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PEARSON

3 Culture

Learning Objectives

Remember the definitions of the key terms highlighted in boldfaced type throughout this chapter.

Understand the historical process through which human beings came to live within a symbolic world we call "culture."

Apply sociology's macro-level theoretical approaches to culture in order to better understand our way of life.

Analyze popular television programming and films to see how they reflect the key values of U.S. culture.

Evaluate cultural differences, informed by an understanding of two important sociological concepts: ethnocentrism and cultural relativism.

Create a broader vision of U.S. culture by studying cultural diversity, including popular culture as well as subcultural and countercultural patterns.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter focuses on the concept of "culture," which refers to a society's entire way of life. Notice that the root of the word "culture" is the same as that of the word "cultivate," suggesting that people living together in a society actually "grow" their way of life over time. ▪

It's late on a Tuesday night, but Fang Lin gazes intently at her computer screen. Dong Wang, her husband, walks up behind the chair.

"I'm trying to finish organizing our investments," Fang explains, speaking in Chinese.

"I didn't realize that we could do that online in our own language," Dong says, reading the screen. "That's great. I like that a lot."

Fang and Dong are not alone in feeling this way. Back in 1990, executives of Charles Schwab & Co., a large investment brokerage corporation, gathered at the company's headquarters in San Francisco to discuss ways to expand their business. They came up with the idea that the company would profit by giving greater attention to the increasing cultural diversity of the United States. Pointing to data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, they saw that the number of Asian Americans was rising rapidly, not just in San Francisco but also all over the country. The data also showed that Asian Americans, on average, were doing pretty well financially. That's still true, with more than half of today's Asian American families earning more than $65,000 a year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

At the 1990 meeting, Schwab's leaders decided to launch a diversity initiative, assigning three executives to work on building awareness of the company among Asian Americans. The program really took off, and today Schwab employs more than 300 people who speak Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, or some other Asian language. Having account executives who speak languages other than English is smart because research shows that most immigrants who come to the United States prefer to communicate in their first language, especially when dealing with important matters such as investing their money. In addition, the company has launched Web sites using Chinese, Korean, and other Asian languages. Fang Lin and Dong Wang are just two of the millions of people who have opened accounts with companies that reach out to them in a language other than English.

Schwab now manages a significant share of the investments made by Asian Americans, who spent about $250 billion in 2009. So any company would do well to follow the lead Schwab has taken. Other ethnic and racial categories that represent even larger markets in the United States are African Americans (spending more than $500 billion) and Hispanics ($600 billion) (Fattah, 2002; Karrfalt, 2003; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; U.S. Department of Labor, 2010).

Businesses like Schwab have learned that the United States is the most *multicultural* nation of all. This cultural diversity reflects the country's long history of receiving immigrants from all over the world. The ways of life found around the world differ, not only in language and forms of dress but also in preferred foods, musical tastes, family patterns, and beliefs about right and wrong. Some of the world's people have many children, while others have few; some honor the elderly, while others seem to glorify youth. Some societies are peaceful, while others are warlike; and societies around the world embrace a thousand different religious beliefs as well as particular ideas about what is polite and rude, beautiful and ugly, pleasant and repulsive. This amazing human capacity for so many different ways of life is a matter of human culture.

What Is Culture?

● Understand

Culture is *the ways of thinking, the ways of acting, and the material objects that together form a people's way of life.* Culture includes what we think, how we act, and what we own. Culture is both our link to the past and our guide to the future.
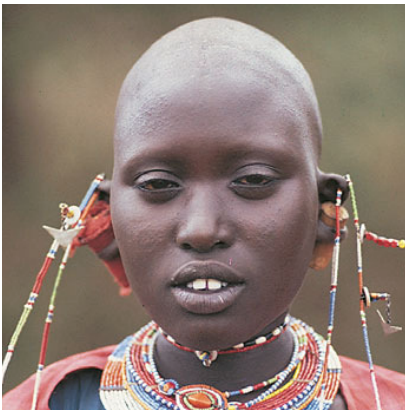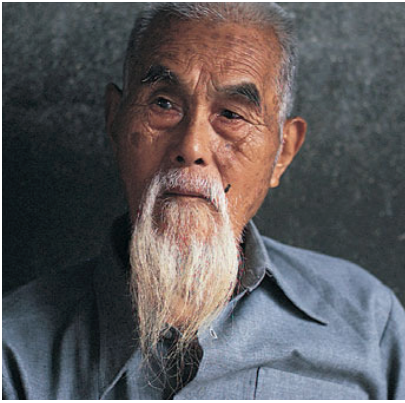
Human beings around the globe create diverse ways of life. Such differences begin with outward appearance: Contrast the women shown here from Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Thailand, South Yemen, and the United States and the men from Taiwan (Republic of China), Ecuador, and Papua New Guinea. Less obvious but of even greater importance are internal differences, since culture also shapes our goals in life, our sense of justice, and even our innermost personal feelings.

To understand all that culture is, we must consider both thoughts and things. **Nonmaterial culture** is *the ideas created by members of a society,* ideas that range from art to Zen. **Material culture,** by contrast, is *the physical things created by members of a society,* everything from armchairs to zippers.

Culture shapes not only what we do but also what we think and how we feel—elements of what we commonly, but wrongly, describe as "human nature." The warlike Yąnomamö of the Brazilian rain for-est think aggression is natural, but halfway around the world, the Semai of Malaysia live quite peacefully. The cultures of the United States and Japan both stress achievement and hard work, but members of our society value individualism more than the Japanese, who value collective harmony.

Given the extent of cultural differences in the world and people's tendency to view their own way of life as "natural," it is no wonder that travelers often find themselves feeling uneasy as they enter an unfamil-

Confronting the Yąnomamö:
The Experience of Culture Shock

A small aluminum motorboat chugged steadily along the muddy Orinoco River, deep within South America's vast tropical rain forest. The anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon was nearing the end of a three-day journey to the home territory of the Yąnomamö, one of the most technologically simple societies on Earth.

Some 12,000 Yąnomamö live in villages scattered along the border of Venezuela and Brazil. Their way of life could not be more different from our own. The Yąnomamö wear little clothing and live without electricity, automobiles, cell phones, or other conveniences most people in the United States take for granted. Their traditional weapon, used for hunting and warfare, is the bow and arrow. Since most of the Yąnomamö knew little about the outside world, Chagnon would be as strange to them as they would be to him.

By 2:00 in the afternoon, Chagnon had almost reached his destination. The heat and humidity were becoming unbearable. He was soaked with perspiration, and his face and hands swelled from the bites of gnats swarming around him. But he hardly noticed, so excited was he that in just a few moments, he would be face to face with people unlike any he had ever known.

Chagnon's heart pounded as the boat slid onto the riverbank. He and his guide climbed from the boat and headed toward the sounds of a nearby village, pushing their way through the dense undergrowth. Chagnon describes what happened next:

I looked up and gasped when I saw a dozen burly, naked, sweaty, hideous men staring at us down the shafts of their drawn arrows! Immense wads of green tobacco were stuck between their lower teeth and lips, making them look even more hideous, and strands of dark green slime dripped or hung from their nostrils—strands so long that they clung to their [chests] or drizzled down their chins.

My next discovery was that there were a dozen or so vicious, underfed dogs snapping at my legs, circling me as if I were to be their next meal. I just stood there holding my notebook, helpless and pathetic. Then the stench of the decaying vegetation and filth hit me and I almost got sick. I was horrified. What kind of welcome was this for the person who came here to live with you and learn your way of life, to become friends with you? (1992:11–12)

Fortunately for Chagnon, the Yąnomamö villagers recognized his guide and lowered their weapons. Though reassured that he would survive the afternoon, Chagnon was still shaken by his inability to make any sense of the people surrounding him. And this was going to be his home for the next year and a half! He wondered why he had given up physics to study human culture in the first place.

Join the Blog!

Can you think of an experience of your own similar to the one described here? Do you think you ever caused culture shock in others? Go to MySocLab and join the Sociology in Focus blog to share your opinions and experiences and to see what others think.

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iar culture. This uneasiness is **culture shock**, *personal disorientation when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life.* People can experience culture shock right here in the United States when, say, African Americans explore an Iranian neighborhood in Los Angeles, college students venture into the Amish countryside in Ohio, or New Yorkers travel through small towns in the Deep South. But culture shock is most intense when we travel abroad: The Sociology in Focus box tells the story of a researcher from the United States as he makes his first visit to the home of the Yąnomamö living in the Amazon region of South America.

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culture the ways of thinking, the ways of acting, and the material objects that together form a people's way of life

nonmaterial culture the ideas created by members of a society

material culture the physical things created by members of a society

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January 2, high in the Andes Mountains of Peru. Here in the rural highlands, people are poor and depend on one another. The culture is built on cooperation among family members and neighbors who have lived nearby for many generations. Today, we spent an hour watching a new house being constructed. A young couple had invited their families and many friends, who arrived at about 6:30 in the morning, and right away they began building. By midafternoon, most of the work was finished, and the couple then provided a large meal, drinks, and music that continued for the rest of the day.

No particular way of life is "natural" to humanity, even though most people around the world view their own behavior that way. The cooperative spirit that comes naturally in small communities high in the Andes Mountains of Peru is very different from the competitive living that comes naturally to many people in, say, Chicago or New York City. Such variations come from the fact that as human beings, we join together to create our own way of life. Every other animal, from ants to zebras, behaves very much the same all around the world

because behavior is guided by *instincts,* biological programming over which the species has no control. A few animals—notably chimpanzees and related primates—have the capacity for limited culture, as researchers have noted by observing them using tools and teaching simple skills to their offspring. But the creative power of humans is far greater than that of any other form of life and has resulted in countless ways of "being human." In short, *only humans rely on culture rather than instinct to create a way of life and ensure our survival* (Harris, 1987; Morell, 2008). To understand how human culture came to be, we need to look back at the history of our species.

Culture and Human Intelligence

Scientists tell us that our planet is 4.5 billion years old (see the timeline inside the back cover of this text). Life appeared about 1 billion years later. Fast-forward another 2 to 3 billion years, and we find dinosaurs ruling Earth. It was after these giant creatures disappeared, some 65 million years ago, that our history took a crucial turn with the appearance of the animals we call primates.

The importance of primates is that they have the largest brains relative to body size of all living creatures. About 12 million years ago, primates began to evolve along two different lines, setting humans apart from the great apes, our closest relatives. Some 5 million years ago, our distant human ancestors climbed down from the trees of Central Africa to move about in the tall grasses. There, walking upright, they learned the advantages of hunting in groups and made use of fire, tools, and weapons; built simple shelters; and fashioned basic clothing. These Stone Age achievements may seem modest, but they mark the point at which our ancestors set off on a distinct evolutionary course, making culture their primary strategy for survival. By about 250,000 years ago, our own species, *Homo sapiens* (Latin for "intelligent person"), finally emerged. Humans continued to evolve so that by about 40,000 years ago, people who looked more or less like us roamed the planet. With larger brains, these "modern" *Homo sapiens* developed culture rapidly, as the wide range of tools and cave art from this period suggests.

About 12,000 years ago, the founding of permanent settlements and the creation of specialized occupations in the Middle East (today's Iraq and Egypt) marked the "birth of civilization." About this point, the biological forces we call instincts had mostly disappeared, replaced by a more efficient survival scheme: *fashioning the natural environment for ourselves.* Ever since, humans have made and remade their world in countless ways, resulting in today's fascinating cultural diversity.

Culture, Nation, and Society

The term "culture" calls to mind other similar terms, such as "nation" and "society," although each has a slightly different meaning. *Culture* refers to a shared way of life. A *nation* is a political entity, a territory with designated borders, such as the United States, Canada, Peru, or Zimbabwe. *Society,* the topic of Chapter 4, is the organized interaction of people who typically live in a nation or some other specific territory.

The United States, then, is both a nation and a society. But many nations, including the United States, are *multicultural;* that

All societies contain cultural differences that can provoke a mild case of culture shock. This woman traveling on a British subway is not sure what to make of the woman sitting next to her, who is wearing the Muslim full-face veil known as the *niqab*.

is, their people follow various ways of life that blend (and sometimes clash).

How Many Cultures?

In the United States, how many cultures are there? One indicator of culture is language; the Census Bureau lists more than 300 languages spoken in this country—almost half of them (134) are native languages with the rest brought by immigrants from nations around the world (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Globally, experts document almost 7,000 languages, suggesting the existence of just as many distinct cultures. Yet with the number of languages spoken around the world declining, roughly half of those 7,000 languages now are spoken by fewer than 10,000 people. Experts expect that the coming decades may see the disappearance of hundreds of these languages, and perhaps half the world's languages may even disappear before the end of this century (Crystal, 2010). Languages on the endangered list include Gullah, Pennsylvania German, and Pawnee (all spoken in the United States), Han (spoken in northwestern Canada), Oro (spoken in the Amazon region of Brazil), Sardinian (spoken on the European island of Sardinia), Aramaic (the language of Jesus of Nazareth, still spoken in the Middle East), Nu Shu (a language spoken in southern China that is the only one known to be used exclusively by women), and Wakka Wakka as well as several other Aboriginal tongues spoken in Australia. As you might expect, when a language is becoming extinct, the last people to speak it are the oldest members of a society. What accounts for the worldwide decline in the number of spoken languages? The main reason is globalization itself, including high-technology communication, increasing international migration, and the expanding worldwide economy (UNESCO, 2001; Barovick, 2002; Hayden, 2003; Lewis, 2009).

New Symbols in the World of Instant Messaging

Molly: gr8 to c u!

Greg: u 2

Molly: jw about next time

Greg: idk, lotta work!

Molly: no prb, xoxoxo

Greg: thanx, bcnu

The world of symbols changes all the time. One reason that people create new symbols is that we develop new ways to communicate. Today, more than 150 million people in the United States communicate by "texting" using cell phones or handheld computers. Texting has become a way of life among young people in their late teens and twenties, more than 95 percent of whom own a cell phone. The exchange featured above shows how everyday social interaction can take place quickly and easily using instant messaging (IM) symbols. Because the symbols people use change all the time, the IM language used a year from now will also differ, just as IM symbols differ from place to place. Here are some common IM symbols:

b be
bc because
b4 before
b4n 'bye for now
bbl be back later
bcnu be seeing you
brb be right back
cu see you
def definitely

g2g got to go
gal get a life
gmta great minds think alike
gr8 great
hagn have a good night
h&k hugs and kisses
idc I don't care
idt I don't think
idk I don't know
imbl it must be love
jk just kidding
jw just wondering
j4f just for fun
kc keep cool
l8r later
lmao laugh my ass off
ltnc long time no see
myob mind your own business
no prb no problem

omg oh my gosh
pcm please call me
plz please
prbly probably
qpsa ¿Que pasa?
rt right
thanx thanks
u you
ur you are
w/ with
w/e whatever
w/o without
wan2 want to
wtf what the freak
y why
2l8 too late
? question
2 to, two
4 for, four

What Do You Think?

1. What does the creation of symbols such as those listed here suggest about culture?

2. Do you think that using such symbols is a good way to communicate? Does it lead to confusion or misunderstanding? Why or why not?

3. What other kinds of symbols can you think of that are new to your generation?

Sources: J. Rubin (2003), Berteau (2005), Bacher (2009), and Lenhart (2010).

The Elements of Culture

🔵 Understand

Although cultures vary greatly, they all have common elements, including symbols, language, values, and norms. We begin our discussion with the one that is the basis for all the others: symbols.

Symbols

Like all creatures, humans use their senses to experience the surrounding world, but unlike others, we also try to give the world *meaning*. Humans transform elements of the world into *symbols*. A **symbol** is *anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share a culture*. A word, a whistle, a wall covered with graffiti, a flashing red light, a raised fist—all serve as symbols. We can see the human capacity to create and manipulate symbols reflected in the very different meanings associated with the simple act of winking an eye, which can convey interest, understanding, or insult.

Societies create new symbols all the time. The Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life box describes some of the "cyber-symbols" that have developed along with our increasing use of computers for communication.

We are so dependent on our culture's symbols that we take them for granted. However, we become keenly aware of the importance of a symbol when someone uses it in an unconventional way, as when a person burns a U.S. flag during a political demonstration. Entering an unfamiliar culture also reminds us of the power of symbols; culture shock is really the inability to "read" meaning in strange surroundings. Not understanding the symbols of a culture leaves a person feeling lost and isolated, unsure of how to act, and sometimes frightened.

Culture shock is a two-way process. On one hand, travelers *experience* culture shock when encountering people whose way of life is different. For example, North Americans who consider dogs beloved household pets might be put off by the Masai of eastern Africa, who

ignore dogs and never feed them. The same travelers might be horrified to find that in parts of Indonesia and the People's Republic of China, people roast dogs for dinner.

On the other hand, a traveler may *inflict* culture shock on local people by acting in ways that offend them. A North American who asks for a steak in an Indian restaurant may unknowingly offend Hindus, who consider cows sacred and never to be eaten. Global travel provides almost endless opportunities for this kind of misunderstanding.

Symbolic meanings also vary within a single society. To some people in the United States, a fur coat represents a prized symbol of success, but to others it represents the inhumane treatment of animals. In the debate about flying the Confederate flag over the South Carolina statehouse a few years ago, some people saw the flag as a symbol of regional pride, but others saw it as a symbol of racial oppression.

Language

An illness in infancy left Helen Keller (1880–1968) blind and deaf. Without these two senses, she was cut off from the symbolic world, and her social development was greatly limited. Only when her teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, broke through Keller's isolation using sign language did Helen Keller begin to realize her human potential. This remarkable woman, who later became a famous educator herself, recalls the moment she first understood the concept of language:

> We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the smell of honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water, and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word *water,* first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul; gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! (1903:24)

Language, the key to the world of culture, is *a system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another.* Humans have created many alphabets to express the hundreds of languages we speak. Several examples are shown in Figure 3–1. Even rules for writing differ: Most people in Western societies write from left to right, but people in northern Africa and western Asia write from right to left, and people in eastern Asia write from top to bottom. Global Map 3–1 on page 60 shows where we find the three most widely spoken languages: English, Chinese, and Spanish.

Language not only allows communication but is also the key to **cultural transmission**, *the process by which one generation passes culture to the next.* Just

People throughout the world communicate not just with spoken words but also with bodily gestures. Because gestures vary from culture to culture, they can occasionally be the cause of misunderstandings. For instance, the commonplace "thumbs up" gesture we use to express "Good job!" can get a person from the United States into trouble in Greece, Iran, and a number of other countries, where people take it to mean "Up yours!"

FIGURE 3–1   Human Languages: A Variety of Symbols

Here the English word "read" is written in twelve of the hundreds of languages humans use to communicate with one another.

as our bodies contain the genes of our ancestors, our culture contains countless symbols of those who came before us. Language is the key that unlocks centuries of accumulated wisdom.

Throughout human history, every society has transmitted culture by using speech, a process sociologists call the "oral cultural tradition." Some 5,000 years ago, humans invented writing, although at that time only a privileged few learned to read and write. Not until the twentieth century did high-income nations boast of nearly universal literacy. Still, about 14 percent of U.S. adults (more than 30 million people) are functionally illiterate, unable to read and write in a society that increasingly demands such skills. In low-income countries of the world, 15 percent of men and 24 percent of women are illiterate (U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Population Reference Bureau, 2011).

Language skills may link us with the past, but they also spark the human imagination to connect symbols in new ways, creating an almost limitless range of future possibilities. Language sets humans apart as the only creatures who are self-conscious, aware of our limitations and ultimate mortality, yet able to dream and to hope for a future better than the present.

Does Language Shape Reality?

Does someone who thinks and speaks using Cherokee, an American Indian language, experience the world differently from other North Americans who think in, say, English or Spanish? Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf claimed that the answer is yes, since each language has its own distinctive symbols that serve as the building blocks of reality (Sapir, 1929, 1949; Whorf, 1956, orig. 1941). Further, they noted that each language has words or expressions not found in any other symbolic

Window on the World

GLOBAL MAP 3–1   Language in Global Perspective

Chinese (including Mandarin, Cantonese, and dozens of other dialects) is the native tongue of one-fifth of the world's people, almost all of whom live in Asia. Although all Chinese people read and write with the same characters, they use several dozen dialects. The "official" dialect, taught in schools throughout the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Taiwan, is Mandarin (the dialect of Beijing, China's capital). Cantonese, the language of Canton, is the second most common Chinese dialect; it differs in sound from Mandarin roughly the way French differs from Spanish.

Chinese
- Official language
- Widely spoken second language

English is the native tongue or official language in several world regions (spoken by 5 percent of humanity) and has become the preferred second language in of the world.

English
- Official language
- Widely spoken second language

The largest concentration of Spanish speakers is in Latin America and, of course, Spain. Spanish is also the second most widely spoken language in the United States.

Sources: Lewis (2009), and World Factbook (2009).
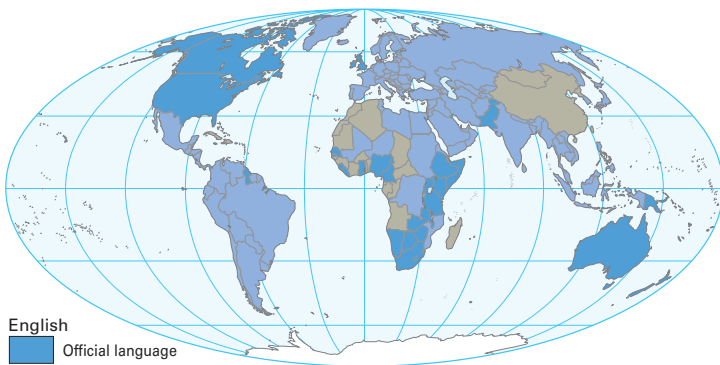
Spanish
- Official language
- Widely spoken second language

system. Finally, all languages fuse symbols with distinctive emotions so that, as multilingual people know, a single idea may "feel" different when spoken in Spanish rather than in English or Chinese.

language a system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another

cultural transmission the process by which one generation passes culture to the next

Sapir-Whorf thesis the idea that people see and understand the world through the cultural lens of language

Formally, the **Sapir-Whorf thesis** states that *people see and understand the world through the cultural lens of language.* In the decades since Sapir and Whorf published their work, however, scholars have taken issue with this thesis. Current thinking is that although we do fashion reality from our symbols, evidence does not support the notion that language *determines* reality the way Sapir and Whorf claimed. For example, we know that children understand the idea of "family" long before they learn that word; similarly, adults can imagine new ideas or things before inventing a name for them (Kay & Kempton, 1984; Pinker, 1994; Deutscher, 2010).

