United States in great numbers. Back then these ethnic cultures were seen as a threat to American values.

Societies need common ground—supplied by their cultures—to function successfully, and sociologists since Emile Durkheim have recognized this need. Nevertheless, cultures are also evolving constantly. Think about how global travel, electronic communications, the global economy, and widespread immigration have changed contemporary society. Already contemporary U.S. society has found many ways to accommodate the peaceful coexistence of diverse cultural traditions.

In fact, culture can also be a basis for connection and exchange in ways that help prevent, or even heal, conflicts. Cross-cultural experiences—from reading the novels, studying the art, or learning about the cuisine of another culture to traveling to other countries, studying new languages, or hosting foreign visitors in your home or school—may provide a bridge that promotes greater understanding and improved relationships across national boundaries. Despite the recent backlash, the historical trend has been in the direction of increased tolerance, accommodation, and appreciation among different cultures.

Cultural Activism

Many people are understandably passionate about cultural issues, which often reflect their deepest concerns. As a result, people from across the political spectrum participate in a wide range of public activities aimed at promoting or contesting culturally specific ideas and practices. In this section, we briefly review three contemporary forms of cultural activism: organizations that promote cultural pride, religious fundamentalism, and anticorporate activism.

Cultural Pride Organizations In communities throughout the United States, a variety of civic organizations maintain and promote particular cultures. They provide children with classes about their cultural heritage and sponsor festivals and other events celebrating their traditions. Because New York City is so ethnically diverse, activities celebrating cultural pride take place throughout the city all year long, including the St. Patrick’s Day Parade in March, celebrating the experiences of the Irish and Irish Americans; the Puerto Rican Day Parade in June; the West Indian Carnival in September, which celebrates Caribbean cultures and histories; and the Chinese New Year Parade in January or February. The idea of embracing and celebrating one’s cultural heritage has become firmly embedded in U.S. society as well as in many other countries.

Religious Fundamentalism A worldwide resurgence of religious belief among fundamentalists, who believe in the literal interpretation of sacred texts such as the Bible and the Qur’an,



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In one example of cultural misunderstanding, *jihad* has widely come to be associated with violent conflict as a result of extremist actions. However, *jihad* means “struggling in the way of God” and typically implies working for things such as goodness, justice, compassion, and self-improvement. One attempt to educate the public about this misperception was a “My Jihad” media campaign, highlighting the more common meaning of the term as a way to take back Islam “from Muslim and anti-Muslim extremists alike” (myjihad.org).

represents another form of cultural activism. Whether at home or abroad, religious fundamentalists are using their faith as the basis for their activism. They criticize the cultural values and practices of Western secular society and develop ways to preserve and promote their own cultural values.

Islamic fundamentalists have challenged the export of Western culture to traditionally Muslim societies. They condemn what they perceive as the hedonism and decadent lifestyles promoted in such cultural products, themes that they say contradict Islamic teachings. They are especially angered by what they see as anti-Islamic media content. Pakistan, for example, ordered internet providers to block Facebook in 2010 because one of its pages promoted “Everybody Draw Mohammed Day”—an action that violates Islamic beliefs. The ban was lifted once the page was removed. Islamic fundamentalists have turned to strict religious schooling and mass media, especially the internet, to promote traditional values and defend them against the onslaught of Western media.

Similarly, in the United States, Christian fundamentalists have fought—unsuccessfully—to eliminate from the mainstream media sexual imagery, violence, positive portrayals of homosexuality, and other content they find objectionable and contrary to their religious teachings. At the same time, these activists promote their religious beliefs through homeschooling, religiously based private schools, religious radio and television broadcasting, and religious books, movies, pop music, and other media content. These efforts have had a significant impact on the political culture of the United States, where religious conservatives have been a significant political and cultural force. After his organization, the Faith and Freedom Coalition, hosted a forum for Republican candidates in the 2016 presidential election,



©Nicholas Kamm/AFP/Getty Images

In the past several decades, Christian conservatives played a significant role in U.S. politics, often applying their interpretation of biblical teaching to contemporary social issues, such as abortion, and insisting that the United States should be considered a Christian nation. What are some of the potentially positive and negative consequences of intermingling religious faith with political activity?

activist Timothy Head claimed, “The conservative Christian vote still remains the largest political constituency in all of American politics” (Jackson 2015).

Anticorporate Activism The role corporations play in shaping culture is a source of contention in many countries. Critics of corporate power in the United States and elsewhere, especially on the political left, engage in yet another form of cultural activism, protesting concentrated media ownership and an unregulated global economy. In the United States, anticorporate cultural activists have established small but vibrant independent media outlets for music, art, news, and other cultural products outside of the mainstream commercial corporate system. Groups such as the Media Foundation, with its

signature magazine *Adbusters*, promote a form of activism called “culture jamming,” which refashions popular brand images to express a critical message about commercial culture, as in the example shown (DeLaure, Fink, and Dery 2017). One group (add-art.org) has taken this battle online with software that replaces ads with artwork.