Values and Beliefs

What accounts for the popularity of Hollywood film characters such as James Bond, Neo, Erin Brockovich, Lara Croft, and Rocky Balboa? Each is ruggedly individualistic, going it alone and relying on personal skill and savvy to challenge "the system." We are led to admire such characters by certain **values**, *culturally defined standards that people use to decide what is desirable, good, and beautiful and that serve as broad guidelines for social living.* People who share a culture use values to make choices about how to live.

Values are broad principles that support **beliefs**, *specific thoughts or ideas that people hold to be true.* In other words, values are abstract standards of goodness, and beliefs are particular matters that individuals consider true or false. For example, because most U.S. adults share the *value* of providing equal opportunities for all, they believe that a qualified woman could serve as president of the United States, as the 2008 campaign of Hillary Clinton demonstrated (NORC, 2011:393).

Key Values of U.S. Culture

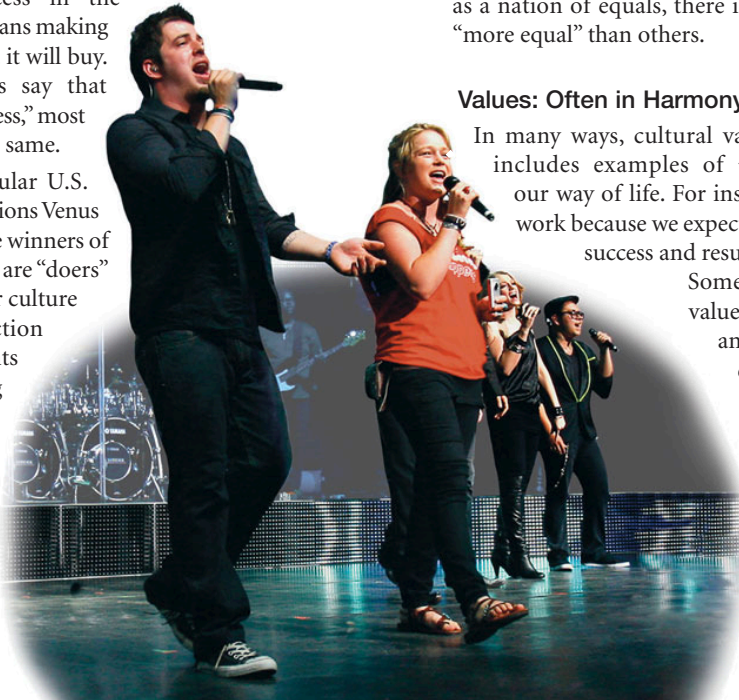Because U.S. culture is a mix of ways of life from other countries all around the world, it is highly diverse. Even so, the sociologist Robin Williams Jr. (1970) identified ten values that are widespread in the United States and viewed by many people as central to our way of life:

1. **Equal opportunity.** Most people in the United States favor not *equality of condition* but *equality of opportunity.* We believe that our society should provide everyone with the chance to get ahead according to individual talents and efforts.

2. **Achievement and success.** Our way of life encourages competition so that each person's rewards should reflect personal merit. A successful person is given the respect due a "winner."

3. **Material comfort.** Success in the United States generally means making money and enjoying what it will buy. Although we sometimes say that "money won't buy happiness," most of us pursue wealth all the same.

4. **Activity and work.** Popular U.S. heroes, from tennis champions Venus and Serena Williams to the winners of television's *American Idol,* are "doers" who get the job done. Our culture values action over reflection and taking control of events over passively accepting fate.

5. **Practicality and efficiency.** We value the practical over the theo-

How does the popularity of the television show *American Idol* illustrate many of the key values of U.S. culture listed here?

retical, "doing" over "dreaming." Activity has value to the extent that it earns money. "Major in something that will help you get a job!" parents tell their college-age children.

6. **Progress.** We are an optimistic people who, despite waves of nostalgia, believe that the present is better than the past. We celebrate progress, viewing the "very latest" as the "very best."

7. **Science.** We expect scientists to solve problems and improve the quality of our lives. We believe we are rational, logical people, which probably explains our cultural tendency (especially among men) to look down on emotion and intuition as sources of knowledge.

8. **Democracy and free enterprise.** Members of our society believe that individuals have rights that governments should not take away. We believe that a just political system is based on free elections in which citizens elect government leaders and on an economy that responds to the choices of individual consumers.

9. **Freedom.** We favor individual initiative over collective conformity. While we know that everyone has responsibilities to others, we believe that people should be free to pursue their personal goals.

10. **Racism and group superiority.** Despite strong ideas about equal opportunity and freedom, most people in the United States judge individuals according to gender, race, ethnicity, and social class. In general, U.S. culture values males above females, whites above people of color, rich above poor, and people with northwestern European backgrounds above those whose ancestors came from other parts of the world. Although we like to describe ourselves as a nation of equals, there is little doubt that some of us are "more equal" than others.

Values: Often in Harmony, Sometimes in Conflict

In many ways, cultural values go together. Williams's list includes examples of *value clusters* that are part of our way of life. For instance, we value activity and hard work because we expect effort to lead to achievement and success and result in greater material comfort.

Sometimes, however, one key cultural value contradicts another. Take the first and last items on Williams's list, for example: People in the United States believe in equality of opportunity, yet they may also look down on others because of their sex or race. Value conflict causes strain and often leads to awkward balancing acts in our beliefs. Sometimes we decide that one value is more important than another by, for example, supporting equal opportunity while opposing
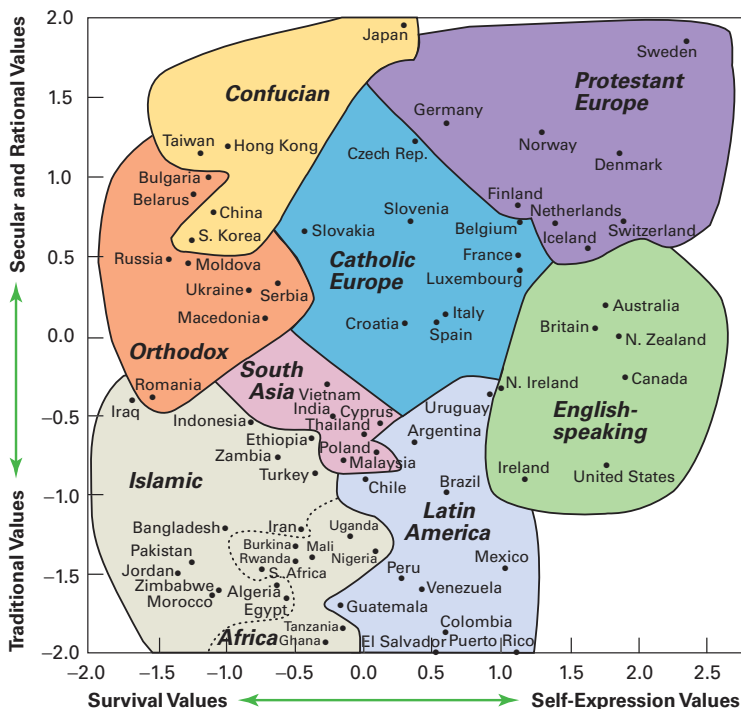
Global Snapshot

FIGURE 3–2 Cultural Values of Selected Countries

A general global pattern is that higher-income countries tend to be secular and rational and favor self-expression. By contrast, the cultures of lower-income countries tend to be more traditional and concerned with economic survival. Each region of the world has distinctive cultural patterns, including religious traditions, that affect values. Looking at the figure, what patterns can you see?

Sources: Inglehart & Welzel (2005) and Inglehart (2010).

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same-sex marriage. In such cases, people simply learn to live with the contradictions.

Emerging Values

Like all elements of culture, values change over time. People in the United States have always valued hard work. In recent decades, however, we have placed increasing importance on leisure—having time off from work to do things such as reading, travel, or community service that provide enjoyment and satisfaction. Similarly, although the importance of material comfort remains strong, more people are seeking personal growth through meditation and other spiritual activity.

Values: A Global Perspective

Values vary from culture to culture around the world. In general, the values that are important in higher-income countries differ somewhat from those common in lower-income countries.

Because lower-income nations contain populations that are vulnerable, people in these countries develop cultures that value sur-

◉─ **Watch** the video "Individual Rights vs. the Common Good" on **mysoclab.com**

vival. This means that people place a great deal of importance on physical safety and economic security. They worry about having enough to eat and a safe place to sleep at night. Lower-income nations also tend to be traditional, with values that celebrate the past and emphasize the importance of family and religious beliefs. These nations, in which men have most of the power, typically discourage or forbid practices such as divorce and abortion.

People in higher-income countries develop cultures that value individualism and self-expression. These countries are rich enough that most of their people take survival for granted, focusing their attention instead on which "lifestyle" they prefer and how to achieve the greatest personal happiness. In addition, these countries tend to be secular-rational, placing less emphasis on family ties and religious beliefs and more on people thinking for themselves and being tolerant of others who differ from them. In higher-income countries, women have social standing more equal to men, and there is widespread support for practices such as divorce and abortion (World Values Survey, 2008). Figure 3–2 shows how selected countries of the world compare in terms of their cultural values.

Norms

Most people in the United States are eager to gossip about "who's hot" and "who's not." Members of American Indian societies, however, typically condemn such behavior as rude and divisive. Both patterns illustrate the operation of **norms**, *rules and expectations by which a society guides the behavior of its members.* In everyday life, people respond to each other with *sanctions,* rewards or punishments that encourage conformity to cultural norms.

Mores and Folkways

William Graham Sumner (1959, orig. 1906), an early U.S. sociologist, recognized that some norms are more important to our lives than others. Sumner coined the term **mores** (pronounced "MORE-ayz") to refer to *norms that are widely observed and have great moral significance.* Mores, which include *taboos,* are the norms in our society that insist, for example, that adults not walk around in public without wearing clothes.

People pay less attention to **folkways**, *norms for routine or casual interaction.* Examples include ideas about appropriate greetings and proper dress. In short, mores distinguish between right and wrong, and folkways draw a line between right and *rude.* A man who does not wear a tie to a formal dinner party may raise eyebrows for violating folkways. If, however, he were to arrive at the party wearing *only* a tie, he would violate cultural mores and invite a more serious response.

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social control attempts by society to regulate people's thoughts and behavior

norms rules and expectations by which a society guides the behavior of its members	**mores** norms that are widely observed and have great moral significance	**folkways** norms for routine or casual interaction

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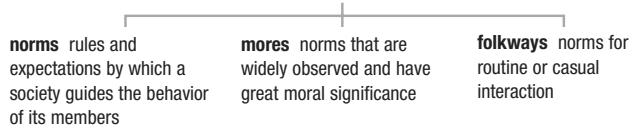
Social Control

Mores and folkways are the basic rules of everyday life. Although we sometimes resist pressure to conform, we can see that norms make our dealings with others more orderly and predictable. Observing or breaking the rules of social life prompts a response from others in the form of either reward or punishment. Sanctions—whether an approving smile or a raised eyebrow—operate as a system of **social control**, *attempts by society to regulate people's thoughts and behavior.*

As we learn cultural norms, we gain the capacity to evaluate our own behavior. Doing wrong (say, downloading a term paper from the Internet) can cause both *shame* (the painful sense that others disapprove of our actions) and *guilt* (a negative judgment we make of ourselves). Of all living things, only cultural creatures can experience shame and guilt. This is probably what Mark Twain had in mind when he remarked that people "are the only animals that blush—or need to."

Ideal and Real Culture

Values and norms do not describe actual behavior so much as they suggest how we *should* behave. We must remember that *ideal* culture always differs from *real* culture, which is what actually occurs in everyday life. For example, most women and men agree on the importance of sexual faithfulness in marriage, and most say they live up to that standard. Even so, about 17 percent of married people report having been sexually unfaithful to their spouses at some point in their marriage (NORC, 2011:2666). But a culture's moral standards are important even if they are sometimes broken, calling to mind the old saying "Do as I say, not as I do."

Material Culture and Technology

In addition to symbolic elements such as values and norms, every culture includes a wide range of physical human creations called *artifacts.* The Chinese eat with chopsticks rather than forks, the Japanese put mats rather than rugs on the floor, and many men and women in India prefer flowing robes to the close-fitting clothing common in the United States. The material culture of a people may seem as strange to outsiders as their language, values, and norms.

A society's artifacts partly reflect underlying cultural values. The warlike Ya̧nomamö carefully craft their weapons and prize the poison tips on their arrows. By contrast, our society's emphasis on individualism and independence goes a long way toward explaining our high regard for the automobile: We own more than 250 million motor vehicles—more than one for every licensed driver—and even in an age of high gasoline prices, many of these are the large sport utility vehicles we might expect rugged, individualistic people to choose.

In addition to reflecting values, material culture also reflects a society's **technology**, *knowledge that people use to make a way of life in their surroundings.* The more complex a society's technology is, the more its members are able (for better or worse) to shape the world for themselves. Advancements in technology have allowed us to crisscross the country with superhighways and to fill them with automobiles. At the same time, the internal-combustion engines in those cars release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which contributes to air pollution and global warming.

Because we attach great importance to science and praise sophisticated technology, people in our society tend to judge cultures with simpler technology as less advanced than our own. Some facts support such an assessment. For example, life expectancy for children born in the United States is more than seventy-eight years; the life span of the Ya̧nomamö is only about forty years.

However, we must be careful not to make self-serving judgments about other cultures. Although many Ya̧nomamö are eager to acquire modern technology (such as steel tools and shotguns), they are generally well fed by world standards, and most are very satisfied with their lives (Chagnon, 1992). Remember too that while our powerful and complex technology has produced work-reducing devices and seemingly miraculous medical treatments, it has also contributed to unhealthy levels of stress and obesity in the population and created weapons capable of destroying in a blinding flash everything that humankind has achieved.

Finally, technology is not equally distributed within our population. Although many of us cannot imagine life without a personal computer, television, and iPhone, many members of U.S. society cannot afford these luxuries. Others reject them on principle. The Amish, who live in small farming communities in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, reject most modern conveniences on religious grounds. With their traditional black clothing and horse-drawn buggies, the Amish may seem like a curious relic of the past. Yet their communities flourish, grounded in strong families that give everyone a sense of identity and purpose. Some researchers who have studied the Amish have concluded that these communities are "islands of sanity in a culture gripped by commercialism and technology run wild" (Hostetler, 1980:4; Kraybill, 1994).

Standards of beauty—including the color and design of everyday surroundings—vary significantly from one culture to another. This Ndebele couple in South Africa dresses in the same bright colors with which they decorate their home. Members of North American and European societies, by contrast, make far less use of bright colors and intricate detail, so their housing appears much more subdued.

Sometimes the distinction between high culture and popular is not so clear. Bonham's Auction House in England recently featured spray-painted works by the graffiti artist Banksy. This particular one was expected to sell for more than $250,000.

New Information Technology and Culture

Many rich nations, including the United States, have entered a postindustrial phase based on computers and new information technology. Industrial production is centered on factories and machinery that generate material goods. By contrast, postindustrial production is based on computers and other electronic devices that create, process, store, and apply information.

In this new information economy, workers need symbolic skills in place of the mechanical skills of the industrial age. Symbolic skills include the ability to speak, write, compute, design, and create images in fields such as art, advertising, and entertainment. In today's computer-based economy, people with creative jobs are generating new cultural ideas, images, and products all the time.

Cultural Diversity: Many Ways of Life in One World

⬤ Analyze

In the United States, we are aware of our cultural diversity when we hear several different languages being spoken while eating a hot dog on the streets of New York or standing in a school yard in Los Angeles. Compared to a country like Japan, whose historic isolation makes it the most *monocultural* of all high-income nations, centuries of immigration have made the United States the most *multicultural* of all high-income countries.

Between 1820 (when the government began keeping track of immigration) and 2010, almost 80 million people came to our shores. Our cultural mix continues to increase as more than 1.5 million people arrive each year. A century ago, almost all immigrants came from

Europe; today, three in four arrive from Latin America or Asia (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2010). To understand the reality of life in the United States, we must move beyond broad cultural patterns and shared values to consider cultural diversity.

High Culture and Popular Culture

Cultural diversity involves not just immigration but also social class. In fact, in everyday talk, we usually use the term "culture" to mean art forms such as classical literature, music, dance, and painting. We describe people who regularly go to the opera or the theater as "cultured," because we think they appreciate the "finer things in life."

We speak less kindly of ordinary people, assuming that everyday culture is somehow less worthy. We are tempted to judge the music of Haydn as "more cultured" than hip-hop, couscous as better than cornbread, and polo as more polished than Ping-Pong.

These differences arise because many cultural patterns are readily available to only some members of a society. Sociologists use the term **high culture** to refer to *cultural patterns that distinguish a society's elite* and **popular culture** to designate *cultural patterns that are widespread among a society's population.*

Common sense may suggest that high culture is superior to popular culture, but sociologists are uneasy with such judgments for two reasons. First, neither elites nor ordinary people share all the same tastes and interests; people in both categories differ in many ways. Second, do we praise high culture because it is inherently better than popular culture or simply because its supporters have more money, power, and prestige? For example, there is no difference at all between a violin and a fiddle; however, we simply name the instrument a violin when it is used to produce classical music typically enjoyed by a person of higher position and we call it a fiddle when the musician plays country tunes appreciated by people with lower social standing.

Subculture

The term **subculture** refers to *cultural patterns that set apart some segment of a society's population.* People who ride "chopper" motorcycles, traditional Korean Americans, New England "Yankees," Ohio State football fans, the southern California "beach crowd," Elvis impersonators, and wilderness campers all display subcultural patterns.

It is easy but often inaccurate to place people in some subcultural category because almost everyone participates in many subcultures without necessarily having much commitment to any of them. In some cases, however, cultural differences can set people apart from one another with tragic results. Consider the former nation of Yugoslavia in southeastern Europe. The 1990s' civil war there was fueled by extreme cultural diversity. This *one* small country with a population about equal to the Los Angeles metropolitan area used *two* alphabets, embraced *three* religions, spoke *four* languages, was home to *five* major nationalities, was divided into *six* political republics, and absorbed the cultural influences of *seven* surrounding countries. The cultural conflict that plunged this nation into civil war

shows that subcultures are a source not only of pleasing variety but also of tension and even violence.

Many people view the United States as a "melting pot" where many nationalities blend into a single "American" culture (Gardyn, 2002). But given so much cultural diversity, how accurate is the "melting pot" image? For one thing, subcultures involve not just *difference* but also *hierarchy.* Too often what we view as "dominant" or "mainstream" culture are patterns favored by powerful segments of the population, and we view the lives of disadvantaged people as "subculture." But are the cultural patterns of rich skiers on the slopes of Aspen, Colorado, any less a subculture than the cultural patterns of low-income skateboarders on the streets of Los Angeles? Some sociologists therefore prefer to level the playing field of society by emphasizing multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is *a perspective recognizing the cultural diversity of the United States and promoting equal standing for all cultural traditions.* Multiculturalism represents a sharp change from the past, when our society downplayed cultural diversity and defined itself primarily in terms of well-off European and especially English immigrants. Today there is a spirited debate about whether we should continue to focus on historical traditions or highlight contemporary diversity.

E pluribus unum, the Latin phrase that appears on all U.S. coins, means "out of many, one." This motto symbolizes not only our national political union but also the idea that immigrants from around the world have come together to form a new way of life.

But from the outset, the many cultures did not melt together as much as harden into a hierarchy. At the top were the English, who formed a majority early in U.S. history and established English as the nation's dominant language. Further down, people of other backgrounds were advised to model themselves after "their betters." In practice, then, "melting" was really a process of Anglicization—adoption of English ways. As multiculturalists see it, early in our history, this society set up the English way of life as an ideal that everyone else should imitate and by which everyone should be judged.

Although we can see general patterns of "U.S. culture," this country is actually a mosaic of diverse cultural patterns shaped by factors including social class, ethnicity, age, and geographical region. What general U.S. cultural patterns do you see in a television show such as *Jersey Shore*? Is this an example of high culture or popular culture? What subcultural patterns do you see in the show?

Ever since, historians have reported events from the point of view of the English and other people of European ancestry, paying little attention to the perspectives and accomplishments of Native Americans and people of African and Asian descent. Multiculturalists criticize this as **Eurocentrism**, *the dominance of European (especially English) cultural patterns.* Molefi Kete Asante, a supporter of multiculturalism, argues that "like the fifteenth-century Europeans who could not cease believing that the Earth was the center of the universe, many today find it difficult to cease viewing European culture as the center of the social universe" (1988:7).

One controversial issue involves language. Some people believe that English should be the official language of the United States; by 2011, legislatures in thirty-one states had enacted laws making it the official language (ProEnglish, 2011). But some 57 million men and women—one in five—speak a language other than English at home. Spanish is the second most commonly spoken language, and across the country we hear several hundred other tongues, including Italian, German, French, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese, as well as many Native American languages. National Map 3–1 on page 66 shows where in the United States large numbers of people speak a language other than English at home.

Supporters of multiculturalism say it is a way of coming to terms with our country's increasing social diversity. With the Asian and Hispanic populations of this country increasing rapidly, some analysts predict that today's young people will live to see people of African, Asian, and Hispanic ancestry become a *majority* of this country's population.

Supporters also claim that multiculturalism is a good way to strengthen the academic achievement of African American children. To counter Eurocentrism, some multicultural educators call for **Afrocentrism**, *emphasizing and promoting African cultural patterns,* which they see as necessary after centuries of minimizing or ignoring the cultural achievements of African societies and African Americans.

Although multiculturalism has found favor in recent years, it has drawn its share of criticism as well. Opponents say it encourages divisiveness rather than unity because it urges people to identify with their own category rather than with the

Elvira Martinez lives in Zapata County, Texas, where about three-quarters of the people in her community speak Spanish at home.

Jeffrey Steen lives in Adams County, Ohio, where almost none of his neighbors speak a language other than English.

Percentage of Population That Speaks a Language Other than English at Home

- 60.0% or more
- 35.0% to 59.9%
- 17.9% to 34.9%
- 4.6% to 17.8%
- 0.4 % to 4.5%

U.S. average = 19.7%
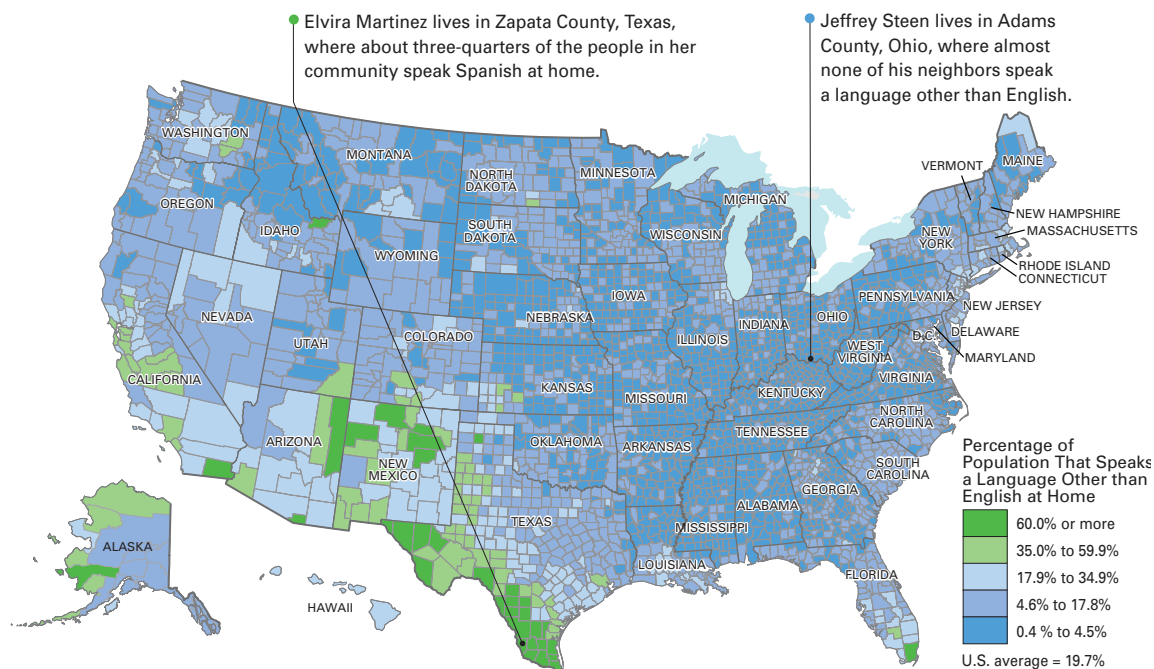
Seeing Ourselves

NATIONAL MAP 3–1   Language Diversity across the United States

Of more than 285 million people age five or older in the United States, the Census Bureau reports that more than 57 million (20 percent) speak a language other than English at home. Of these, 62 percent speak Spanish and 15 percent speak an Asian language (the Census Bureau lists a total of 39 languages and language categories, each of which is favored by more than 100,000 people). The map shows that non–English speakers are concentrated in certain regions of the country. Which ones? What do you think accounts for this pattern?

✳ **Explore** the percentage of foreign-born people in your local community and in counties across the United States on **mysoclab.com**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2010).

nation as a whole. Instead of recognizing any common standards of truth, say critics, multiculturalism maintains that we should evaluate ideas according to the race (and sex) of those who present them. Our common humanity thus breaks down into an "African experience," an "Asian experience," and so on. In addition, critics say, multiculturalism actually harms minorities themselves. Multicultural policies (from African American studies to all-black dorms) seem to support the same racial segregation that our nation has struggled so long to overcome. Furthermore, in the early grades, an Afrocentric curriculum may deny children a wide range of important knowledge and skills by forcing them to study only certain topics from a single point of view.

Finally, the global war on terror has drawn the issue of multiculturalism into the spotlight. In 2005, British Prime Minister Tony Blair responded to a terrorist attack in London, stating, "It is important that

the terrorists realize [that] our determination to defend our values and our way of life is greater than their determination to . . . impose their extremism on the world." He went on to warn that the British government would expel Muslim clerics who encouraged hatred and terrorism (Barone, 2005; Carle, 2008). In a world of cultural difference and conflict, we have much to learn about tolerance and peacemaking.

Counterculture

Cultural diversity also includes outright rejection of conventional ideas or behavior. **Counterculture** refers to *cultural patterns that strongly oppose those widely accepted within a society.*

During the 1960s, for example, a youth-oriented counterculture rejected mainstream culture as overly competitive, self-centered, and materialistic. Instead, hippies and other counterculturalists favored a cooperative lifestyle in which "being" was more important than "doing" and the capacity for personal growth—or "expanded con-

📖 **Read** "Gangstas, Thugs, and Hustlas: The Code of the Street in Rap Music" by Charis Kubrin on **mysoclab.com**

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subculture cultural patterns that set apart some segment of a society's population

counterculture cultural patterns that strongly oppose those widely accepted within a society

sciousness"—was prized over material possessions like homes and cars. Such differences led some people to "drop out" of the larger society.

Countercultures are still flourishing. At the extreme, small militaristic communities (made up of people born in this country) or bands of religious militants (from other countries) exist in the United States, some of them engaging in violence intended to threaten our way of life.

Cultural Change

Perhaps the most basic human truth of this world is that "all things shall pass." Even the dinosaurs, which thrived on this planet for 160 million years, exist today only as fossils. Will humanity survive for millions of years to come? All we can say with certainty is that given our reliance on culture, for as long as we survive, the human record will show continuous change.

Figure 3–3 shows changes in attitudes among first-year college students between 1969 (the height of the 1960s' counterculture) and 2010. Some attitudes have changed only slightly: Today, as a generation ago, most men and women look forward to raising a family. But today's students are less concerned with developing a philosophy of life and much more interested in making money.

Change in one part of a culture usually sparks changes in others. For example, today's college women are much more interested in making money because women are now far more likely to be in the labor force than their mothers or grandmothers were. Working for income may not change their interest in raising a family, but it does increase both the age at first marriage and the divorce rate. Such connections illustrate the principle of **cultural integration**, *the close relationships among various elements of a cultural system.*
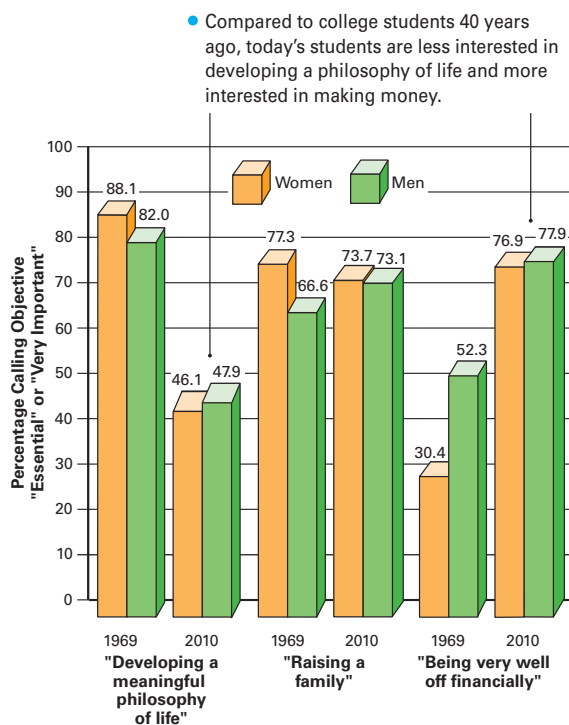
Cultural Lag

Some elements of culture change faster than others. William Ogburn (1964) observed that technology moves quickly, generating new elements of material culture (things) faster than nonmaterial culture (ideas) can keep up with them. Ogburn called this inconsistency **cultural lag**, *the fact that some cultural elements change more quickly than others, disrupting a cultural system.* For example, in a world in which a woman can give birth to a child by using another woman's egg, which has been fertilized in a laboratory with the sperm of a total stranger, how are we to apply traditional ideas about motherhood and fatherhood?

Causes of Cultural Change

Cultural changes are set in motion in three ways. The first is *invention,* the process of creating new cultural elements. Invention has given us the telephone (1876), the airplane (1903), and the computer (late 1940s); each of these elements of material culture has had a tremendous impact on our way of life. The same is true of the minimum wage (1938), school desegregation (1954), and women's shelters (1975), each an important element of nonmaterial culture. The process of invention goes on constantly. The timeline inside the back cover of this text shows other inventions that have helped change our way of life.

Discovery, a second cause of cultural change, involves recognizing and understanding more fully something already in existence—perhaps a distant star or the foods of another culture or women's political leadership skills. Some discoveries result from painstaking

● Compared to college students 40 years ago, today's students are less interested in developing a philosophy of life and more interested in making money.

Student Snapshot

FIGURE 3–3   Life Objectives of First-Year College Students, 1969 and 2010

Researchers have surveyed first-year college students every year since 1969. While attitudes about some things such as the importance of family have stayed about the same, attitudes about other life goals have changed dramatically.

Sources: Astin et al. (2002) and Pryor et al. (2011).

scientific research, and some result from political struggle. Some even result from luck, as in 1898, when Marie Curie left a rock on a piece of photographic paper, noticed that emissions from the rock had exposed the paper, and thus discovered radium.

The third cause of cultural change is *diffusion,* the spread of cultural traits from one society to another. Because new information technology sends information around the globe in seconds, cultural diffusion has never been greater than it is today.

Certainly our own society has contributed many significant cultural elements to the world, ranging from computers to jazz. Of course, diffusion works the other way, too, so that much of what we assume to be "American" actually comes from elsewhere. Most of the clothing we wear and the furniture we use, as well as the watch we carry and the money we spend, all had their origin in other cultures (Linton, 1937a).

It is certainly correct to talk about "American culture," especially when we are comparing our way of life to the culture of some other society. But this discussion of cultural change shows us that culture is always complex and always changing. The Thinking About Diversity box on page 68 offers a good example of the diverse and dynamic character of culture with a brief look at the history of rock-and-roll music.

In the 1950s, rock-and-roll emerged as a major part of U.S. popular culture. Before then, mainstream "pop" music was aimed at white adults. Songs were written by professional composers, recorded by long-established record labels, and performed by well-known artists such as Perry Como, Eddie Fisher, Doris Day, and Patti Page. Just about every big-name performer was white.

At that time, the country was rigidly segregated racially, which created differences in the cultures of white people and black people. In the subcultural world of African Americans, music had sounds and rhythms reflecting jazz, gospel singing, and rhythm and blues. These musical styles were created by African American composers and performers working with black-owned record companies broadcast on radio to an almost entirely black audience.

Class, too, divided the musical world of the 1950s, even among whites. A second musical subculture was country and western, a musical style popular among poorer whites, especially people living in the South. Like rhythm and blues, country and western music had its own composers and performers, its own record labels, and its own radio stations.

"Crossover" music was rare, meaning that very few performers or songs moved from one musical world to gain popularity in another. But this musical segregation began to break down about 1955 with the birth of rock-and-roll. Rock was a new mix of older musical patterns, blending mainstream pop with country and western and, especially, rhythm and blues.

As rock-and-roll drew together musical traditions, it soon divided society in a new way—by age. Rock was the first music clearly linked to the emergence of a youth culture—rock was all the rage among teenagers but was little appreciated by their parents. The new rock-and-roll performers were men (and a few women) who took a rebellious stand against "adult" culture. The typical rocker looked like what parents might have called a "juvenile delinquent" and claimed to be "cool," an idea that most parents did not even understand.

The first band to make it big in rock-and-roll was Bill Haley and His Comets. Emerging from the country and western tradition, Haley's first hits in 1954—"Shake, Rattle, and Roll" and "Rock around the Clock"—were "covers" of earlier rhythm and blues songs.

Soon, however, young people began to lose interest in older performers such as Bill Haley in favor of younger performers sporting sideburns, turned-up collars, and black leather jackets. By 1956, the unquestioned star of rock-and-roll was a poor white southern boy from Tupelo, Mississippi, named Elvis Aron Presley. With rural roots, Elvis Presley knew country and western music, and after moving to Memphis, Tennessee, he learned black gospel and rhythm and blues.

Presley became the first superstar of rock-and-roll not just because he had talent but also because he had great crossover power. With early hits including "Hound Dog" (a rhythm and blues song originally recorded by Big Mama Thornton) and "Blue Suede Shoes" (written by country and western star Carl Perkins), Presley broke down many of the musical walls based on race and class.

By the end of the 1950s, popular music developed in many new directions, creating soft rock (Ricky Nelson, Pat Boone), rockabilly (Johnny Cash), and dozens of doo-wop groups, both black and white (often named for birds—the Falcons, the Penguins, the Flamingos—or cars—the Imperials, the Impalas, the Fleetwoods). In the 1960s, rock expanded further, including folk music (the Kingston Trio; Peter, Paul, and Mary; Bob Dylan), surf music (the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean), and the "British invasion" led by the Beatles.

Starting on the clean-cut, pop side of rock, the Beatles soon shared the spotlight with another British band proud of its "delinquent" clothing and street fighter looks—the Rolling Stones. By now, music was a huge business, including not just the hard rock of the Beatles and Stones but softer "folk rock" performed by the Byrds, the Mamas and the Papas, Simon and Garfunkel, and Crosby, Stills, and Nash. In addition, "Motown" (named for the "motor city," Detroit, the automobile-building capital of the United States at the time) and "soul" music launched the careers of dozens of African American stars, including James Brown, Aretha Franklin, the Four Tops, the Temptations, and Diana Ross and the Supremes.

On the West Coast, San Francisco developed political rock music performed by Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, and Janis Joplin. West Coast spin-off styles included "acid rock," influenced by drug use, performed by the Doors and Jimi Hendrix. The jazz influence returned as "jazz rock" played groups such as Chicago and Blood, Sweat, and Tears.

This brief look at the birth of rock-and-roll shows the power of race and class to shape subcultural patterns. It also shows that the production of culture—music as well as movies and music videos—became a megabusiness. Most of all, it shows us that culture does not stand still but is a living process, changing, adapting, and reinventing itself over time.

What Do You Think?

1. Our way of life shaped rock-and-roll. In what ways did the emergence of rock-and-roll change U.S. culture?

2. Throughout this period of musical change, most musical performers were men. What does this tell us about our way of life? Is today's popular music still dominated by men?

3. Can you carry on the story of musical change to the present? (Think of disco, heavy metal, punk rock, rap, and hip-hop.)

Source: Based on Stuessy & Lipscomb (2008).

Elvis Presley (*center*) drew together the music of rhythm and blues singers, such as Big Mama Thornton (*left*), and country and western stars, including Carl Perkins (*right*). The development of rock-and-roll illustrates the ever-changing character of U.S. culture.

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

December 10, a small village in Morocco. Watching many of our fellow travelers browsing through a tiny ceramics factory, we have little doubt that North Americans are among the world's greatest shoppers. We delight in surveying hand-woven carpets in China or India, inspecting finely crafted metals in Turkey, or collecting the beautifully colored porcelain tiles we find here in Morocco. Of course, all these items are wonderful bargains. But one major reason for the low prices is unsettling: Many products from the world's low- and middle-income countries are produced by children—some as young as five or six—who work long days for pennies per hour.

We think of childhood as a time of innocence and freedom from adult burdens like regular work. In poor countries throughout the world, however, families depend on income earned by children. So what people in one society think of as right and natural, people elsewhere find puzzling and even immoral. Perhaps the Chinese philosopher Confucius had it right when he noted that "all people are the same; it's only their habits that are different."

Just about every imaginable idea or behavior is commonplace somewhere in the world, and this cultural variation causes travelers both excitement and distress. The Australians flip light switches down to turn them on; North Americans flip them up. The British drive on the left side of the road, North Americans drive on the right side. The Japanese name city blocks; North Americans name streets. Egyptians stand very close to others in conversation; North Americans are used to maintaining several feet of "personal space." Bathrooms lack toilet paper in much of rural Morocco, causing considerable discomfort for North Americans, who recoil at the thought of using the left hand for bathroom hygiene, as the Moroccans do.

Given that a particular culture is the basis for each person's reality, it is no wonder that people everywhere exhibit **ethnocentrism**, *the practice of judging another culture by the standards of one's own culture.* Some degree of ethnocentrism is necessary for people to be emotionally attached to their way of life. But ethnocentrism also generates misunderstanding and sometimes conflict.

Even language is culturally biased. Centuries ago, people in Europe and North America referred to China as the "Far East." But this term, unknown to the Chinese, is an ethnocentric expression for a region that is far to the east *of us.* The Chinese name for their country translates as "Central Kingdom," suggesting that they, like us, see their own society as the center of the world.

The alternative to ethnocentrism is **cultural relativism**, *the practice of judging a culture by its*

In the world's low-income countries, most children must work to provide their families with needed income. These young girls work long hours in a brick factory in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. Is it ethnocentric for people living in high-income nations to condemn the practice of child labor because we think youngsters belong in school? Why or why not?

own standards. Cultural relativism can be difficult for travelers to adopt: It requires not only openness to unfamiliar values and norms but also the ability to put aside cultural standards we have known all our lives. Even so, as people of the world come into increasing contact with one another, the importance of understanding other cultures becomes ever greater.

As the opening to this chapter explained, businesses in the United States are learning the value of marketing to a culturally diverse population. Similarly, businesses are learning that success in the global economy depends on awareness of cultural patterns around the world. IBM, for example, now provides technical support for its products using Web sites in more than thirty languages (IBM, 2011).

This trend is a change from the past, when many corporations used marketing strategies that lacked sensitivity to cultural diversity. Coors's phrase "Turn It Loose" startled Spanish-speaking customers by proclaiming that the beer would cause diarrhea. Braniff Airlines translated its slogan "Fly in Leather" so carelessly into Spanish that it read "Fly Naked." Similarly, Eastern Airlines' slogan "We Earn Our Wings Every Day" became "We Fly Daily to Heaven." Even poultry giant Frank Perdue fell victim to poor marketing when his pitch "It Takes a Tough Man to Make a Tender Chicken" was transformed into the Spanish words reading "A Sexually Excited Man Will Make a Chicken Affectionate" (Helin, 1992).

But cultural relativism introduces problems of its own. If almost any kind of behavior is the norm *somewhere* in the world, does that mean everything is equally right? Does the fact that some Indian and Moroccan families benefit from having their children work long hours justify child labor? Since we are all members of a single species, surely there must be some universal standards of proper conduct. But what are they? And in trying to develop them, how can we avoid imposing our own standards on others? There are no simple answers to these questions. But when confronting an unfamiliar cultural practice, it is best to resist making judgments before grasping what people in that culture understand the issue to be. Remember also to think about your own way of life as others might see it. After all, what we gain most from studying others is better insight into ourselves.

A Global Culture?

Today more than ever, we can observe many of the same cultural practices the world over. Walking the streets of Seoul, South Korea; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Chennai, India; Cairo, Egypt; or Casablanca, Morocco, we see people wearing jeans, hear familiar music, and read ads for many of the same products we use at home. Recall, too, from Global Map 3–1 on page 60 that English is rapidly emerging as the preferred second lan-

guage around the world. Are we witnessing the birth of a single global culture?

Societies now have more contact with one another than ever before, thanks to the flow of goods, information, and people:

1. **The global economy: The flow of goods.** International trade has never been greater. The global economy has spread many of the same consumer goods—from cars and TV shows to music and fashions—throughout the world.

2. **Global communications: The flow of information.** The Internet and satellite-assisted communications enable people to experience the sights and sounds of events taking place thousands of miles away, often as they happen. In addition, although less than one-third of Internet users speak English as their first language, most of the world's Web pages are written in English. Therefore, the spread of computer technology has helped spread the English language around the world. Recall from Global Map 3–1 that English is now the preferred second language in most parts of the world.

3. **Global migration: The flow of people.** Knowing about the rest of the world motivates people to move to where they imagine life will be better. In addition, today's transportation technology, especially air travel, makes relocating easier than ever before. As a result, in most countries, significant numbers of people were born elsewhere, including more than 38 million people in the United States, which is 13 percent of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

These global links help make the cultures of the world more similar. Even so, there are three important limitations to the global culture thesis. First, the global flow of goods, information, and people is uneven in different parts of the world. Generally speaking, urban areas (centers of commerce, communication, and people) have stronger ties to one another, while many rural villages remain isolated. In addition, the greater economic and military power of North America and Western Europe means that these regions influence the rest of the world more than the rest of the world influences them.

Second, the global culture thesis assumes that people everywhere are able to *afford* various new goods and services. As Chapter 12 ("Global Stratification") explains, desperate poverty in much of the world deprives people of even the basic necessities of a safe and secure life.

Third, although many cultural practices are now found in countries throughout the world, people everywhere do not attach the same meanings to them. Do children in Tokyo draw the same lessons from reading the Harry Potter books as children in New York or London? Similarly, we enjoy foods from around the world while knowing little about the lives of the people who created them. In short, people everywhere still see the world through their own cultural lenses.

Theories of Culture

● Apply

Sociologists have the special task of understanding how culture helps us make sense of ourselves and the surrounding world. Here we will examine several macro-level theoretical approaches to understanding culture. A micro-level approach to the personal experience of culture, which emphasizes how individuals not only conform to cultural pat-

terns but also create new patterns in their everyday lives, is the focus of Chapter 6 ("Social Interaction in Everyday Life").

The Functions of Culture: Structural-Functional Theory

The structural-functional approach explains culture as a complex strategy for meeting human needs. Borrowing from the philosophical doctrine of *idealism,* this approach considers values the core of a culture (Parsons, 1966; R. M. Williams, 1970). In other words, cultural values direct our lives, give meaning to what we do, and bind people together. Countless other cultural traits have various functions that support the operation of society.

Thinking functionally helps us understand an unfamiliar way of life. Consider the Amish farmer plowing hundreds of acres on an Ohio farm with a team of horses. His farming methods may violate our cultural value of efficiency, but from the Amish point of view, hard work functions to develop the discipline necessary for a highly religious way of life. Long days of working together not only make the Amish self-sufficient but also strengthen family ties and unify local communities.

Of course, Amish practices have dysfunctions as well. The hard work and strict religious discipline are too demanding for some, who end up leaving the community. Then, too, strong religious beliefs sometimes prevent compromise; slight differences in religious practices have caused the Amish to divide into different communities (Kraybill, 1989; Kraybill & Olshan, 1994).

If cultures are strategies for meeting human needs, we would expect to find many common patterns around the world. **Cultural universals** are *traits that are part of every known culture.* Comparing hundreds of cultures, George Murdock (1945) identified dozens of cultural universals. One common element is the family, which functions everywhere to control sexual reproduction and to oversee the care of children. Funeral rites, too, are found everywhere, because all human communities cope with the reality of death. Jokes are another cultural universal, serving as a safe means of releasing social tensions.

● **Evaluate** The strength of the structural-functional approach, whose characteristics are summarized in the Applying Theory table, is that it shows how culture operates to meet human needs. Yet by emphasizing a society's dominant cultural patterns, this approach largely ignores the cultural diversity that exists in many societies, including our own. Also, because this approach emphasizes cultural stability, it downplays the importance of change. In short, cultural systems are not as stable or a matter of as much agreement as structural-functional analysis leads us to believe.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING In the United States, what are some of the functions of sports, July Fourth celebrations, and Black History Month?