Whether they are motivated by pride in a culture, by religious belief, or by opposition to corporate power, campaigns by cultural activists often lead to passionate public expression and debate. Although many of the issues taken on by cultural activists receive scant attention in mainstream public policy arenas, this form of activism often produces broad public discussion, testifying to the significance of culture in our everyday lives.



Courtesy of Adbusters Media Foundation, adbusters.org

Culture jamming is a form of activism that attaches new and subversive meanings to well-known corporate brands, often rewriting popular advertising campaigns. This example was produced by Adbusters. Complete with the Nike swoosh, it associates the Nike brand with slave labor—a powerful critique of Nike’s labor practices.

A Changing World

CULTURE AND GLOBALIZATION

About 200 million people live in Africa's most populous country, Nigeria, where the largest ethnic groups are the Hausa and Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, and Ijaw. But in the country's most successful movies, those cultures have been invisible. Indeed, in 2013, the biggest box office hit of the year was the Hollywood film *White House Down*. The previous year, it had been the James Bond film *Skyfall*. Year after year, imported Western—usually U.S.—films have dominated the Nigerian box office. Television, too, is full of Western programs, because importing these shows is cheaper than making TV programs at home.

Much of the rest of the world has been experiencing a similar media-driven globalization of culture (Crothers 2009). One analysis found that U.S. films made up 6 of the top 10 movies of 2012 and 2013 across 51 countries. But this measure varies significantly by region. Up to 8 of the top 10 films in Latin America were from the United States, but in India and South Korea less than half were (UNESCO 2015,129). As in Nigeria, media globalization has primarily meant a massive export of Western television, film, music, and other cultural products to poorer nations that lack the resources or technological infrastructure to support a large media industry of their own. While often popular, these Western products also generate resentment as a kind of foreign invasion that is displacing local cultural practices and challenging traditional values and lifeways. As David Makali, then-director of the Media Institute in Nairobi, put it, "In Kenya, TV has become a major avenue of cultural promotion, and it is really terrible the way Western culture has taken over. The people are being brainwashed, and we are losing out culturally" (Miranda 2003).

The flood of U.S. media inundating foreign markets may have crested, however (Akpabio and Mustapha-Lambe 2008; Flew 2007; UNESCO 2015). India and China, especially, have played an increasingly significant role in exporting cultural products. As new technologies have reduced the cost of media production, local media industries have begun competing for local audiences, though their products are almost never seen in Western cinemas or television. Locally produced programs, finely attuned to local cultures—and now distributed through new digital media platforms—are very popular, offering viewers alternatives to homogenized global content.

In Nigeria, the film industry has exploded, coming to be known as Nollywood. Nigeria is now the world's second-largest movie producer, just behind India and just ahead of the United States. Such projects, often produced on a shoestring budget, are unable to match the slick production values of expensive Western fare, but they are finding an audience. The country's few



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cinemas are dominated by Western films, so local movies are often shown informally in home theaters and community spaces. In 2011, iROKOTv.com—sometimes referred to as the “Netflix of Africa”—launched, offering a wide variety of African-made films on-demand for home viewing. The project suggests the potential appeal of African films elsewhere: the largest numbers of subscribers come from the United States, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean, and Australia.

The opportunities for communication among cultures are greater than ever before. In 2016, Nollywood even had an international hit with the romantic comedy *The Wedding Party*, sparking a 2018 sequel. However, because of the imbalance between wealthy and poor parts of the globe, affluent countries have been doing most of the talking, overwhelming the cultures of other parts of the world. Armed with today's technologies, though, artists in poor countries can feasibly begin to make themselves heard.



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The on-demand internet streaming service iROKOTv.com is the “Netflix of Africa,” highlighting the work of Nigerian filmmakers and offering viewers around the world an alternative to typical Western fare.

thinking sociologically about Culture

- Culture must be learned and can be thought of as all aspects of society that are transmitted socially rather than biologically. Culture consists of both nonmaterial and material elements: values, beliefs, knowledge, and norms; symbols and language; behavior and objects.
- Our own culture can be so familiar to us that we often fail to recognize its various elements or even why it matters. A sociological approach illuminates the often-hidden ways that culture helps define our identities and our relationship to our broader communities.
- Sociologists have long paid attention to the assumptions built into any culture, arguing that what we take for granted is one of the keys to recognizing how culture and power are intertwined.
- Culture is highly diverse, varying across time and among different societies as well as within a single society. Humans meet their basic needs by adopting a variety of culture-specific behaviors.
- Most societies contain a dominant culture, as well as a number of subcultures. These subcultures—including countercultures—often introduce innovation and change to mainstream culture.
- Living in a multicultural society gives us an opportunity to learn about and appreciate the rich diversity of human cultures. But diversity also brings challenges and problems; cultural differences are often the basis for inequality and conflict.