Inequality and Culture: Social-Conflict Theory

The social-conflict approach stresses the link between culture and inequality. Any cultural trait, from this point of view, benefits some members of society at the expense of others.

Why do certain values dominate a society in the first place? Many conflict theorists, especially Marxists, argue that culture is shaped by a society's system of economic production. "It is not the conscious-

Culture

	Structural-Functional Approach	Social-Conflict Approach	Sociobiology Approach
What is the level of analysis?	Macro-level	Macro-level	Macro-level
What is culture?	Culture is a system of behavior by which members of societies cooperate to meet their needs.	Culture is a system that benefits some people and disadvantages others.	Culture is a system of behavior that is partly shaped by human biology.
What is the foundation of culture?	Cultural patterns are rooted in a society's core values and beliefs.	Cultural patterns are rooted in a society's system of economic production.	Cultural patterns are rooted in humanity's biological evolution.
What core questions does the approach ask?	How does a cultural pattern help society operate? What cultural patterns are found in all societies?	How does a cultural pattern benefit some people and harm others? How does a cultural pattern support social inequality?	How does a cultural pattern help a species adapt to its environment?

ness of men that determines their being," Karl Marx proclaimed; "it is their social being that determines their consciousness" (Marx & Engels, 1978:4, orig. 1859). Social-conflict theory, then, is rooted in the philosophical doctrine of *materialism,* which holds that a society's system of material production (such as our own capitalist economy) has a powerful effect on the rest of a culture. This materialist approach contrasts with the idealist leanings of structural functionalism.

Social-conflict analysis ties our cultural values of competitiveness and material success to our country's capitalist economy, which serves the interests of the nation's wealthy elite. The culture of capitalism further teaches us to think that rich and powerful people work harder or longer than others and therefore deserve their wealth and privileges. It also encourages us to view capitalism as somehow "natural," discouraging us from trying to reduce economic inequality.

Eventually, however, the strains of inequality erupt into movements for social change. Two examples in the United States are the civil rights movement and the women's movement. Both have sought greater equality, and both have encountered opposition from defenders of the status quo.

🔵 **Evaluate** The social-conflict approach suggests that cultural systems do not address human needs equally, allowing some people to dominate others. This inequity in turn generates pressure toward change. Yet by stressing the divisiveness of culture, this approach understates the ways that cultural patterns integrate members of society. We should therefore consider both social-conflict and structural-functional insights for a fuller understanding of culture.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING How might a social-conflict analysis of college fraternities and sororities differ from a structural-functional analysis?

Evolution and Culture: Sociobiology

We know that culture is a human creation, but does human biology influence how this process unfolds? A third theoretical approach, standing with one leg in biology and one in sociology, is **sociobiology**, *a theoretical approach that explores ways in which human biology affects how we create culture.*

Sociobiology rests on the theory of evolution proposed by Charles Darwin in *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Darwin asserted that living organisms change over long periods of time as a result of *natural selection,* a matter of four simple principles. First, all living things live to reproduce themselves. Second, the blueprint for reproduction is in the genes, the basic units of life that carry traits of one generation into the next. Third, some random variation in genes allows a species to "try out" new life patterns in a particular environment. This variation allows some organisms to survive better than others and pass on their advantageous genes to their offspring. Fourth and finally, over thousands of generations, the genetic patterns that promote reproduction survive and become dominant. In this way, as biologists say, a species *adapts* to its environment, and dominant traits emerge as the "nature" of the organism.

Sociobiologists claim that the large number of cultural universals reflects the fact that all humans are members of a single biological species. It is our common biology that underlies, for example, the apparently universal "double standard" of sexual behavior. As the sex researcher Alfred Kinsey put it, "Among all people everywhere in the world, the male is more likely than the female to desire sex with a variety of partners" (quoted in Barash, 1981:49). But why?

We all know that children result from joining a woman's egg with a man's sperm. But the biological importance of a single sperm and of a single egg is quite different. For healthy men, sperm represent a "renewable resource" produced by the testes throughout most of the

Using an evolutionary perspective, sociobiologists explain that different reproductive strategies give rise to a double standard: Men treat women as sexual objects more than women treat men that way. While this may be so, many sociologists counter that behavior—such as that shown here—is more correctly understood as resulting from a culture of male domination.

life course. A man releases hundreds of millions of sperm in a single ejaculation—technically, enough to fertilize every woman in North America (Barash, 1981:47). A newborn female's ovaries, however, contain her entire lifetime supply of eggs. A woman generally releases a single egg cell from her ovaries each month. So although men are biologically capable of fathering thousands of offspring, women are able to bear only a relatively small number of children.

Given this biological difference, men reproduce their genes most efficiently by being promiscuous—readily engaging in sex with any willing partner. But women look differently at reproduction. Each of a woman's relatively few pregnancies demands that she carry the child for nine months, give birth, and provide care for years afterward. Thus efficient reproduction on the part of the woman depends on carefully selecting a mate whose qualities (beginning with the likelihood that he will simply stay around) will contribute to her child's survival and, later, successful reproduction.

The double standard certainly involves more than biology and is tangled up with the historical domination of women by men. But sociobiology suggests that this cultural pattern, like many others, has an underlying "bio-logic." Simply put, the double standard exists around the world because biological differences lead women and men everywhere to favor distinctive reproductive strategies.

🟡 **Evaluate** Sociobiology has generated intriguing theories about the biological roots of some cultural patterns. But the approach remains controversial for two main reasons.

First, some critics fear that sociobiology may revive biological arguments, from over a century ago, that claimed the superiority of one race or sex. But defenders counter that sociobiology rejects the past pseudoscience of racial and gender superiority. In fact, they say, sociobiology unites all of humanity because all people share a single evolutionary history. Sociobiology does assert that men and women differ biologically in some ways that culture cannot easily overcome. But far from claiming that males are somehow more important than females, sociobiology emphasizes that both sexes are vital to human reproduction and survival.

Second, say the critics, sociobiologists have little evidence to support their theories. Research to date suggests that biological forces do not *determine* human behavior in any rigid sense. Rather, humans *learn* behavior within a cultural system. The contribution of sociobiology, then, lies in explaining why some cultural patterns seem easier to learn than others (Barash, 1981).

CHECK YOUR LEARNING   Using the sociobiology approach, explain why a cultural pattern such as sibling rivalry (by which children in the same family often compete and even fight with one another) is widespread.

Because any analysis of culture requires a broad focus on the workings of society, the three approaches discussed in this chapter are all macro-level in scope. The symbolic-interaction approach, with its micro-level focus on behavior in everyday situations, will be explored in Chapter 6 ("Social Interaction in Everyday Life").

Culture and Human Freedom

🟡 **Evaluate**

This chapter leads us to ask an important question: To what extent are human beings, as cultural creatures, free? Does culture bind us to each other and to the past? Or does culture enhance our capacity for individual thought and independent choice?

Culture as Constraint

As symbolic creatures, humans cannot live without culture. But the capacity for culture does have some drawbacks. We may be the only animal to name ourselves, but living in a symbolic world means that we are also the only creatures who experience alienation. In addition, culture is largely a matter of habit, which limits our choices and drives us to repeat troubling patterns, such as racial prejudice and sex discrimination, in each new generation.

Our society's emphasis on competitive achievement urges us toward excellence, yet this same pattern also isolates us from one another. Material things comfort us in some ways but divert us from the security and satisfaction that come from close relationships and spiritual strength.

Culture as Freedom

For better or worse, human beings are cultural creatures, just as ants and elephants are prisoners of their biology. But there is a crucial difference.

The United States and Canada: How Do These National Cultures Differ?

The United States and Canada are two of the largest high-income countries in the world, and they share a common border of about 4,000 miles. But do the United States and Canada share the same culture?

One important point to make right away is that both nations are *multicultural.* Not only do the two countries have hundreds of Native American societies, but immigration also has brought people from all over the world to both the United States and Canada. Most early immigrants to both countries came from Europe, but in recent decades, most have come from Asia and Latin America. The Canadian city of Vancouver, for example, has an Asian community that is almost the same size as the Latino community in Los Angeles.

Canada and the United States differ in one important respect: Historically, Canada has had *two* dominant cultures: French (about 16 percent of the population) and British (36 percent). People of French ancestry are a large majority in the province of Quebec (where French is the official language) and represent almost one-third of the population of New Brunswick (which is officially bilingual).

Are the dominant values of Canada much the same as those we have described for the United States? Seymour Martin Lipset (1985) finds that they differ to some degree. The United States declared its independence from Great Britain in 1776, but Canada did not formally separate from Great Britain until 1982, and the British monarch is still Canada's official head of state. Thus, Lipset continues, the dominant culture of Canada lies somewhere between the culture of the United States and that of Great Britain.

The culture of the United States is more individualistic, and Canada's is more collective. In the United States, individualism is seen in the historical importance of the cowboy, a self-sufficient loner, and even outlaws such as Jesse James and Billy the Kid are regarded as heroes because they challenged authority. In Canada, by contrast, it is the Mountie—Canada's well-known police officer on horseback—who is looked on with great respect. Canada's greater emphasis on collective life is also evident in stronger unions: Canadian workers are nearly three times more likely to be members of a union as workers in the United States (Steyn, 2008; U.S. Department of Labor, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2011).

Politically, people in the United States tend to think individuals ought to do things for themselves. In Canada, however, much as in Great Britain, there is a strong sense that government should look after the interests of everyone. The U.S. Constitution emphasizes the importance of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (words that place importance on the individual), while Canadian society is based on "peace, order, and good government" (words that place importance on the government) (Steyn, 2008). One clear result of this difference is that Canada has a much broader social welfare system (including universal health care) than the United States (the only high-income nation without such a program). It also helps explain the fact that more than one-third of all U.S. households own a gun, and the idea that individuals are entitled to own a gun, although controversial, is widespread. In Canada, by contrast, the government restricts gun ownership, as in Great Britain.

What Do You Think?

1. Why do you think some Canadians feel that their way of life is overshadowed by that of the United States?

2. Ask your friends to name the capital city of Canada. (The correct answer is Ottawa, in the province of Ontario.) Are you surprised by how many know the answer? Why or why not?

3. Why do many people in the United States not know very much about either Canada or Mexico, countries with which we share long borders?

The individuals that a society celebrates as heroic are a good indication of that society's cultural values. In the United States, outlaws such as Jesse James (and later, Bonnie and Clyde) were regarded as heroes because they represented the individual standing strong against authority. In Canada, by contrast, people have always looked up to the Mountie, who symbolizes society's authority over the individual.

Biological instincts create a ready-made world; culture forces us to make choices as we make and remake a world for ourselves. No better evidence of this freedom exists than the cultural diversity of our own society and the even greater human diversity found around the world.

Learning more about this cultural diversity is one goal shared by sociologists. The Thinking Globally box offers some contrasts between the cultures of the United States and Canada. Wherever we may live, the better we understand the workings of the surrounding culture, the better prepared we are to use the freedom it offers us.

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

What clues do we have to a society's cultural values?

The values of any society—that is, what that society thinks is important—are reflected in various aspects of everyday life, including the things people have and the ways they behave. An interesting way to "read" our own culture's values is to look at the "superheroes" that we celebrate. Take a look at the characters in the three photos shown here and, in each case, describe what makes the character special and what each character represents in cultural terms.

Hint Superman (as well as all superheroes) defines our society as good; after all, Superman fights for "truth, justice, and the American way." Many superheroes have stories that draw on great people in our cultural history, including religious figures such as Moses and Jesus: They have mysterious origins (we never really know their true families), they are "tested" through great moral challenges, and they finally succeed in overcoming all obstacles. (Today's superheroes, however, are likely to win the day using force and often violence.) Having a "secret identity" means superheroes can lead ordinary lives (and means we ordinary people can imagine being superheroes). But to keep their focus on fighting evil, superheroes must place their work ahead of any romantic interests ("Work comes first!"). Sookie also illustrates the special challenge to "do it all" faced by women in our society: Besides using her special powers to fight evil, she still has to hold down a full-time job.

In the television drama, *True Blood,* Sookie Stackhouse (Anna Paquin), a waitress with telepathic abilities and other special powers, inhabits a world in which you never know if your customer is a vampire. Heroic humans with special abilities as portrayed in the mass media rarely include women.

Superman first appeared in an *Action Comics* book in 1938, as the United States struggled to climb out of economic depression and faced the rising danger of war. Since then, Superman has been featured in a television show as well as in a string of Hollywood films. One trait of most superheroes is that they have a secret identity; in this case, Superman's everyday identity is "mild-mannered news reporter" Clark Kent.

Another longtime superhero important to our culture is Spider-Man. In the *Spider-Man* movies, Peter Parker (who transforms into Spider-Man when he confronts evil) is secretly in love with Mary Jane Watson. Again and again the male hero rescues the female from danger. But, in true superhero style, Spider-Man does not allow himself to follow his heart because with great power comes great responsibility, and that must come first.

Seeing Sociology in *Your* Everyday Life

1. Members of every culture, as they decide how to live their lives, look to "heroes" for role models and inspiration. In modern societies, the mass media play a big part in creating heroes. What traits define popular culture heroes such as Clint Eastwood's film character "Dirty Harry," Sylvester Stallone's film characters "Rocky" as well as "Rambo," and Arnold Schwarzenegger's character "the Terminator"?

2. Watch an animated Disney film such as *Finding Nemo, The Lion King, The Little Mermaid, Aladdin,* or *Pocahontas*. One reason for the popularity of these films is that they all share many of the same distinctive cultural themes that appeal to members of our society. Using the list of key values of U.S. culture on page 61 as a guide, identify the cultural values that make the film you selected especially "American."

3. Do you know someone on your campus who has lived in another country or a cultural setting different from what is familiar to you? Try to engage in conversation with someone whose way of life is significantly different from your own. Try to discover something that you accept or take for granted in one way that the other person sees in a different way and try to understand why. Go to the "Seeing Sociology in *Your* Everyday Life" feature on mysoclab.com to learn more about cultural diversity and how we can all learn from experiencing cultural differences.

What Is Culture?

Culture is a **way of life**.
- Culture is shared by members of a society.
- Culture shapes how we act, think, and feel. **p. 54**

Culture is a **human trait**.
- Although several species display a limited capacity for culture, only human beings rely on culture for survival. **pp. 56–57**

Culture is a **product of evolution**.
- As the human brain evolved, culture replaced biological instincts as our species' primary strategy for survival. **p. 57**

We experience **culture shock** when we enter an unfamiliar culture and are not able to "read" meaning in our new surroundings. We create culture shock for others when we act in ways they do not understand.
pp. 55–56

culture (p. 54) the ways of thinking, the ways of acting, and the material objects that together from a people's way of life

nonmaterial culture (p. 55) the ideas created by members of a society

material culture (p. 55) the physical things created by members of a society

culture shock (p. 56) personal disorientation when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life

The Elements of Culture

Culture relies on **symbols** in the form of words, gestures, and actions to express meaning.
- The fact that different meanings can come to be associated with the same symbol (for example, a wink of an eye) shows the human capacity to create and manipulate symbols.
- Societies create new symbols all the time (for example, new computer technology has sparked the creation of new cyber-symbols). **pp. 58–59**

Language is the symbolic system by which people in a culture communicate with one another.
- People use language—both spoken and written—to transmit culture from one generation to the next.
- Because every culture is different, each language has words or expressions not found in any other language. **pp. 59–60**

Values are abstract standards of what *ough*t to be (for example, equality of opportunity).
- Values can sometimes be in conflict with one another.
- Lower-income countries have cultures that value survival; higher-income countries have cultures that value individualism and self-expression.

Beliefs are specific statements that people who share a culture hold to be true (for example, "A qualified woman could be elected president"). **pp. 61–62**

👁—[Watch the Video on mysoclab.com](#)

Norms, rules that guide human behavior, are of two types:
- **mores** (for example, sexual taboos), which have great moral significance
- **folkways** (for example, greetings or dining etiquette), which are matters of everyday politeness **pp. 62–63**

symbol (p. 58) anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share a culture

language (p. 59) a system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another

cultural transmission (p. 59) the process by which one generation passes culture to the next

Sapir-Whorf thesis (p. 60) the idea that people see and understand the world through the cultural lens of language

values (p. 61) culturally defined standards that people use to decide what is desirable, good, and beautiful and that serve as broad guidelines for social living

beliefs (p. 61) specific ideas that people hold to be true

norms (p. 62) rules and expectations by which a society guides the behavior of its members

mores (p. 62) norms that are widely observed and have great moral significance

folkways (p. 62) norms for routine or casual interaction

social control (p. 63) attempts by society to regulate people's thoughts and behavior

technology (p. 63) knowledge that people use to make a way of life in their surroundings

Technology and Culture

- A society's **artifacts**—the wide range of physical human creations that together make up a society's material culture—reflect underlying cultural values and technology.
- The more complex a society's technology, the more its members are able to shape the world as they wish.

pp. 63–64

Cultural Diversity

We live in a **culturally diverse society**.
- This diversity is due to our country's history of immigration.
- Diversity reflects regional differences.
- Diversity reflects differences in social class that set off **high culture** (available only to elites) from **popular culture** (available to average people).   **p. 64**

A number of values are central to our way of life. But **cultural patterns** are not the same throughout our society.

Subculture is based on differences in interests and life experiences.
- Hip-hop fans and jocks are two examples of youth subcultures in the United States.

Multiculturalism is an effort to enhance appreciation of cultural diversity.
- Multiculturalism developed as a reaction to the earlier "melting pot" idea, which was thought to result in minorities' losing their identity as they adopted mainstream cultural patterns.

✳▸**Explore** the **Map** on **mysoclab.com**

Counterculture is strongly at odds with conventional ways of life.
- Militant religious fundamentalist groups in the United States who plot to destroy Western society are examples of a counterculture.   **pp. 64–67**

▭▸**Read** the **Document** on **mysoclab.com**

Cultural change results from
- **invention** (examples include the telephone and the computer)
- **discovery** (for example, the recognition that women are capable of political leadership)
- **diffusion** (for example, the growing popularity of various ethnic foods and musical styles).

Cultural lag results when some parts of a cultural system change faster than others.   **p. 67**

How do we understand cultural differences?
- **Ethnocentrism** links people to their society but can cause misunderstanding and conflict between societies.
- **Cultural relativism** is increasingly important as people of the world come into contact more with each other.   **pp. 69–70**

high culture (p. 64) cultural patterns that distinguish a society's elite

popular culture (p. 64) cultural pattens that are widespread among a society's population

subculture (p. 64) cultural patterns that set apart some segment of a society's population

counterculture (p. 66) cultural patterns that strongly oppose those widely accepted within a society

multiculturalism (p. 65) a perspective recognizing the cultural diversity of the United States and promoting equal standing for all cultural traditions

Eurocentrism (p. 65) the dominance of European (especially English) cultural patterns

Afrocentrism (p. 65) emphasizing and promoting African cultural patterns

cultural integration (p. 67) the close relationships among various elements of a cultural system

cultural lag (p. 67) the fact that some cultural elements change more quickly than others, disrupting a cultural system

ethnocentrism (p. 69) the practice of judging another culture by the standards of one's own culture

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

Theories of Culture

The **structural–functional approach** views culture as a relatively stable system built on core values. All cultural patterns play some part in the ongoing operation of society.   **p. 70**

The **social conflict–approach** sees culture as a dynamic arena of inequality and conflict. Cultural patterns benefit some categories of people more than others.   **pp. 70–71**

Sociobiology explores how the long history of evolution has shaped patterns of culture in today's world.   **pp. 71–72**

cultural universals (p. 70) traits that are part of every known culture

sociobiology (p. 71) a theoretical approach that explores ways in which human biology affects how we create culture

Culture and Human Freedom

- Culture can limit the choices we make.
- As cultural creatures, we have the capacity to shape and reshape our world to meet our needs and pursue our dreams.   **pp. 72–73**

4 Society

Learning Objectives

Remember the definitions of the key terms highlighted in boldfaced type throughout this chapter.

Understand Gerhard Lenski's process of sociocultural evolution and the various types of societies that have existed throughout human history.

Apply the ideas of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim to familiar issues including the information revolution.

Analyze how our postindustrial society differs from societies based on other types of productive technology.

Evaluate modern society based on the observations of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim.

Create a critical awareness of the benefits and drawbacks of modern society and how to live more effectively in our modern world.

We all live within a social world. This chapter explores how societies are organized and also explains how societies have changed over the centuries. The story of human societies over time is guided by the work of one of today's leading sociologists, Gerhard Lenski, and three of sociology's founders, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim. ■

Sididi Ag Inaka has never sent a text message. He has never spoken on a cell phone. And he has never logged on to the Internet. Does such a person really exist in today's high-technology world? Well, how about this: Neither Inaka nor anyone in his family has ever been to a movie, watched television, or even read a newspaper.

Are these people visitors from another planet? Prisoners on some remote island? Not at all. They are Tuareg nomads who wander over the vast Sahara in the western African nations of Mali and Niger. Known as the "blue men of the desert" for the flowing blue robes worn by both men and women, the Tuareg herd camels, goats, and sheep and live in camps where the sand blows and the daytime temperature often reaches 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Life is hard, but most Tuareg try to hold on to traditional ways. With a stern look, Inaka says, "My father was a nomad. His father was a nomad. I am a nomad. My children will be nomads."

The Tuareg are among the world's poorest people. When the rains fail to come, they and their animals are at risk of losing their lives. Perhaps some day the Tuareg people can gain some of the wealth that comes from mining uranium below the desert across which they have traveled for centuries. But whatever their economic fate, Inaka and his people are a society set apart, with little knowledge of the larger world and none of its advanced technology. But Inaka does not complain: "This is the life of my ancestors. This is the life that we know" (Buckley, 1996; Matloff, 1997; Lovgren, 1998; McConnell, 2007).

Society refers to *people who interact in a defined territory and share a culture.* In this chapter, you will learn more about human societies with the help of four important sociologists. We begin with the approach of **Gerhard Lenski**, who describes how societies have changed over the past 10,000 years. Lenski points to the importance of *technology* in shaping any society. Then we turn to three of sociology's founders. **Karl Marx**, like Lenski, took a long historical view of societies. But Marx's story of society is all about *social conflict* that arises as people work within an economic system to produce material goods. **Max Weber** tells a different tale, showing that the power of *ideas* shapes society. Weber contrasted the traditional thinking of simple societies with the rational thought that dominates complex societies today. Finally, **Emile Durkheim** helps us see the different ways that traditional and modern societies hang together.

All four visions of society answer a number of important questions: What makes the way of life of people such as the Tuareg of the Sahara so different from your life as a college student in the United States? How and why do all societies change over time? What forces divide a society? What forces hold a society together? This chapter will provide answers to all of these questions as we look at the work of important sociologists.

Gerhard Lenski: Society and Technology

🔴 **Analyze**

Members of our society, who take things like television and texting for granted, must wonder at the nomads of the Sahara, who live the same simple life their ancestors did centuries ago. The work of Gerhard Lenski (Nolan & Lenski, 2010) helps us understand the great differences among societies that have existed throughout human history.

Lenski uses the term **sociocultural evolution** to mean *changes that occur as a society gains new technology.* With only simple technology, societies such as the Tuareg have little control over nature, so they can support just a small number of people. Societies with complex technology such as cars and cell phones, while not necessarily

"better," are certainly more productive so that they can support hundreds of millions of people with far more material affluence.

Inventing or adopting new technology sends ripples of change throughout a society. When our ancestors first discovered how to make a sail so that the power of the wind could move a boat, they created a new form of transportation that eventually would take them to new lands, greatly expand their economy, and increase their military power. In addition, the more technology a society has, the faster it changes. Technologically simple societies change very slowly; Sididi Ag Inaka says he lives "the life of my ancestors." How many people in U.S. society can say that they live the way their grandparents or great-grandparents did? Modern, high-technology societies such as our own change so fast that people usually experience major social changes during a single lifetime. Imagine how surprised your great-grandmother would be to hear about "Googling" and texting, artificial intelligence and iPods, replacement hearts and test-tube babies, space shuttles and screamo music.

Drawing on Lenski's work, we will examine five types of societies defined by their technology: hunting and gathering societies, horticultural and pastoral societies, agrarian societies, industrial societies, and postindustrial societies. Characteristics of each of these types of society are reviewed in the Summing Up table on page 83.

Hunting and Gathering Societies

In the simplest of all societies, people live by **hunting and gathering**, *making use of simple tools to hunt animals and gather vegetation for food.* From the time that our species appeared 3 million years ago until about 12,000 years ago, *all* humans were hunters and gatherers. Even in 1800, many hunting and gathering societies could be found around the world. But today just a few remain, including the Aka and Pygmies of Central Africa, the Bushmen of southwestern Africa, the Aborigines of Australia, the Kaska Indians of northwestern Canada, the Batek and Semai of Malaysia, and isolated native people living in the Amazon rain forest.

With little ability to control their environment, hunters and gatherers spend most of their time looking for game and collecting plants to eat. Only in lush areas with lots of food do hunters and gatherers have much chance for leisure. Because it takes a large amount of land to support even a few people, hunting and gathering societies have just a few dozen members. They must also be nomadic, moving on to find new sources of vegetation or to follow migrating animals. Although they may return to favored sites, they rarely form permanent settlements.

After a nearby forest was burned, these Aboriginal women in Australia spent the day collecting roots, which they will use to make dye for their clothing. Members of such societies live closely linked to nature.

Hunting and gathering societies depend on the family to do many things. The family must get and distribute food, protect its members, and teach their way of life to the children. Everyone's life is much the same; people spend most of their time getting their next meal. Age and gender have some effect on what individuals do. Healthy adults do most of the work, leaving the very young and the very old to help out as they can. Women gather vegetation—which provides most of the food—while men take on the less certain job of hunting. Although men and women perform different tasks, most hunters and gatherers probably see the sexes as having about the same social importance (Leacock, 1978).

Hunting and gathering societies usually have a *shaman,* or spiritual leader, who enjoys high prestige but has to work to find food like everyone else. In short, people in hunting and gathering societies come close to being socially equal.

Hunters and gatherers use simple weapons—the spear, bow and arrow, and stone knife—but rarely do they use them to wage war. Their real enemy is the forces of nature: Severe storms and droughts can kill off their food supply in a short span of time, and there is little they can do for someone who has a serious accident or illness. Being constantly at risk in this way encourages people to cooperate and share, a strategy that raises everyone's chances of survival. But the truth is that many die in childhood, and no more than half reach the age of twenty.

society people who interact in a defined territory and share a culture

Gerhard Lenski (society is defined by level of technology)

Karl Marx (society is defined by type of social conflict)

Max Weber (society is defined by ideas/mode of thinking)

Emile Durkheim (society is defined by type of solidarity)
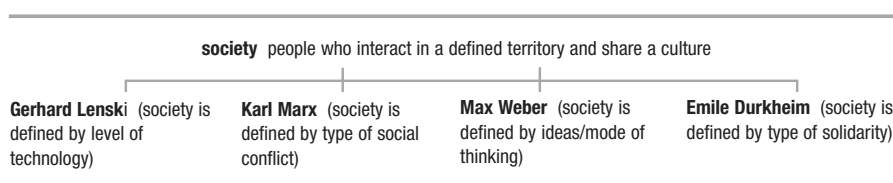
What would it be like to live in a society with simple technology? That's the premise of the television show *Survivor*. What advantages do societies with simple technology afford their members? What disadvantages do you see?

During the past century, societies with more powerful technology have closed in on the few remaining hunters and gatherers, reducing their food supply. As a result, hunting and gathering societies are disappearing. Fortunately, study of this way of life has given us valuable information about human history and our basic ties to the natural world.

Horticultural and Pastoral Societies

Some 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, as the timeline inside the back cover shows, a new technology began to change the lives of human beings. People developed **horticulture**, *the use of hand tools to raise crops.* Using a hoe to work the soil and a digging stick to punch holes in the ground to plant seeds may not seem like something that would change the world, but these inventions allowed people to give up gathering in favor of growing food for themselves. The first humans to plant gardens lived in fertile regions of the Middle East. Cultural diffusion spread this knowledge to America and Asia and eventually all over the world.

Not all societies were quick to give up hunting and gathering for horticulture. Hunters and gatherers living where food was plentiful probably saw little reason to change their ways. People living in dry regions (such as the deserts of Africa or the Middle East) or mountainous areas found little use for horticulture because they could not grow much anyway. Such people (including the Tuareg) were more likely to adopt **pastoralism**, *the domestication of animals.* Today, societies that mix horticulture and pastoralism can be found throughout South America, Africa, and Asia.

Growing plants and raising animals greatly increased food production, so populations expanded from dozens to hundreds of people. Pastoralists remained nomadic, leading their herds to fresh grazing lands. But horticulturalists formed settlements, moving only when the soil gave out. Joined by trade, these settlements formed extended societies with populations reaching into the thousands.

Once a society is capable of producing a *material surplus*—more resources than are needed to feed the population—not everyone has to work at providing food. Greater specialization results: Some make crafts, while others engage in trade, cut hair, apply tattoos, or serve as priests. Compared to hunting and gathering societies, horticultural and pastoral societies are more socially diverse.

But being more productive does not make a society "better" in every sense. As some families produce more than others, they become richer and more powerful. Horticultural and pastoral societies have greater inequality, with elites using government power—and military force—to serve their own interests. But leaders do not have the ability to travel or to communicate over large distances, so they can control only a small number of people rather than rule over vast empires.

Religion also differs among types of societies. Hunters and gatherers believe that many spirits inhabit the world. Horticulturalists, however, are more likely to think of one God as the creator of the world. Pastoral societies carry this belief further, seeing God as directly involved in the well-being of the entire world. The pastoral roots of Judaism and Christianity are evident in the term "pastor" and the common view of God as a shepherd ("The Lord is my shepherd," says Psalm 23) who stands watch over us all.

Agrarian Societies

About 5,000 years ago, another revolution in technology was taking place in the Middle East, one that would end up changing life on Earth. This was the emergence of **agriculture**, *large-scale cultivation using plows harnessed to animals or more powerful energy sources.* So important was the invention of the animal-drawn plow, along with other breakthroughs of the period—including irrigation, the wheel, writing, numbers, and the use of various metals—that this moment in history is often called the "dawn of civilization."

Using animal-drawn plows, farmers could cultivate fields far bigger than the garden-sized plots planted by horticulturalists. Plows have the added advantage of turning and aerating the soil, making it more fertile. As a result, farmers could work the same land for generations, encouraging the development of permanent settlements. With the ability to grow a surplus of food and to transport goods using animal-powered wagons, agrarian societies greatly expanded in size and population. About 100 C.E., for example, the agrarian Roman Empire contained some 70 million people spread over 2 million square miles (Nolan & Lenski, 2010).

Greater production meant even more specialization. Now there were dozens of distinct occupations, from farmers to builders to metalworkers. With so many people producing so many different things, people invented money as a common standard of exchange, and the old barter system—in which people traded one thing for another—was abandoned.

Summing Up

Sociocultural Evolution

Type of Society	Historical Period	Productive Technology	Population Size	Settlement Pattern	Social Organization	Examples
Hunting and Gathering Societies	Only type of society until about 12,000 years ago; still common several centuries ago; the few examples remaining today are threatened with extinction	Primitive weapons	25–40 people	Nomadic	Family-centered; specialization limited to age and sex; little social inequality	Pygmies of Central Africa, Bushmen of southwestern Africa, Aborigines of Australia, Semai of Malaysia, Kaska Indians of Canada
Horticultural and Pastoral Societies	From about 12,000 years ago, with decreasing numbers after about 3000 B.C.E.	Horticultural societies use hand tools for cultivating plants; pastoral societies are based on the domestication of animals.	Settlements of several hundred people, connected through trading ties to form societies of several thousand people	Horticulturalists form small permanent settlements; pastoralists are nomadic.	Family-centered; religious system begins to develop; moderate specialization; increased social inequality	Middle Eastern societies about 5000 B.C.E., various societies today in New Guinea and other Pacific islands, Yąnomamö today in South America
Agrarian Societies	From about 5,000 years ago, with large but decreasing numbers today	Animal-drawn plow	Millions of people	Cities become common, but they generally contain only a small proportion of the population.	Family loses significance as distinct religious, political, and economic systems emerge; extensive specialization; increased social inequality	Egypt during construction of the Great Pyramids, medieval Europe, numerous predominantly agrarian societies of the world today
Industrial Societies	From about 1750 to the present	Advanced sources of energy; mechanized production	Millions of people	Cities contain most of the population.	Distinct religious, political, economic, educational, and family systems; highly specialized; marked social inequality persists, lessening somewhat over time	Most societies today in Europe, North America, Australia, and Japan, which generate most of the world's industrial production
Postindustrial Societies	Emerging in recent decades	Computers that support an information-based economy	Millions of people	Population remains concentrated in cities.	Similar to industrial societies, with information processing and other service work gradually replacing industrial production	Industrial societies are now entering the postindustrial stage.

Agrarian societies have extreme social inequality, typically even more than modern societies such as our own. In most cases, a large number of the people are peasants or slaves, who do most of the work. Elites therefore have time for more "refined" activities, including the study of philosophy, art, and literature. This explains the historical link between "high culture" and social privilege noted in Chapter 3 ("Culture").

Among hunters and gatherers and also among horticulturalists, women provide most of the food, which gives them social importance. Agriculture, however, raises men to a position of social dominance. Using heavy metal plows pulled by large animals, agrarian societies put men in charge of food production. Women are left with the support tasks, such as weeding and carrying water to the fields (Boulding, 1976; Fisher, 1979).

In agrarian societies, religion reinforces the power of elites by defining both loyalty and hard work as moral obligations. Many of the "Wonders of the Ancient World," such as the Great Wall of China and the Great Pyramids of Egypt, were possible only because emperors and pharaohs had almost absolute power and could order their people to work for a lifetime without pay.

Of the societies described so far, agrarian societies have the most social inequality. Agrarian technology also gives people a greater range of life choices, which is the reason that agrarian societies differ more from one another than horticultural and pastoral societies do.

Industrial Societies

Industrialism, which first took hold in the rich nations of today's world, is *the production of goods using advanced sources of energy to drive large machinery.* Until the industrial era began, the major source of energy had been the muscles of humans and the animals they tended. Around the year 1750, people turned to water power and then steam boilers to operate mills and factories filled with larger and larger machines.

Industrial technology gave people such power to alter their environment that change took place faster than ever before. It is probably fair to say that the new industrial societies changed more in one century than the earlier agrarian societies had changed over the course of the previous thousand years. As explained in Chapter 1 ("The Sociological Perspective"), change was so rapid that it sparked the birth of sociology itself. By 1900, railroads crossed the land, steamships traveled the seas, and steel-framed skyscrapers reached far higher than any of the old cathedrals that symbolized the agrarian age.

But that was only the beginning. Soon automobiles allowed people to move quickly almost anywhere, and electricity powered homes full of modern "conveniences" such as refrigerators, washing machines, air conditioners, and entertainment centers. Electronic communication, beginning with the telegraph and the telephone and followed by radio, television, and computers, gave people the ability to reach others instantly, all over the world.

Work also changed. In agrarian communities, most men and women worked in the home or in the fields nearby. Industrialization drew people away from home to factories situated near energy sources (such as coalfields) that powered their machinery. The result was a weakening of close working relationships, strong family ties, and many of the traditional values, beliefs, and customs that guide agrarian life.

December 28, Moray, in the Andes highlands of Peru. We are high in the mountains in a small community of several dozen families, miles from the nearest electric line or paved road. At about 12,000 feet, breathing is hard for people not used to the thin air, so we walk slowly. But hard work seems to be no problem for the man and his son out on a field near their home tilling the soil with a horse and plow. Too poor to buy a tractor, these people till the land in the same way that their ancestors did 500 years ago.

With industrialization, occupational specialization became greater than ever. Today, the kind of work you do has a lot to do with your standard of living, so people now often size up one another in terms of their jobs rather than according to their family ties, as agrarian people do. Rapid change and people's tendency to move from place to place also make social life more anonymous, increase cultural diversity, and promote subcultures and countercultures, as described in Chapter 3 ("Culture").
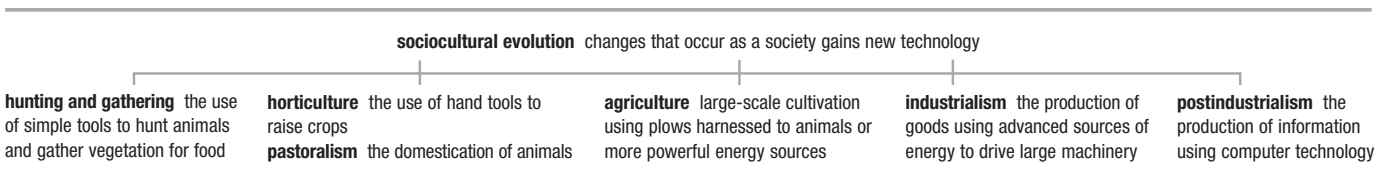
Industrial technology changes the family, too, reducing its traditional importance as the center of social life. No longer does the family serve as the main setting for work, learning, and religious worship. As Chapter 18 ("Families") explains, technological change also plays a part in making families more diverse, with a greater share of single people, divorced people, single-parent families, and stepfamilies.

Perhaps the greatest effect of industrialization has been to raise living standards, which increased fivefold in the United States over the past century. Although at first new technology only benefits the elite few, industrial technology is so productive that over time just about everyone's income rises so that people live longer and more comfortable lives. Even social inequality decreases slightly, as explained in Chapter 10 ("Social Stratification"), because industrial societies provide extended schooling and greater political rights for everyone. Around the world, industrialization has had the effect of increasing the demand for a greater political voice, a pattern evident in South Korea, Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, the nations of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and in 2011 in Egypt and other nations of the Middle East.

Postindustrial Societies

Many industrial societies, including the United States, have now entered a new phase of technological development, and we can extend Lenski's analysis to take account of recent trends. A generation ago, the sociologist Daniel Bell (1973) coined the term **postindustrialism** to refer to *the production of information using computer technology.* Production in industrial societies centers on factories and machinery generating material goods; postindustrial production relies on computers and other electronic devices that create, process, store, and apply information. Just as people in industrial societies learn mechanical skills, people in postindustrial societies such as ours develop information-based skills and carry out their work using computers and other forms of high-technology communication.

As Chapter 16 ("The Economy and Work") explains, a postindustrial society uses less and less of its labor force for industrial production.

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sociocultural evolution changes that occur as a society gains new technology

hunting and gathering the use of simple tools to hunt animals and gather vegetation for food

horticulture the use of hand tools to raise crops
pastoralism the domestication of animals

agriculture large-scale cultivation using plows harnessed to animals or more powerful energy sources

industrialism the production of goods using advanced sources of energy to drive large machinery

postindustrialism the production of information using computer technology

Does advancing technology make society better? In some ways, perhaps. However, many films and TV shows—as far back as *Frankenstein* (*left*) in 1931 and as recently as the 2011 TV series *Fringe* (*right*)—have expressed the concern that new technology not only solves old problems but also creates new ones. All the sociological theorists discussed in this chapter shared this ambivalent view of the modern world.

At the same time, more jobs become available for clerical workers, teachers, writers, sales managers, and marketing representatives, all of whom have in common jobs that involve processing information.

The Information Revolution, which is at the heart of postindustrial society, is most evident in rich nations, yet new information technology affects people in all countires around the world. As discussed in Chapter 3 ("Culture"), a worldwide flow of products, people, and information now links societies and has advanced a global culture. In this sense, the postindustrial society is at the heart of globalization.

The Limits of Technology

More complex technology has made life better by raising productivity, reducing infectious disease, and sometimes just relieving boredom. But technology provides no quick fix for social problems. Poverty, for example, remains a reality for some 43.6 million women and men in the United States (see Chapter 11, "Social Class in the United States") and 1.4 billion people worldwide (Chen & Ravaillon, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; see Chapter 12, "Global Stratification").

Technology also creates new problems that our ancestors (and people like Sididi Ag Inaka today) could hardly imagine. Industrial and postindustrial societies give us more personal freedom, but they often lack the sense of community that was part of preindustrial life. Most seriously, an increasing number of the world's nations have used nuclear technology to build weapons that could send the entire world back to the Stone Age—if humanity survives at all.

Advancing technology has also threatened the physical environment. Each stage in sociocultural evolution has introduced more powerful sources of energy and increased our appetite for Earth's resources. Ask yourself whether we can continue to pursue material prosperity without permanently damaging our planet by consuming its limited resources or poisoning it with pollution (see Chapter 22, "Population, Urbanization, and Environment").

Technological advances have improved life and brought the world's people closer. But establishing peace, ensuring justice, and protecting the environment are problems that technology alone cannot solve.

Karl Marx: Society and Conflict

🔴 **Analyze**

The first of our classic visions of society comes from Karl Marx (1818–1883), an early giant in the field of sociology whose influence continues today. Keenly aware of how the Industrial Revolution had changed Europe, Marx spent most of his adult life in London, the capital of what was then the vast British Empire. He was awed by the size and productive power of the new factories going up all over Britain. Along with other industrial nations, Britain was producing more goods than ever before, drawing raw materials from around the world and churning out finished products at a dizzying rate.

What astounded Marx even more was that the riches produced by this new technology ended up in the hands of only a few people. As he walked around the city of London, he could see for himself that a handful of aristocrats and industrialists enjoyed lives of luxury and privilege, living in fabulous mansions staffed by many servants. At the same time, most people lived in slums and labored long hours for low wages. Some even slept in the streets, where they were likely to die young from diseases brought on by cold and poor nutrition.

Marx saw his society in terms of a basic contradiction: In a country so rich, how could so many people be so poor? Just as important, he asked, how can this situation be changed? Many people think Marx set out to tear societies apart. But he was motivated by compassion and wanted to help a badly divided society create a new and more just social order.

📖 **Read** "Manifesto of the Communist Party" by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on **mysoclab.com**

SUPERSTRUCTURE

Ideas
and Values

Social
Institutions:

Politics/Religion/Education/Family
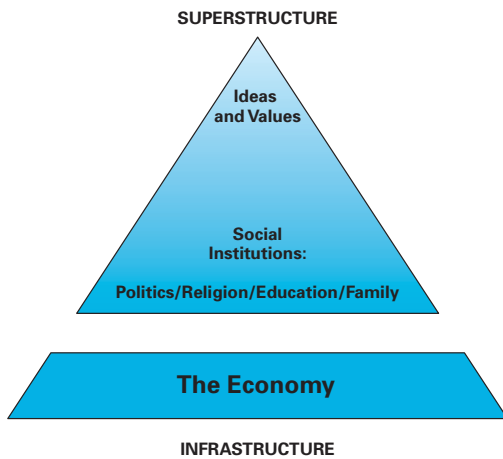
The Economy

INFRASTRUCTURE

FIGURE 4–1 Karl Marx's Model of Society

This diagram illustrates Marx's materialist view that the system of economic production shapes the entire society. Economic production involves both technology (industry, in the case of capitalism) and social relationships (for capitalism, the relationship between the capitalists, who own the factories and businesses, and the workers). On this infrastructure, or foundation, rests society's superstructure, which includes its major social institutions as well as core cultural values and ideas. Marx maintained that every part of a society supports the economic system.

At the heart of Marx's thinking is the idea of **social conflict**, *the struggle between segments of society over valued resources.* Social conflict can, of course, take many forms: Individuals quarrel, colleges have long-standing sports rivalries, and nations sometimes go to war. For Marx, however, the most important type of social conflict was *class conflict* arising from the way a society produces material goods.

Society and Production

Living in the nineteenth century, Marx observed the early decades of industrial capitalism in Europe. This economic system, Marx explained, turned a small part of the population into **capitalists**, *people who own and operate factories and other businesses in pursuit of profits.* A capitalist tries to make a profit by selling a product for more than it costs to produce. Capitalism turns most of the population into industrial workers, whom Marx called **proletarians**, *people who sell their labor for wages.* To Marx, a system of capitalist production always ends up creating conflict between capitalists and workers. To keep profits high, capitalists keep wages low. But workers want higher wages. Since profits and wages come from the same pool of funds, the result is conflict. As Marx saw it, this conflict could end only with the end of capitalism itself.

All societies are composed of **social institutions**, *the major spheres of social life, or societal subsystems, organized to meet human needs.* Examples of social institutions include the economy, the political system, the family, religion, and education. In his analysis of society, Marx argued that one institution—the economy—dominates all the others and defines the character of the entire society. Drawing on the philosophical approach called *materialism,* which says that how

humans produce material goods shapes their experiences, Marx believed that the other social institutions all operate in a way that supports a society's economy. Lenski focused on how technology molds a society but, for Marx, it is the economy that forms a society's "real foundation" (1959:43, orig. 1859).