REVIEW, REFLECT, AND APPLY

Looking Back

1. Culture is an essential part of social life. It must be taught and learned and exists only in the context of groups.
2. The elements of culture include values, beliefs, knowledge, and norms (the ideas of culture); language and other forms of symbolic communication (for transmitting culture); and behaviors and material objects.
3. Within each culture, there is a dominant ideology that generally supports the current social system and serves the interests of those in authority.
4. Most societies contain a dominant culture as well as a number of subcultures and countercultures.
5. Multiculturalism refers to the willingness to recognize, value, and protect the distinct cultures that make up a society.
6. Ethnocentrism is the practice of judging another culture by the standards of one's own. In contrast, cultural relativism is the practice of understanding a culture by its own standards.
7. Examples of cultural activism include cultural pride organizations, religious fundamentalism, and anticorporate activism.
8. Media globalization has primarily taken the form of the massive export of Western—primarily U.S.—media products to poorer nations. The flood of U.S. media may have crested, however, as local media industries have begun to take advantage of new digital technologies to compete for local audiences.

Critical Thinking: Questions and Activities

1. Why is “culture” a core concept in sociology? How can the concept of culture help us understand social life?
2. Why do changes in today’s world make it especially important to understand the concept of culture?
3. Imagine that, because of your sociological training, you have been chosen to select the items to be included in a time capsule for your community that will be opened 100 years from now. Assuming the time capsule is about the size of a large suitcase, what cultural artifacts would you choose to represent your “way of life”? Explain why you believe these items are the most important.
4. Suppose you live in a foreign country and know little about the United States. Watch an hour of prime-time television and take careful notes about what you have learned about U.S. society. Were the media images you saw an accurate representation of U.S. society? Why or why not? What lessons about the United States might the export of such cultural products be teaching people in other societies?

Key Terms

behaviors (p. 61) the actions associated with a group that help reproduce a distinct way of life.

beliefs (p. 55) the specific convictions or opinions that people generally accept as being true.

counterculture (p. 64) a subculture that champions values and lifestyles distinctly opposed to those of the dominant culture.

cultural lag (p. 57) the ways that new technological developments often outpace the norms that govern our collective experiences with these new technologies.

cultural object (p. 61) a physical item that is created by and associated with people who share a culture.

cultural relativism (p. 69) the practice of understanding a culture by its own standards.

culture (p. 52) the collection of values, beliefs, knowledge, norms, language, behaviors, and material objects shared by a people and socially transmitted from generation to generation.

culture shock (p. 56) the experience of being disoriented because of a lack of knowledge about an unfamiliar social situation.

culture war (p. 55) an intense disagreement about core values and moral positions.

dialect (p. 59) a variant of a language with its own distinctive accent, vocabulary, and in some cases grammatical characteristics.

dominant culture (p. 63) a culture that permeates a society and that represents the ideas and practices of those in positions of power.

dominant ideology (p. 62) a widely held and regularly reinforced set of assumptions that generally support the current social system and serve the interests of authorities.

ethnocentrism (p. 69) the judging of other cultures by the standards of one’s own on the assumption that one’s own is superior.

folkways (p. 58) group habits or customs that are common in a given culture.

high culture (p. 65) cultural forms associated with—and especially valued by—elites.

ideal culture (p. 61) what the members of a culture report to be their values, beliefs, and norms.

ideology (p. 62) a system of meaning that helps define and explain the world and that makes value judgments about that world.

knowledge (cultural) (p. 56) the range of information, awareness, and understanding that helps us navigate our world.

language (p. 59) an elaborate system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another in complex ways.

material culture (p. 52) the physical objects produced by people in a particular culture, including tools, clothing, toys, works of art, and housing.

mores (p. 58) norms that are strictly enforced, with potentially severe penalties for violating them.

multiculturalism (p. 66) the recognition, valuing, and protection of the distinct cultures that make up a society.

nonmaterial culture (p. 52) the ideas of a culture, including values and beliefs, accumulated knowledge about how to understand and navigate the world, and standards or “norms” about appropriate behavior.

norms (p. 56) a culture’s rules and expectations for “appropriate” behavior.

popular culture (p. 65) cultural forms that are widespread and commonly embraced within a society.

real culture (p. 61) what members of a culture actually do, which may or may not reflect the ideal.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (p. 59) the idea that because of their different cultural content and structure, languages affect how their speakers think and behave.

society (p. 52) a group of people who live together in a specific territory and share a culture.

subculture (p. 63) a culture associated with a smaller group in society that has distinct norms, values, and lifestyles setting it apart from the dominant culture.

symbol (p. 58) anything—a sound, a gesture, an image, an object—that represents something else.

taboos (p. 58) norms with the most severe prohibition or restriction.

value (p. 53) a deeply held principle or standard that people use to make judgments about the world, especially in deciding what is desirable or worthwhile.

xenophobia (p. 69) an unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners or people from other cultures.