Marx viewed the economic system as society's *infrastructure* (*infra* is Latin, meaning "below"). Other social institutions, including the family, the political system, and religion, are built on this foundation; they form society's *superstructure* and support the economy. Marx's theory is illustrated in Figure 4–1. For example, under capitalism, the legal system protects capitalists' wealth, and the family allows capitalists to pass their property from one generation to the next.

Marx was well aware that most people living in an industrial-capitalist system do not recognize how capitalism shapes the operation of their entire society. Most people, in fact, regard the right to own private property or pass it on to their children as "natural." In the same way, many of us tend to see rich people as having "earned" their money through long years of schooling and hard work; we see the poor, on the other hand, as lacking skills and the personal drive to make more of themselves. Marx rejected this type of thinking, calling it **false consciousness**, *explaining social problems as the shortcomings of individuals rather than as the flaws of society.* Marx was saying, in effect, that it is not "people" who make society so unequal but rather the system of capitalist production. False consciousness, he believed, hurts people by hiding the real cause of their problems.

Conflict and History

For Marx, conflict is the engine that drives social change. Sometimes societies change at a slow, *evolutionary* rate. But they may erupt in rapid, *revolutionary* change.

To Marx, early hunters and gatherers formed primitive communist societies. *Communism* is a system in which people commonly own and equally share food and other things they produce. People in hunting and gathering societies do not have much, but they share what they have. In addition, because everyone does the same kind of work, there are no class differences and thus little chance of social conflict.

With technological advance comes social inequality. Among horticultural, pastoral, and early agrarian societies—which Marx lumped together as the "ancient world"—warfare was frequent, and the victors turned their captives into slaves.

Agriculture brings still more wealth to a society's elite but does little for most other people, who labor as serfs and are barely better off than slaves. As Marx saw it, the state supported the feudal system (in which the elite or nobility had all the power), assisted by the church, which claimed that this arrangement reflected the will of God. This is why Marx thought that feudalism was simply "exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions" (Marx & Engels, 1972:337, orig. 1848).

social conflict the stuggle between segments of society over valued resources

capitalists people who own and operate factories and other businesses in pursuit of profits

proletarians people who sell their labor for wages
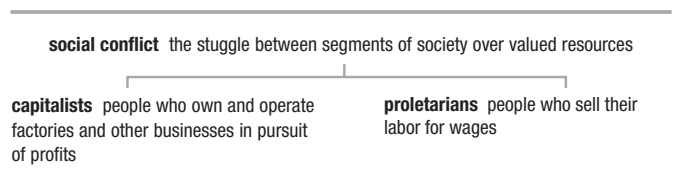
Gradually, new productive forces started to break down the feudal order. As trade steadily increased, cities grew, and merchants and skilled craftsworkers formed the new capitalist class or *bourgeoisie* (a French word meaning "people of the town"). After 1800, the bourgeoisie also controlled factories, becoming richer and richer so that they soon rivaled the ancient landowning nobility. For their part, the nobles looked down their noses at this upstart "commercial" class, but in time, these capitalists took control of European societies. To Marx's way of thinking, then, new technology was only part of the Industrial Revolution; it also served as a class revolution in which capitalists overthrew the old agrarian elite.

Industrialization also led to the formation of the proletariat. English landowners converted fields once plowed by serfs into grazing land for sheep to produce wool for the textile mills. Forced from the land, millions of people migrated to cities and had little choice but to work in factories. Marx envisioned these workers one day joining together to form a revolutionary class that would overthrow the capitalist system.

Capitalism and Class Conflict

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." With these words, Marx and his collaborator, Friedrich Engels, began their best-known statement, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1972:335, orig. 1848). Industrial capitalism, like earlier types of society, contains two major social classes: the ruling class, whose members (capitalists or bourgeoisie) own productive property, and the oppressed (proletarians), who sell their labor, reflecting the two basic positions in the productive system. Like masters and slaves in the ancient world and like nobles and serfs in feudal systems, capitalists and proletarians are engaged in class conflict today. Currently, as in the past, one class controls the other as productive property. Marx used the term **class conflict** (and sometimes *class struggle*) to refer to *conflict between entire classes over the distribution of a society's wealth and power.*

Class conflict is nothing new. What distinguishes the conflict in capitalist society, Marx pointed out, is how out in the open it is. Agrarian nobles and serfs, for all their differences, were bound together by traditions and mutual obligations. Industrial capitalism dissolved those ties so that loyalty and honor were replaced by "naked self-interest." Because the proletarians had no personal ties to the capitalists, Marx saw no reason for them to put up with their oppression.

Marx knew that revolution would not come easily. First, workers must *become aware* of their oppression and see capitalism as its true cause. Second, they must *organize and act* to address their problems. This means that false consciousness must be replaced with **class consciousness**, *workers' recognition of themselves as a class unified in opposition to capitalists and ultimately to capitalism itself.* Because the inhumanity of early
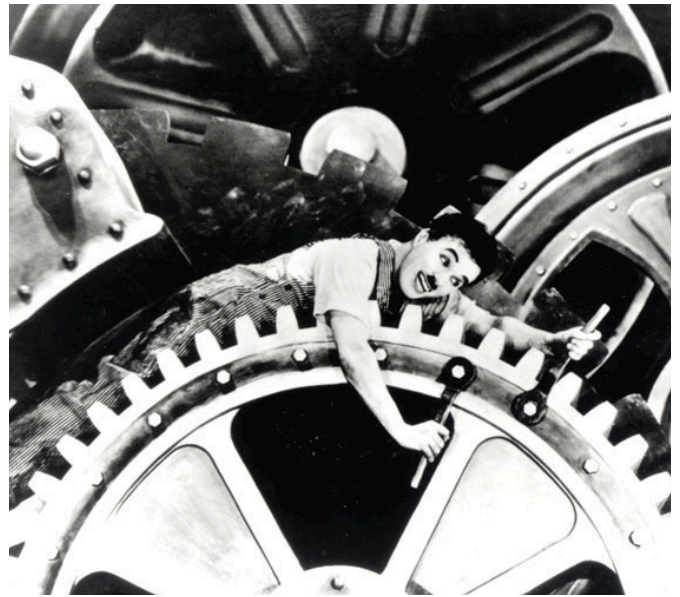
A common fear among thinkers in the early industrial era was that people, now slaves to the new machines, would be stripped of their humanity. No one captured this idea better than the comic actor Charlie Chaplin, who wrote and starred in the 1936 film *Modern Times*.

capitalism was plain for him to see, Marx concluded that industrial workers would soon rise up to destroy this economic system.

How would the capitalists react? Their wealth made them strong. But Marx saw a weakness in the capitalist armor. Motivated by a desire for personal gain, capitalists feared competition with other capitalists. Marx predicted, therefore, that capitalists would be slow to band together despite their common interests. In addition, he reasoned, capitalists kept employees' wages low in order to maximize profits, which made the workers' misery ever greater. In the long run, Marx believed, capitalists would bring about their own undoing.

Capitalism and Alienation

Marx also condemned capitalist society for producing **alienation**, *the experience of isolation and misery resulting from powerlessness.* To the capitalists, workers are nothing more than a source of labor, to be hired and fired at will. Dehumanized by their jobs (repetitive factory work in the past and processing orders on a computer today), workers find little satisfaction and feel unable to improve their situation. Here we see another contradiction of capitalist society: As people develop technology to gain power over the world, the capitalist economy gains more control over people.

Marx noted four ways in which capitalism alienates workers:

1. **Alienation from the act of working.** Ideally, people work to meet their needs and to develop their personal potential. Capitalism, however, denies workers a say in what they make or how they make it. Further, much of the work is a repetition of routine tasks. The fact that today we replace workers with machines whenever possible would not have surprised Marx. As far as he was concerned, capitalism had turned human beings into machines long ago.

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class conflict conflict between entire classes over the distribution of a society's wealth and power

class consciousness workers' recognition of themselves as a class unified in opposition to capitalists and ultimately to capitalism itself

To the outside observer, the trading floor of a stock exchange may look like complete craziness. But in such activity Weber saw the essence of modern rationality.

ary and perhaps even violent. Marx believed that a socialist society would bring class conflict to an end.

Chapter 10 ("Social Stratification") explains more about changes in industrial-capitalist societies since Marx's time and why the revolution he envisioned never took place. In addition, as Chapter 17 ("Politics and Government") explains, Marx failed to foresee that the revolution he imagined could take the form of repressive regimes, such as Stalin's government in the Soviet Union, that would end up killing tens of millions of people (R. F. Hamilton, 2001). But in his own time, Marx looked toward the future with hope: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win" (Marx & Engels, 1972:362, orig. 1848).

2. **Alienation from the products of work.** The product of work belongs not to workers but to capitalists, who sell it for profit. Thus, Marx reasoned, the more of themselves workers invest in their work, the more they lose.

3. **Alienation from other workers.** Through work, Marx claimed, people build bonds of community. Industrial capitalism, however, makes work competitive rather than cooperative, setting each person apart from everyone else and offering little chance for companionship.

4. **Alienation from human potential.** Industrial capitalism alienates workers from their human potential. Marx argued that a worker "does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not freely develop his physical and mental energies, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker, therefore, feels himself to be at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless" (1964:124–25, orig. 1848). In short, industrial capitalism turns an activity that should express the best qualities in human beings into a dull and dehumanizing experience.

Marx viewed alienation, in its various forms, as a barrier to social change. But he hoped that industrial workers would overcome their alienation by uniting into a true social class, aware of the cause of their problems and ready to change society.

Revolution

The only way out of the trap of capitalism, Marx argued, is to remake society. He imagined a system of production that could provide for the social needs of all. He called this system *socialism.* Although Marx knew that such a dramatic change would not come easily, he must have been disappointed that he did not live to see workers in England rise up. Still, convinced that capitalism was a social evil, he believed that in time the working majority would realize they held the key to a better future. This change would certainly be revolution-

Max Weber: The Rationalization of Society

🔴 **Analyze**

With a wide-ranging knowledge of law, economics, religion, and history, Max Weber (1864–1920) produced what many experts regard as the greatest individual contribution ever made to sociology. This scholar, born to a prosperous family in Germany, had much to say about how modern society differs from earlier types of social organization.

Weber understood the power of technology, and he shared many of Marx's ideas about social conflict. But he disagreed with Marx's philosophy of materialism. Weber's philosophical approach, called *idealism,* emphasized how human ideas—especially beliefs and values—shape society. He argued that the most important difference among societies is not how people produce things but how people think about the world. In Weber's view, modern society was the product of a new way of thinking.

Weber compared societies in different times and places. To make the comparisons, he relied on the **ideal type**, *an abstract statement of the essential characteristics of any social phenomenon.* Following Weber's approach, for example, we might speak of "preindustrial" and "industrial" societies as ideal types. The use of the word "ideal" does not mean that one or the other is "good" or "best." Nor does an ideal type refer to any actual society. Rather, think of an ideal type as a way of defining a type of society in its pure form. We have already used ideal types in comparing "hunting and gathering societies" with "industrial societies" and "capitalism" with "socialism."

Two Worldviews: Tradition and Rationality

Rather than categorizing societies according to their technology or productive systems, Weber focused on ways that people think about their world. Members of preindustrial societies, Weber explained, are bound by *tradition,* and people in industrial-capitalist societies are guided by *rationality*.

Window on the World

GLOBAL MAP 4–1   High Technology in Global Perspective

Countries with traditional cultures cannot afford, choose to ignore, or even intentionally resist new technology that nations with highly rationalized ways of life quickly embrace. Personal computers, central to today's high technology, are commonplace in high-income countries such as the United States. In low-income nations, by contrast, they are unknown to most people.

Source: United Nations (2010).

- Jean Boulanger, age 14, lives outside of Millinocket, Maine, where almost all of his friends have a personal computer.

- Lis Vang, also age 14, lives in a small village in Myanmar and has never seen a personal computer.

Personal Computers per 100 People

- 50 or more
- 25.0 to 49.9
- 10.0 to 24.9
- 1.0 to 9.9
- Fewer than 1.0
- No data

By **tradition**, Weber meant *values and beliefs passed from generation to generation.* In other words, traditional people are guided by the past, and they feel a strong attachment to long-established ways of life. They consider particular actions right and proper mostly because they have been accepted for so long.

People in modern societies, however, favor **rationality**, *a way of thinking that emphasizes deliberate, matter-of-fact calculation of the most efficient way to accomplish a particular task.* Sentimental ties to the past have no place in a rational worldview, and tradition becomes simply one type of information. Typically, modern people think and act on the basis of what they see as the present and future consequences of their choices. They evaluate jobs, schooling, and even relationships in terms of what they put into them and what they expect to receive in return.

Weber viewed both the Industrial Revolution and the development of capitalism as evidence of modern rationality. Such changes are all part of the **rationalization of society**, *the historical change from tradition to rationality as the main type of human thought.* Weber went on to describe modern society as "disenchanted" because scientific thinking has swept away most of people's sentimental ties to the past.

The willingness to adopt the latest technology is one strong indicator of how rationalized a society is. To illustrate the global pattern of rationalization, Global Map 4–1 shows where in the world personal computers are found. In general, members of high-income societies in North America and Europe use personal computers the most, but these devices are rare in low-income nations.

Max Weber agreed with Karl Marx that modern society is alienating to the individual, but they identified different causes of this problem. For Marx, economic inequality is the reason; for Weber, the problem is isolating and dehumanizing bureaucracy. George Tooker's painting *Landscape with Figures* echoes Weber's sentiments.

George Tooker, *Landscape with Figures,* 1963, egg tempera on gesso panel, 26   30 in. Private collection. Reproduction courtesy D. C. Moore Gallery, New York.

Why are some societies more eager than others to adopt new technology? Those with a more rational worldview might consider new computer or medical technology a breakthrough, but those with a very traditional culture might reject such devices as a threat to their way of life. The Tuareg nomads of northern Mali, described at the beginning of this chapter, shrug off the idea of using telephones: Why would anyone herding animals in the desert need a cell phone? Similarly, in the United States, the Amish refuse to have telephones in their homes because it is not part of their traditional way of life.

In Weber's view, the amount of technological innovation depends on how a society's people understand their world. Many people throughout history have had the opportunity to adopt new technology, but only in the rational cultural climate of Western Europe did people exploit scientific discoveries to spark the Industrial Revolution (Weber, 1958, orig. 1904–05).

Is Capitalism Rational?

Is industrial capitalism a rational economic system? Here again, Weber and Marx ended up on different sides. Weber considered industrial

rationalization of society the historical change from tradition to rationality as the main type of human thought

tradition values and beliefs passed from generation to generation

rationality a way of thinking that emphasizes deliberate, matter-of-fact calculation of the most efficient way to accomplish a particular task

capitalism highly rational because capitalists try to make money in any way they can. Marx, however, thought capitalism irrational because it fails to meet the basic needs of most of the people (Gerth & Mills, 1946:49).

Weber's Great Thesis: Protestantism and Capitalism

Weber spent many years considering how and why industrial capitalism developed in the first place. Why did it emerge in parts of Western Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

Weber claimed that the key to the birth of industrial capitalism lay in the Protestant Reformation. Specifically, he saw industrial capitalism as the major outcome of Calvinism, a Christian religious movement founded by John Calvin (1509–1564). Calvinists approached life in a formal and rational way that Weber characterized as *inner-worldly asceticism*. This mind-set leads people to deny themselves worldly pleasures in favor of a highly disciplined focus on economic pursuits. In practice, Calvinism encouraged people to put their time and energy into their work; in modern terms, we might say that such people become good businesspeople or entrepreneurs (Berger, 2009).

Another of Calvin's most important ideas was *predestination,* the belief that an all-knowing and all-powerful God had predestined some people for salvation and others for damnation. Believing that everyone's fate was set before birth, early Calvinists thought that people could only guess at what their destiny was and that, in any case, they could do nothing to change it. So Calvinists swung between hopeful visions of spiritual salvation and anxious fears of eternal damnation.

Frustrated at not knowing their fate, Calvinists gradually came to a resolution of sorts. Wouldn't those chosen for glory in the next world, they reasoned, see signs of divine favor in *this* world? In this way, Calvinists came to see worldly prosperity as a sign of God's grace. Eager to gain this reassurance, Calvinists threw themselves into a quest for business success, applying rationality, discipline, and hard work to their tasks. They were certainly pursuing wealth, but they were not doing this for the sake of money, at least not to spend on themselves because any self-indulgence would be sinful. Neither were Calvinists likely to use their wealth for charity. To share their wealth with the poor seemed to go against God's will because they viewed poverty as a sign of God's rejection. Calvinists' duty was pressing forward in what they saw as their personal *calling* from God, reinvesting the money they made for still greater success. It is easy to see how such activity—saving money, using wealth to create more wealth, and adopting new technology—became the foundation of capitalism.

Other world religions did not encourage the rational pursuit of wealth the way Calvinism did. Catholicism, the traditional religion in most of Europe, taught a passive, "otherworldly" view: Good deeds performed humbly on Earth would bring rewards in heaven. For Catholics, making money had none of the spiritual significance it had for Calvinists. Weber concluded that this was the reason that industrial capitalism developed primarily in areas of Europe where Calvinism was strong.

Weber's study of Calvinism provides striking evidence of the power of ideas to shape society. Not one to accept simple explanations, Weber knew that industrial capitalism had many causes. But by stressing the importance of ideas, Weber tried to counter Marx's strictly economic explanation of modern society.

As the decades passed, later generations of Calvinists lost much of their early religious enthusiasm. But their drive for success and personal discipline remained, and what started out as a *religious* ethic was gradually transformed into a *work* ethic. In this sense, Weber considered industrial capitalism to be a "disenchanted" religion, with wealth no longer valued as a sign of salvation but for its own sake. This transformation is seen in the fact that the practice of "accounting," which to early Calvinists meant keeping a daily record of their moral deeds, before long came to mean simply keeping track of money.

Rational Social Organization

According to Weber, rationality is the basis of modern society, giving rise to both the Industrial Revolution and capitalism. He went on to identify seven characteristics of rational social organization:

1. **Distinctive social institutions.** In hunting and gathering societies, the family is the center of all activity. Gradually, however, religious, political, and economic systems develop as separate social institutions. In modern societies, new institutions—including education and health care—also appear. Specialized social institutions are a rational strategy to meet human needs efficiently.

2. **Large-scale organizations.** Modern rationality can be seen in the spread of large-scale organizations. As early as the horticultural era, small groups of political officials made decisions concerning religious observances, public works, and warfare. By the time Europe developed agrarian societies, the Catholic church had grown into a much larger organization with thousands of officials. In today's modern, rational society, almost everyone works for large formal organizations, and federal and state governments employ tens of millions of workers.

3. **Specialized tasks.** Unlike members of traditional societies, people in modern societies are likely to have very specialized jobs. The Yellow Pages of any city's telephone directory suggest just how many thousands of different occupations there are today.

4. **Personal discipline.** Modern societies put a premium on self-discipline. Most business and government organizations expect their workers to be disciplined, and discipline is also encouraged by our cultural values of achievement and success.

5. **Awareness of time.** In traditional societies, people measure time according to the rhythm of sun and seasons. Modern people, by contrast, schedule events precisely by the hour and even the minute. Clocks began appearing in European cities some 500 years ago, about the same time commerce began to expand. Soon people began to think (to borrow Benjamin Franklin's phrase) that "time is money."

6. **Technical competence.** Members of traditional societies size up one another on the basis of *who* they are—their family ties. Modern rationality leads us to judge people according to *what* they are, with an eye toward their education, skills, and abilities. Most workers have to keep up with the latest skills and knowledge in their field in order to be successful.

7. **Impersonality.** In a rational society, technical competence is the basis for hiring, so the world becomes impersonal. People interact as specialists concerned with particular tasks rather than as individuals concerned with one another as people. Because showing your feelings can threaten personal discipline, modern people tend to devalue emotion.

All these characteristics can be found in one important expression of modern rationality: bureaucracy.

Rationality, Bureaucracy, and Science

Weber considered the growth of large, rational organizations one of the defining traits of modern societies. Another term for this type of organization is *bureaucracy.* Weber believed that bureaucracy has much in common with capitalism—another key factor in modern social life:

> Today, it is primarily the capitalist market economy which demands that the official business of public administration be discharged precisely, unambiguously, continuously, and with as much speed as possible. Normally, the very large capitalist enterprises are themselves unequaled models of strict bureaucratic organization. (1978:974, orig. 1921)

As Chapter 7 ("Groups and Organizations") explains, we find aspects of bureaucracy in today's businesses, government agencies, labor unions, and universities. Weber considered bureaucracy highly rational because its elements—offices, duties, and policies—help achieve specific goals as efficiently as possible. To Weber, capitalism, bureaucracy, and also science—the highly disciplined pursuit of knowledge—are all expressions of the same underlying factor that defines modern society: rationality.

Rationality and Alienation

Weber agreed with Marx that industrial capitalism was highly productive. Weber also agreed with Marx that modern society generates widespread alienation, although Weber pointed to different reasons. Marx thought alienation was caused by economic inequality. Weber blamed alienation on bureaucracy's countless rules and regulations. Bureaucracies, Weber warned, treat a human being as a "number" or a "case" rather than as a unique individual. In addition, working for large organizations demands highly specialized and often tedious routines. In the end, Weber saw modern society as a vast and growing system of rules trying to regulate everything, and he feared that modern society would end up crushing the human spirit.

Like Marx, Weber found it ironic that modern society, meant to serve humanity, turns on its creators and enslaves them. Just as Marx described the dehumanizing effects of industrial capitalism, Weber portrayed the modern individual as "only a small cog in a ceaselessly moving mechanism that prescribes to him an endlessly fixed routine of march" (1978:988, orig. 1921). Although Weber could see the advantages of modern society, he was deeply pessimistic about the future. He feared that in the end, the rationalization of society would reduce human beings to robots.

Emile Durkheim: Society and Function

🔴 **Analyze**

"To love society is to love something beyond us and something in ourselves." These are the words (1974:55, orig. 1924) of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), another of the discipline's founders. In Durkeim's ideas we find another important vision of human society.

Structure: Society beyond Ourselves

Emile Durkheim's great insight was recognizing that society exists beyond ourselves. Society is more than the individuals who compose it. Society was here long before we were born, it shapes us while we live, and it will remain long after we are gone. Patterns of human behavior—cultural norms, values, and beliefs—exist as established structures, or *social facts,* that have an objective reality beyond the lives of individuals.

Because society is bigger than any one of us, it has the power to guide our thoughts and actions. This is why studying individuals alone (as psychologists or biologists do) can never capture the heart of the social experience. A classroom of college students taking a math exam, a family gathered around a table sharing a meal, people quietly waiting their turn in a doctor's office—all are examples of the countless situations that have a familiar organization apart from any particular individual who has ever been part of them.

Once created by people, Durkheim claimed, society takes on a life of its own and demands a measure of obedience from its creators. We experience the power of society when we see lives falling into common patterns or when we feel the tug of morality during a moment of temptation.

Function: Society as System

Having established that society has structure, Durkheim turned to the concept of *function.* The significance of any social fact, he explained, is more than what individuals see in their immediate lives; social facts help along the operation of society as a whole.

Consider crime. As victims of crime, individuals experience pain and loss. But taking a broader view, Durkheim saw that crime is vital to the ongoing life of society itself. As Chapter 9 ("Deviance") explains, only by defining acts as wrong do people construct and defend morality, which gives direction and meaning to our collective life. For this reason, Durkheim rejected the common view of crime as abnormal. On the contrary, he concluded, crime is "normal" for the most basic of reasons: A society could not exist without it (1964a, orig. 1893; 1964b, orig. 1895).

Personality: Society in Ourselves

Durkheim said that society is not only "beyond ourselves" but also "in ourselves," helping to form our personalities. How we act, think, and feel is drawn from the society that nurtures us. Society shapes us in another way as well—by providing the moral discipline that guides our behavior and controls our desires. Durkheim believed that human beings need the restraint of society because as creatures who can want more and more, we are in constant danger of being overpowered by our own desires. As he put it, "The more one has, the more one wants, since satisfactions received only stimulate instead of filling needs" (1966:248, orig. 1897).

Nowhere is the need for societal regulation better illustrated than in Durkheim's study of suicide (1966, orig. 1897), which was described in Chapter 1 ("The Sociological Perspective"). Why is it that rock stars—from Del Shannon, Elvis Presley, Janis Joplin, and Jim Morrison
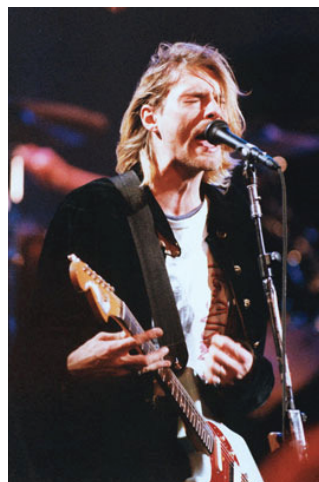
Durkheim's observation that people with weak social bonds are prone to self-destructive behavior stands as stark evidence of the power of society to shape individual lives. When rock-and-roll singers become famous, they are wrenched out of familiar life patterns and existing relationships, sometimes with deadly results. The history of rock-and-roll contains many tragic stories of this kind, including (from left) Janis Joplin's and Jimi Hendrix's deaths by drug overdose (both 1970), Kurt Cobain's suicide (1994), and the drugs-induced death of Michael Jackson (2009).

In traditional societies, people dress the same and everyone does much the same work. These societies are held together by strong moral beliefs. Modern societies, illustrated by urban areas in this country, are held together by a system of production in which people perform specialized work and rely on one another for all the things they cannot do for themselves.

to Jimi Hendrix, Keith Moon, Kurt Cobain, and Michael Jackson—seem so prone to self-destruction? Durkheim had the answer long before the invention of the electric guitar: Now as back then, the *highest* suicide rates are found among categories of people with the *lowest* level of societal integration. In short, the enormous freedom of the young, rich, and famous carries a high price in terms of the risk of suicide.

Modernity and Anomie

Compared to traditional societies, modern societies impose fewer restrictions on everyone. Durkheim acknowledged the advantages of modern-day freedom, but he warned of increased **anomie**, *a condition in which society provides little moral guidance to individuals.* The pattern by which many celebrities are "destroyed by fame" well illustrates the destructive effects of anomie. Sudden fame tears people from their families and familiar routines, disrupts established values and norms, and breaks down society's support and regulation of the individual—sometimes with fatal results. Therefore, Durkheim explained, an individual's desires must be balanced by the claims and guidance of society—a balance that is sometimes difficult to achieve in the modern world. Durkheim would not have been

mechanical solidarity social bonds, based on common sentiments and shared moral values, that are strong among members of preindustrial societies

organic solidarity social bonds, based on specialization and interdependence, that are stong among members of industrial societies

division of labor specialized economic activity

surprised to see a rising suicide rate in modern societies such as the United States.

Evolving Societies: The Division of Labor

Like Marx and Weber, Durkheim lived through the rapid social change that swept across Europe during the nineteenth century as the Industrial Revolution unfolded. But Durkheim offered his own understanding of this change.

In preindustrial societies, he explained, tradition operates as the social cement that binds people together. In fact, what he termed the *collective conscience* is so strong that the community moves quickly to punish anyone who dares to challenge conventional ways of life. Durkheim used the term **mechanical solidarity** to refer to *social bonds, based on common sentiments and shared moral values, that are strong among members of preindustrial societies.* In practice, mechanical solidarity is based on *similarity.* Durkheim called these bonds "mechanical" because people are linked together in lockstep, with a more or less automatic sense of belonging together and acting alike.

With industrialization, Durkheim continued, mechanical solidarity becomes weaker and weaker, and people are much less bound by tradition. But this does not mean that society dissolves. Modern life creates a new type of solidarity. Durkheim called this new social integration **organic solidarity**, defined as *social bonds, based on specialization and interdependence, that are strong among members of industrial societies.* The solidarity that was once rooted in likeness is now based on *differences* among people who find that their specialized work—as plumbers, college students, midwives, or sociology instructors—makes them rely on other people for most of their daily needs.
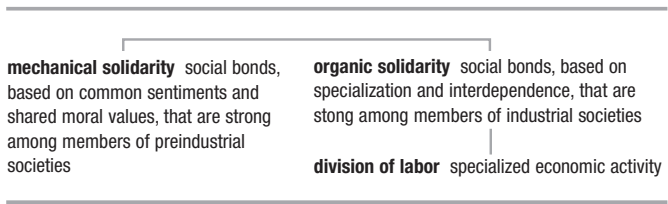
For Durkheim, then, the key to change in a society is an expanding **division of labor**, or *specialized economic activity*. Weber said that modern societies specialize in order to become more efficient, and Durkheim filled out the picture by showing that members of modern societies count on tens of thousands of others—most of them strangers—for the goods and services needed every day. As members of modern societies, we depend more and more on people we trust less and less. Why do we look to people we hardly know and whose beliefs may well differ from our own? Durkheim's answer was "because we can't live without them."

So modern society rests far less on *moral consensus* and far more on *functional interdependence.* Herein lies what we might call "Durkheim's dilemma": The technological power and greater personal freedom of modern society come at the cost of declining morality and the rising risk of anomie.

Like Marx and Weber, Durkheim worried about the direction society was taking. But of the three, Durkheim was the most optimistic. He saw that large, anonymous societies gave people more freedom and privacy than small towns. Anomie remains a danger, but Durkheim hoped we would be able to create laws and other norms to regulate our behavior.

How can we apply Durkheim's views to the Information Revolution? The Sociology in Focus box suggests that Durkheim, as well as two of the other theorists whose ideas we have considered in this chapter, would have had much to say about today's new computer technology.

Critical Review: Four Visions of Society

🟡 Evaluate

This chapter opened with several important questions about society. We will conclude by summarizing how each of the four visions of society answers these questions.

What Holds Societies Together?

How is something as complex as society possible? Lenski claims that members of a society are united by a shared culture, although cultural patterns become more diverse as a society gains more complex technology. He also points out that as technology becomes more complex, inequality divides a society more and more, although industrialization reduces inequality somewhat.

Marx saw in society not unity but social division based on class position. From his point of view, elites may force an uneasy peace, but true social unity can occur only if production becomes a cooperative process. To Weber, the members of a society share a worldview. Just as tradition joined people together in the past, so modern societies have created rational, large-scale organizations that connect people's lives. Finally, Durkheim made solidarity the focus of his work. He contrasted the mechanical solidarity of preindustrial societies, which is based on shared morality, with modern society's organic solidarity, which is based on specialization.

How Have Societies Changed?

According to Lenski's model of sociocultural evolution, societies differ mostly in terms of changing technology. Modern society stands out from past societies in terms of its enormous productive power. Marx, too, noted historical differences in productivity yet pointed to continuing social conflict (except perhaps among simple hunters and gatherers). For Marx, modern society is distinctive mostly because it brings that conflict out into the open. Weber considered the question of change from the perspective of how people look at the world. Members of preindustrial societies have a traditional outlook; modern people take a rational worldview. Finally, for Durkheim, traditional societies are characterized by mechanical solidarity based on moral likeness. In modern industrial societies, mechanical solidarity gives way to organic solidarity based on productive specialization.

How do we understand something as complex as human society? Each of the thinkers profiled in this chapter offers insights about the meaning and importance of modern society. Each has a somewhat different view and provides a partial answer to a very complex issue.

Today's Information Revolution: What Would Durkheim, Weber, and Marx Have Thought?

Colleen: Didn't Marx predict there'd be a class revolution?

Masako: Well, yes, but in the information age, what are the classes that are supposed to be in conflict?

New technology is changing our society at a dizzying pace. Were they alive today, the founding sociologists discussed in this chapter would be eager observers of the current scene. Imagine for a moment the kinds of questions Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx might ask about the effects of computer technology on our everyday lives.

Durkheim, who emphasized the increasing division of labor in modern society, would probably wonder if new information technology is pushing work specialization even further. There is good reason to think that it is. Because electronic communication (say, a Web site) gives anyone a vast market (currently about 1.6 billion people access the Internet), people can specialize far more than if they were trying to make a living in a small geographic area. For example, while most small-town lawyers have a general practice, an information age attorney, living anywhere, can provide specialized guidance on, say, prenuptial agreements or electronic copyright law. As we move into the electronic age, the number of highly specialized small businesses (some of which end up becoming very large) in all fields is increasing rapidly.

Durkheim might also point out that the Internet threatens to increase our experience of anomie.

Using computers has a tendency to isolate people from personal relationships with others. Perhaps, as one analyst puts it, as we expect more from our machines, we expect less from each other (Turkle, 2011). An additional problem is that, although the Internet offers a flood of information, it provides little in the way of moral guidance about what is wise or good or worth knowing.

Weber believed that modern societies are distinctive because their members share a rational worldview, and nothing illustrates this worldview better than bureaucracy. But will bureaucracy be as important during the twenty-first century? Here is one reason to think it may not: Although organizations will probably continue to regulate workers performing the kinds of routine tasks that were common in the industrial era, much work in the postindustrial era involves imagination. Consider such "new age" work as designing homes, composing music, and writing software. This kind of creative work cannot be regulated in the same way

as putting together automobiles as they move down an assembly line. Perhaps this is the reason many high-technology companies have done away with worker dress codes and having employees punch in and out on a time clock.

Finally, what might Marx make of the Information Revolution? Since Marx considered the earlier Industrial Revolution a *class* revolution that allowed the owners of industry to dominate society, he would probably be concerned about the emergence of a new symbolic elite. Some analysts point out that film and television writers, producers, and performers now enjoy vast wealth, international prestige, and enormous power. Just as people without industrial skills stayed at the bottom of the class system in past decades, so people without symbolic skills may well become the "underclass" of the twenty-first century. Globally, there is a "digital divide" by which most people in rich countries, but few people in poor countries, are part of the Information Revolution (United Nations, 2010).

Durkheim, Weber, and Marx greatly improved our understanding of industrial societies. As we continue into the postindustrial age, there is plenty of room for new generations of sociologists to carry on.

Join the Blog!

As we try to understand the Information Revolution that defines our postindustrial society, which of the founding sociologists considered in this chapter—Marx, Weber, or Durkheim—do you find most useful? Why? Go to MySocLab and join the Sociology in Focus blog to share your opinions and experiences and to see what others think.

Why Do Societies Change?

As Lenski sees it, social change comes about through technological innovation that over time transforms an entire society. Marx's materialist approach highlights the struggle between classes as the engine of change, pushing societies toward revolution. Weber, by contrast, pointed out that ideas contribute to social change. He demonstrated how a particular worldview—Calvinism—set in motion the Industrial Revolution, which ended up reshaping all of society. Finally, Durkheim pointed to an expanding division of labor as the key dimension of social change.

The fact that these four approaches are so different does not mean that any one of them is right or wrong in an absolute sense. Society is exceedingly complex, and our understanding of society benefits from applying all four visions.

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

Does having advanced technology make a society better?

The four thinkers discussed in this chapter all had their doubts. Here's a chance for you to do some thinking about the pros and cons of computer technology in terms of its effect on our everyday lives. For each of the three photos shown here, answer these questions: What do you see as the advantages of this technology for our everyday lives? What are the disadvantages?

Hint In the first case, being linked to the Internet allows us to stay in touch with the office, and this may help our careers. At the same time, being "connected" in this way blurs the line between work and play, just as it may allow work to come into our lives at home. In addition, employers may expect us to be on call 24-7.

In the second case, cell phones allow us to talk with others or to send and receive messages. Of course, we all know that cell phones and cars don't add up to safe driving. In addition, doesn't using cell phones in public end up reducing our privacy? And what about the other people around us? How do you feel about having to listen to the personal conversations of people sitting nearby?

In the third case, computer gaming can certainly be fun and it may develop various sensory-motor skills. At the same time, the rise of computer gaming discourages physical play and plays a part in the alarming increase of obesity, which now affects more than one in five children. Also, computers (including iPods) have the effect of isolating individuals, not only from the natural world but also from other people.

Mark has recently started a new job and he decided to carry a laptop equipped so that he can access the Internet and receive email even out on the lake. What advantages and disadvantages do you think this technology provides to Mark?

Kanene likes to stay in touch with her friends when she's in the car, waiting for a flight at the airport, having dinner in a restaurant, or even while catching an afternoon basketball game at a local arena. What advantages and disadvantages do you see in cell phone technology?

Like children all across the United States, Andy and Trish like to play computer games and they own all the latest devices. Assess the use of computer technology as a form of recreation.

Seeing Sociology in *Your* Everyday Life

1. The defining trait of a postindustrial society is computer technology. Spend a few minutes walking around your apartment, dorm room, or home trying to identify every device that has a computer chip in it. How many did you find? Were you surprised by the number?

2. Over the next few days, be alert for everyday evidence of these concepts: Marx's alienation, Weber's alienation, and Durkheim's anomie.

So that you can identify everyday examples of these concepts, answer this question now: What type of behavior or social pattern qualifies as an example of each in action? How are they different?

3. Is modern society good for us? This chapter makes clear that the founders of sociology were aware that modern societies provide many benefits, but all of them were also critical of modern society.

Based on what you have read in this chapter, list three ways in which you would argue modern society is better than traditional societies. Also point to three ways in which you think traditional societies are better than modern societies. Go to the "Seeing Sociology in *Your* Everyday Life" feature on mysoclab.com to learn more about the experience of living in modern society and how we can learn to face up to the challenges of modern life.

Society refers to people who interact in a defined territory and share a culture.
- What forces hold a society together?
- What makes societies different?
- How and why do societies change over time? **p. 80**

Four Visions of Society

Gerhard Lenski: Society and Technology

Gerhard Lenski points to the importance of **technology** in shaping any society. He uses the term **sociocultural evolution** to mean changes that occur as a society gains new technology.

In **hunting and gathering societies**, men use simple tools to hunt animals and women gather vegetation.

Hunting and gathering societies
- have only a few dozen members and are nomadic
- are built around the family
- consider men and women roughly equal in social importance **pp. 81–82**

Horticultural and pastoral societies developed some 12,000 years ago as people began to use hand tools to raise crops and as they shifted to raising animals for food instead of hunting them.

Horticultural and pastoral societies
- are able to produce more food, so populations expand to hundreds
- show greater specialization of work
- show increasing levels of social inequality **p. 82**

Agrarian societies developed 5,000 years ago as the use of plows harnessed to animals or more powerful energy sources enabled large-scale cultivation.

Agrarian societies
- may expand into vast empires
- show even greater specialization, with dozens of distinct occupations
- have extreme social inequality
- reduce the importance of women. **pp. 82–84**

Industrial societies, which developed first in Europe 250 years ago, use advanced sources of energy to drive large machinery.

Industrialization
- moves work from home to factory
- reduces the traditional importance of the family
- raises living standards **p. 84**

✳ **Explore** the **Map** on **mysoclab.com**

Postindustrial societies represent the most recent stage of technological development, namely, technology that supports an information-based economy.

Postindustrialization
- shifts production from heavy machinery making material things to computers processing information
- requires a population with information-based skills
- is the driving force behind the Information Revolution, a worldwide flow of information that now links societies with an emerging global culture **pp. 84–85**

Karl Marx: Society and Conflict

Karl Marx's **materialist approach** claims that societies are defined by their economic systems: How humans produce material goods shapes their experiences.

📖 **Read** the **Document** on **mysoclab.com**

Conflict and History

Class conflict is the conflict between entire classes over the distribution of a society's wealth and power.

Marx traced conflict between social classes in societies as the source of social change throughout history:
- In "ancient" societies, masters dominated slaves.
- In agrarian societies, nobles dominated serfs.
- In industrial-capitalist societies, capitalists dominate proletarians. **pp. 85–87**

👁 **Watch** the **Video** on **mysoclab.com**

Capitalism

Marx focused on the role of **capitalism** in creating inequality and class conflict in modern societies.
- Under capitalism, the ruling class (capitalists, who own the means of production) oppresses the working class (proletarians, who sell their labor).
- Capitalism alienates workers from the act of working, from the products of work, from other workers, and from their own potential.
- Marx predicted that a workers' revolution would eventually overthrow capitalism and replace it with socialism, a system of production that would provide for the social needs of all. **pp. 87–88**

society (p. 80) people who interact in a defined territory and share a culture

sociocultural evolution (p. 80) Lenski's term for the changes that occur as a society gains new technology

hunting and gathering (p. 81) making use of simple tools to hunt animals and gather vegetation for food

horticulture (p. 82) the use of hand tools to raise crops

pastoralism (p. 82) the domestication of animals

agriculture (p. 82) large-scale cultivation using plows harnessed to animals or more powerful energy sources

industrialism (p. 84) the production of goods using advanced sources of energy to drive large machinery

postindustrialism (p. 84) the production of information using computer technology

social conflict (p. 86) the struggle between segments of society over valued resources

capitalists (p. 86) people who own and operate factories and other businesses in pursuit of profits

proletarians (p. 86) people who sell their labor for wages

social institutions (p. 86) the major spheres of social life, or societal subsystems, organized to meet human needs

false consciousness (p. 86) Marx's term for explanations of social problems as the shortcomings of individuals rather than as the flaws of society

class conflict (p. 87) conflict between entire classes over the distribution of a society's wealth and power

class consciousness (p. 87) Marx's term for workers' recognition of themselves as a class unified in opposition to capitalists and ultimately to capitalism itself

alienation (p. 87) the experience of isolation and misery resulting from powerlessness

Max Weber: The Rationalization of Society

Max Weber's **idealist approach** emphasizes the power of ideas to shape society.

Ideas and History

Weber traced the ideas—especially beliefs and values—that have shaped societies throughout history.

- Members of preindustrial societies are bound by **tradition**, the beliefs and values passed from generation to generation.
- Members of industrial-capitalist societies are guided by **rationality**, a way of thinking that emphasizes deliberate, matter-of-fact calculation of the most efficient way to accomplish a particular task.   **pp. 88–90**

The RIse of Rationality

Weber focused on the growth of large, rational organizations as the defining characteristic of modern societies.

- Increasing rationality gave rise to both the Industrial Revolution and capitalism.
- Protestantism (specifically, Calvinism) encouraged the rational pursuit of wealth, laying the groundwork for the rise of industrial-capitalism.
- Weber feared that excessive rationality, while promoting efficiency, would stifle human creativity.   **pp. 90–91**

ideal type (p. 88) an abstract statement of the essential characteristics of any social phenomenon

tradition (p. 89) values and beliefs passed from generation to generation

rationality (p. 89) a way of thinking that emphasizes deliberate, matter-of-fact calculation of the most efficient way to accomplish a particular task

rationalization of society (p. 89) Weber's term for the historical change from tradition to rationality as the main type of human thought

Emile Durkheim: Society and Function

Emile Durkheim claimed that society has an objective existence apart from its individual members.

Structure and Function

Durkheim believed that because society is bigger than any one of us, it dictates how we are expected to act in any given social situation.

- He pointed out that social elements (such as crime) have functions that help society operate.
- Society also shapes our personalities and provides the moral discipline that guides our behavior and controls our desires.   **pp. 92–93**

Evolving Societies

Durkheim traced the evolution of social change by describing the different ways societies throughout history have guided the lives of their members.

- In preindustrial societies, **mechanical solidarity**, or social bonds based on common sentiments and shared moral values, guides the social life of individuals.
- Industrialization and the **division of labor** weaken traditional bonds, so that social life in modern societies is characterized by **organic solidarity**, social bonds based on specialization and interdependence.
- Durkheim warned of increased **anomie** in modern societies, as society provides little moral guidance to individuals.   **pp. 93–94**

anomie (p. 93) Durkheim's term for a condition in which society provides little moral guidance to individuals

mechanical solidarity (p. 93) Durkheim's term for social bonds, based on common sentiments and shared moral values, that are strong among members of preindustrial societies

organic solidarity (p. 93) Durkheim's term for social bonds, based on specialization and interdependence, that are strong among members of industrial societies

division of labor (p. 94) specialized economic activity

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5 Socialization

Learning Objectives

Remember the definitions of the key terms highlighted in boldfaced type throughout this chapter.

Understand the nature-nurture debate about human development.

Apply the sociological perspective to see how society defines behavior at various stages of the life course.

Analyze the contribution of the family, schooling, the peer group, and the mass media to personality development.

Evaluate the contributions of six important thinkers to our understanding of the socialization process.

Create a complex appreciation for the fact that our personalities are not fixed at birth but develop and change as we interact with others.

Having completed two macro-level chapters, Chapters 3 ("Culture") and 4 ("Society"), exploring our social world, we turn now to a micro-level look at how individuals become members of society through the process of socialization. ■

On a cold winter day in 1938, a social worker walked quickly to the door of a rural Pennsylvania farmhouse. Investigating a case of possible child abuse, the social worker entered the home and soon discovered a five-year-old girl hidden in a second-floor storage room. The child, whose name was Anna, was wedged into an old chair with her arms tied above her head so that she couldn't move. She was wearing filthy clothes, and her arms and legs were as thin as matchsticks (K. Davis, 1940).

Anna's situation can only be described as tragic. She had been born in 1932 to an unmarried and mentally impaired woman of twenty-six who lived with her strict father. Angry about his daughter's "illegitimate" motherhood, the grandfather did not even want the child in his house, so for the first six months of her life, Anna was passed among several welfare agencies. But her mother could not afford to pay for her care, and Anna was returned to the hostile home of her grandfather.

To lessen the grandfather's anger, Anna's mother kept Anna in the storage room and gave her just enough milk to keep her alive. There she stayed—day after day, month after month, with almost no human contact—for five long years.

Learning of Anna's rescue, the sociologist Kingsley Davis immediately went to see the child. He found her with local officials at a county home. Davis was stunned by the emaciated girl, who could not laugh, speak, or even smile. Anna was completely unresponsive, as if alone in an empty world.

Social Experience: The Key to Our Humanity

● Understand

Socialization is so basic to human development that we sometimes overlook its importance. But here, in the terrible case of an isolated child, we can see what humans would be like without social contact. Although physically alive, Anna hardly seems to have been human. We can see that without social experience, a child is not able to act or communicate in a meaningful way and seems to be as much an object as a person.

Sociologists use the term **socialization** to refer to *the lifelong social experience by which people develop their human potential and learn culture.* Unlike other living species, whose behavior is mostly or entirely set by biology, humans need social experience to learn their culture and to survive. Social experience is also the foundation of **personality**, *a person's fairly consistent patterns of acting, thinking, and feeling.* We build a personality by internalizing—taking in—our surroundings. But without social experience, as Anna's case shows, personality hardly develops at all.

Human Development: Nature and Nurture

Anna's case makes clear that humans depend on others to provide the care and nurture needed not only for physical growth but also for personality to develop. A century ago, however, people mistakenly believed that humans were born with instincts that determined their personality and behavior.

The Biological Sciences: The Role of Nature

Charles Darwin's groundbreaking 1859 study of evolution, described in Chapter 3 ("Culture"), led people to think that human behavior was instinctive, simply our "nature." Such ideas led to claims that the U.S. economic system reflects "instinctive human competitiveness," that some people are "born criminals," or that women are "naturally" emotional while men are "naturally" rational.

People trying to understand cultural diversity also misunderstood Darwin's thinking. Centuries of world exploration had taught Western Europeans that people behaved quite differently from one society to another. But Europeans linked these differences to biology rather than culture. It was an easy, although incorrect and very damaging,

Human infants display various *reflexes*—biologically based behavior patterns that enhance survival. The sucking reflex, which actually begins before birth, enables the infant to obtain nourishment. The grasping reflex, triggered by placing a finger on the infant's palm, causing the hand to close, helps the infant to maintain contact with a parent and, later on, to grasp objects. The Moro reflex, activated by startling the infant, has the infant swinging both arms outward and then bringing them together across the chest. This action, which disappears after several months of life, probably developed among our evolutionary ancestors so that a falling infant could grasp the body hair of a parent.

step to claim that members of technologically simple societies were biologically less evolved and therefore "less human." This ethnocentric view helped justify colonialism: Why not take advantage of others if they seem not to be human in the same sense that you are?

The Social Sciences: The Role of Nurture

In the twentieth century, biological explanations of human behavior came under fire. The psychologist John B. Watson (1878–1958) developed a theory called *behaviorism,* which holds that behavior is not instinctive but learned. Thus people everywhere are equally human, differing only in their cultural patterns. In short, Watson rooted human behavior not in nature but in *nurture.*

Today, social scientists are cautious about describing *any* human behavior as instinctive. This does not mean that biology plays no part in human behavior. Human life, after all, depends on the functioning of the body. We also know that children often share biological traits (like height and hair color) with their parents and that heredity plays a part in intelligence, musical and artistic talent, and personality (such as how you react to frustration). However, whether you develop your inherited potential depends on how you are raised. For example, unless children use their brain early in life, the brain does not fully develop (Goldsmith, 1983; Begley, 1995).

Without denying the importance of nature, then, we can correctly say that nurture matters more in shaping human behavior. More precisely, *nurture is our nature.*

Social Isolation

As the story of Anna shows, being cut off from the social world is very harmful to human beings. For ethical reasons, researchers can never place people in total isolation to study what happens. But in the past, they have studied the effects of social isolation on nonhuman primates.

Research with Monkeys

In a classic study, the psychologists Harry and Margaret Harlow (1962) placed rhesus monkeys—whose behavior is in some ways surprisingly similar to that of humans—in various conditions of social isolation. They found that complete isolation (with adequate nutrition) for even six months seriously disturbed the monkeys' development. When returned to their group, these monkeys were passive, anxious, and fearful.

The Harlows then placed infant rhesus monkeys in cages with an artificial "mother" made of wire mesh with a wooden head and the nipple of a feeding tube where the breast would be. These monkeys also survived but were unable to interact with others when placed in a group.

But monkeys in a third category, isolated with an artificial wire mesh "mother" covered with soft terry cloth, did better. Each of these monkeys would cling to its mother closely. Because these monkeys showed less developmental damage than earlier groups, the Harlows concluded that the monkeys benefited from this closeness. The experiment confirmed how important it is that adults cradle infants affectionately.

Finally, the Harlows discovered that infant monkeys could recover from about three months of isolation. But by about six months, isolation caused irreversible emotional and behavioral damage.

Studies of Isolated Children

Tragic cases of children isolated by abusive family members show the damage caused by depriving human beings of social experience. We will review three such cases.

Anna: The Rest of the Story   The rest of Anna's story squares with the Harlows' findings. After her discovery, Anna received extensive medical attention and soon showed improvement. When Kingsley Davis visited her after ten days, he found her more alert and even

smiling (perhaps for the first time in her life). Over the next year, Anna made slow but steady progress, showing more interest in other people and gradually learning to walk. After a year and a half, she could feed herself and play with toys.

But as the Harlows might have predicted, five long years of social isolation had caused permanent damage. At age eight, her mental development was less than that of a two-year-old. Not until she was almost ten did she begin to use words. Because Anna's mother was mentally retarded, perhaps Anna was also. The riddle was never solved, however, because Anna died at age ten of a blood disorder, possibly related to the years of abuse she suffered (K. Davis, 1940, 1947).

Another Case: Isabelle   A second case involves another girl found at about the same time as Anna and under similar circumstances. After more than six years of virtual isolation, this girl, named Isabelle, displayed the same lack of responsiveness as Anna. But Isabelle had the benefit of an intensive learning program directed by psychologists. Within a week, Isabelle was trying to speak, and a year and a half later, she knew some 2,000 words. The psychologists concluded that intensive effort had pushed Isabelle through six years of normal development in only two years. By the time she was fourteen, Isabelle was attending sixth-grade classes, damaged by her early ordeal but on her way to a relatively normal life (K. Davis, 1947).

A Third Case: Genie   A more recent case of childhood isolation involves a California girl abused by her parents (Curtiss, 1977; Rymer, 1994). From the time she was two, Genie was tied to a potty chair in a dark garage. In 1970, when she was rescued at age thirteen, Genie weighed only fifty-nine pounds and had the mental development of

The personalities we develop depend largely on the environment in which we live. When a child's world is shredded by violence, the damage (including losing the ability to trust) can be profound and lasting. This drawing was made by a child in the Darfur region of Sudan, where armed militia have killed more than 300,000 people since 2003. What are the likely effects of such experiences on a young person's self-confidence and capacity to form trusting ties?

a one-year-old. With intensive treatment, she became physically healthy, but her language ability remains that of a young child. Today, Genie lives in a home for developmentally disabled adults.

Evaluate   All evidence points to the crucial importance of social experience in personality development. Human beings can recover from abuse and short-term isolation. But there is a point—precisely when is unclear from the small number of cases studied—at which isolation in childhood causes permanent developmental damage.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING   What do studies of isolated children teach us about the importance of social experience?

Understanding Socialization

Understand

Socialization is a complex, lifelong process. The following discussions highlight the work of six researchers—Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, George Herbert Mead, and Erik H. Erikson—who have made lasting contributions to our understanding of human development.

Sigmund Freud's Elements of Personality

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) lived in Vienna at a time when most Europeans considered human behavior to be biologically fixed. Trained as a physician, Freud gradually turned to the study of personality and mental disorders and eventually developed the celebrated theory of psychoanalysis.

Basic Human Needs

Freud claimed that biology plays a major part in human development, although not in terms of specific instincts, as is the case in other species. Rather, he theorized that humans have two basic needs or drives that are present at birth. First is a need for sexual and emotional bonding, which he called the "life instinct," or *eros* (named after the Greek god of love). Second, we share an aggressive drive he called the "death instinct," or *thanatos* (the Greek word for "death"). These opposing forces, operating at an unconscious level, create deep inner tension.

Freud's Model of Personality

Freud combined basic needs and the influence of society into a model of personality with three parts: id, ego, and superego. The **id** (Latin for "it") represents *the human being's basic drives,* which are unconscious and demand immediate satisfaction. Rooted in biology, the id is present at birth, making a newborn a bundle of demands for attention, touching, and food. But society opposes the self-centered id, which is why one of the first words a child typically learns is "no."

To avoid frustration, a child must learn to approach the world realistically. This is done through the **ego** (Latin for "I"), which is *a person's conscious efforts to balance innate pleasure-seeking drives with the demands*

of society. The ego arises as we become aware of our distinct existence and face the fact that we cannot have everything we want.

In the human personality, the **superego** (Latin for "above or beyond the ego") is *the cultural values and norms internalized by an individual.* The superego operates as our conscience, telling us *why* we cannot have everything we want. The superego begins to form as a child becomes aware of parental demands and matures as the child comes to understand that everyone's behavior should take account of cultural norms.

Personality Development

To the id-centered child, the world is a bewildering assortment of physical sensations that bring either pleasure or pain. As the superego develops, however, the child learns the moral concepts of right and wrong. Initially, in other words, children can feel good only in a physical way (such as by being held and cuddled), but after three or four years, they feel good or bad according to how they judge their behavior against cultural norms (doing "the right thing").

The id and superego remain in conflict, but in a well-adjusted person, the ego manages these two opposing forces. If conflicts are not resolved during childhood, Freud claimed, they may surface as personality disorders later on.
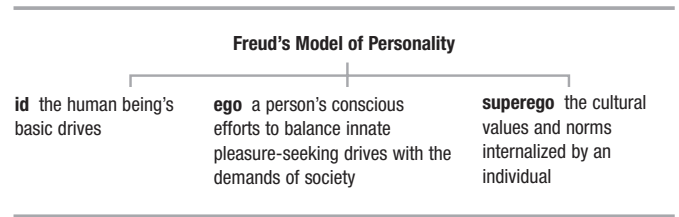
Culture, in the form of the superego, *represses* selfish demands, forcing people to look beyond their own desires. Often the competing demands of self and society result in a compromise that Freud called *sublimation.* Sublimation redirects selfish drives into socially acceptable behavior. For example, marriage makes the satisfaction of sexual urges socially acceptable, and competitive sports are an outlet for aggression.

● **Evaluate** In Freud's time, few people were ready to accept sex as a basic human drive. More recent critics have charged that Freud's work presents humans in male terms and devalues women (Donovan & Littenberg, 1982). Freud's theories are also difficult to test scientifically. But Freud influenced everyone who later studied human personality. Of special importance to sociology are his ideas that we internalize social norms and that childhood experiences have a lasting impact on personality.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What are the three elements in Freud's model of personality? Explain how each one operates.

Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980) studied human *cognition,* how people think and understand. As Piaget watched his own three children grow, he wondered not just what they knew but also how they made sense of the world. Piaget went on to identify four stages of cognitive development.

Freud's Model of Personality

id the human being's basic drives	**ego** a person's conscious efforts to balance innate pleasure-seeking drives with the demands of society	**superego** the cultural values and norms internalized by an individual

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The Sensorimotor Stage

Stage one is the **sensorimotor stage**, *the level of human development at which individuals experience the world only through their senses.* For about the first two years of life, the infant knows the world only through the five senses: touching, tasting, smelling, looking, and listening. "Knowing" to young children amounts to what their senses tell them.

The Preoperational Stage

About age two, children enter the **preoperational stage**, *the level of human development at which individuals first use language and other symbols.* Now children begin to think about the world mentally and use imagination. But "pre-op" children between about two and six still attach meaning only to specific experiences and objects. They can identify a toy as their "favorite" but cannot explain what *types* of toys they like.
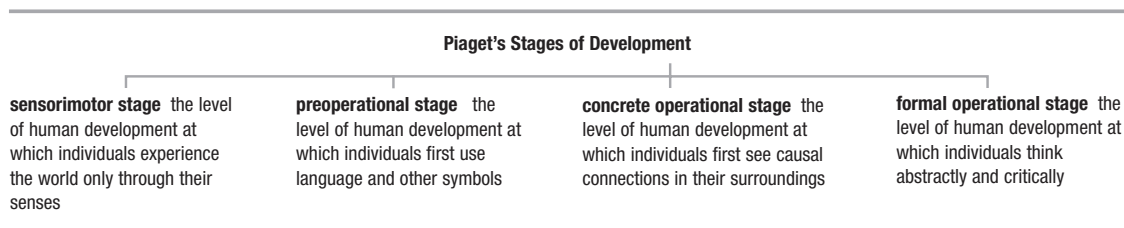
Lacking abstract concepts, a child also cannot judge size, weight, or volume. In one of his best-known experiments, Piaget placed two identical glasses containing equal amounts of water on a table. He asked several children aged five and six if the amount in each glass was the same. They nodded that it was. The children then watched Piaget take one of the glasses and pour its contents into a taller, narrower glass so that the level of the water in the glass was higher. He asked again if each glass held the same amount. The typical five- or six-year-old now insisted that the taller glass held more water. By about age seven, children are able to think abstractly and realize that the amount of water stays the same.

The Concrete Operational Stage

Next comes the **concrete operational stage**, *the level of human development at which individuals first see causal connections in their surroundings.* Between the ages of seven and eleven, children focus on how and why things happen. In addition, children now attach more than one symbol to a particular event or object. If, for example, you say to a child of five, "Today is Wednesday," she might respond, "No, it's my birthday!"—indicating that she can use just one symbol at a time. But a ten-year-old at the concrete operational stage would be able to respond, "Yes, and it's also my birthday."

The Formal Operational Stage

The last stage in Piaget's model is the **formal operational stage**, *the level of human development at which individuals think abstractly and*

Piaget's Stages of Development

sensorimotor stage the level of human development at which individuals experience the world only through their senses	**preoperational stage** the level of human development at which individuals first use language and other symbols	**concrete operational stage** the level of human development at which individuals first see causal connections in their surroundings	**formal operational stage** the level of human development at which individuals think abstractly and critically

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critically. At about age twelve, young people begin to reason abstractly rather than thinking only of concrete situations. If, for example, you were to ask a seven-year-old, "What would you like to be when you grow up?" you might receive a concrete response such as "a teacher." But most teenagers can think more abstractly and might reply, "I would like a job that helps others." As they gain the capacity for abstract thought, young people also learn to understand metaphors. Hearing the phrase "A penny for your thoughts" might lead a child to ask for a coin, but a teenager will recognize a gentle invitation to intimacy.

🟡 **Evaluate**   Freud saw human beings torn by opposing forces of biology and culture. Piaget saw the mind as active and creative. He saw an ability to engage the world unfolding in stages as the result of both biological maturation and social experience.

But do people in all societies pass through all four of Piaget's stages? Living in a traditional society that changes slowly probably limits a person's capacity for abstract and critical thought. Even in the United States, perhaps 30 percent of people never reach the formal operational stage (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971).

CHECK YOUR LEARNING   What are Piaget's four stages of cognitive development? What does his theory teach us about socialization?

Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) built on Piaget's work to study *moral reasoning,* how individuals judge situations as right or wrong. Here again, development occurs in stages.

Young children who experience the world in terms of pain and pleasure (Piaget's sensorimotor stage) are at the *preconventional* level of moral development. At this early stage, in other words, "rightness" amounts to "what feels good to me." For example, a young child may simply reach for something on a table that looks shiny, which is the reason parents of young children have to "child-proof" their homes.

The *conventional* level, Kohlberg's second stage, appears by the teen years (corresponding to Piaget's final, formal operational stage). At this point, young people lose some of their self-ishness as they learn to define right and wrong in terms of what pleases parents and conforms to cultural norms. Individuals at this stage also begin to assess intention in reaching moral judgments instead of simply looking at what people do. For example, they understand that

Childhood is a time to learn principles of right and wrong. According to Carol Gilligan, however, boys and girls define what is "right" in different ways. After reading about Gilligan's theory, can you suggest what these two children might be arguing about?

stealing food to feed one's hungry children is not the same as stealing an iPod to sell for pocket change.

In Kohlberg's final stage of moral development, the *postconventional* level, people move beyond their society's norms to consider abstract ethical principles. Now they think about liberty, freedom, or justice, perhaps arguing that what is legal still may not be right. When the African American activist Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus in 1955, she violated that city's segregation laws in order to call attention to the racial injustice of the law.

🟡 **Evaluate**   Like the work of Piaget, Kohlberg's model explains moral development in terms of distinct stages. But whether this model applies to people in all societies remains unclear. Further, many people in the United States apparently never reach the postconventional level of moral reasoning, although exactly why is still an open question.

Another problem with Kohlberg's research is that his subjects were all boys. He committed a common research error, described in Chapter 2 ("Sociological Investigation"), by generalizing the results of male subjects to all people. This problem led a colleague, Carol Gilligan, to investigate how gender affects moral reasoning.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING   What are Kohlberg's three stages of moral development? What does his theory teach us about socialization?

Carol Gilligan's Theory of Gender and Moral Development

Carol Gilligan, whose approach is highlighted in the Thinking About Diversity box, compared the moral development of girls and boys and concluded that the two sexes use different standards of rightness.

Boys, Gilligan (1982, 1990) claims, have a *justice perspective,* relying on formal rules to define right and wrong. Girls, by contrast, have a *care and responsibility perspective,* judging a situation with an eye toward personal relationships and loyalties. For example, as boys see it, stealing is wrong because it breaks the law. Girls are more likely to wonder why someone would steal and to be sympathetic toward a person who steals, say, to feed her family.

Kohlberg treats rule-based male reasoning as superior to the person-based female approach. Gilligan notes that impersonal rules dominate men's lives in the workplace, but personal relationships are more relevant to women's lives as mothers and caregivers. Why, then, Gilligan asks, should we set up male standards as the norms by which to judge everyone?

🟡 **Evaluate**   Gilligan's work sharpens our understanding of both human development and

The Importance of Gender in Research

Carol Gilligan (1990) has shown how gender guides social behavior. Her early work exposed the gender bias in studies by Kohlberg and others who had used only male subjects. But as her research progressed, Gilligan made a major discovery: Boys and girls actually use different standards in making moral decisions. By ignoring gender, we end up with an incomplete view of human behavior.

Gilligan has also looked at the effect of gender on self-esteem. Her research team interviewed more than 2,000 girls, aged six to eighteen, over a five-year period. She found a clear pattern: Young girls start out eager and confident, but their self-esteem slips away as they pass through adolescence.

Why? Gilligan claims that the answer lies in our society's socialization of females. In U.S. society, the ideal woman is calm, controlled, and eager to please. Then too, as girls move from the elementary grades to secondary school, they have fewer women teachers and find that most authority figures are men. As a result, by their late teens, girls struggle to regain the personal strength they had a decade earlier.

When their research was finished, Gilligan and her colleagues returned to a private girls' school where they had interviewed their subjects to share the results of their work. As their conclusions led them to expect, most of the younger girls who had been interviewed were eager to have their names appear in the forthcoming book. But the older girls were hesitant—many were fearful that they would be talked about.

What Do You Think?

1. How does Gilligan's research show the importance of gender in the socialization process?
2. Do you think boys are subject to some of the same pressures and difficulties as girls? What about the fact that a much smaller share of boys than girls makes it to college? Explain your answer.
3. Can you think of ways in which your gender has shaped the development of your personality? Point out three significant ways gender has shaped your own life.

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gender issues in research. Yet the question remains, does nature or nurture account for the differences between females and males? In Gilligan's view, cultural conditioning is at work, a view that finds support in other research. Nancy Chodorow (1994) claims that children grow up in homes in which, typically, mothers do much more nurturing than fathers. As girls identify with mothers, they become more concerned with care and responsibility to others. By contrast, boys become more like fathers, who are often detached from the home, and develop the same formal and detached personalities. Perhaps the moral reasoning of females and males will become more similar as more women organize their lives around the workplace.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING According to Gilligan, how do boys and girls differ in their approach to understanding right and wrong?

George Herbert Mead's Theory of the Social Self

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) developed the theory of *social behaviorism* to explain how social experience develops an individual's personality (1962, orig. 1934).

The Self

Mead's central concept is the **self**, *the part of an individual's personality composed of self-awareness and self-image.* Mead's genius was in seeing the self as the product of social experience.

First, said Mead, *the self is not there at birth; it develops.* The self is not part of the body, and it does not exist at birth. Mead rejected the idea that personality is guided by biological drives (as Freud asserted) or biological maturation (as Piaget claimed).

Second, *the self develops only with social experience*, as the individual interacts with others. Without interaction, as we see from cases of isolated children, the body grows, but no self emerges.

Third, Mead continued, *social experience is the exchange of symbols.* Only people use words, a wave of the hand, or a smile to create meaning. We can train a dog using reward and punishment, but the dog attaches no meaning to its actions. Human beings, by contrast, find meaning in almost every action.

Fourth, Mead stated that *seeking meaning leads people to imagine other people's intentions.* In short, we draw conclusions from people's actions, imagining their underlying intentions. A dog responds to *what you do;* a human responds to *what you have in mind* as you do it. You can train a dog to go to the hallway and bring back an umbrella, which is handy on a rainy day. But because the dog doesn't understand intention, if the dog cannot find the umbrella, it is incapable of the *human* response: to look for a raincoat instead.

Fifth, Mead explained that *understanding intention requires imagining the situation from the other's point of view.* Using symbols, we imagine ourselves "in another person's shoes" and see ourselves as that person does. We can therefore anticipate how others will respond to us even before we act. A simple toss of a ball requires stepping outside ourselves to imagine how another will catch our throw. All social interaction involves seeing ourselves as others see us—a process that Mead termed *taking the role of the other.*

The Looking-Glass Self

As we interact with others, the people around us become a mirror (an object that people used to call a "looking glass") in which we can see ourselves. What we think of ourselves, then, depends on how we think others see us. For example, if we think others see us as clever, we will think of ourselves in the same way. But if we feel they think of us as clumsy, then that is how we will see ourselves. Charles Hor-

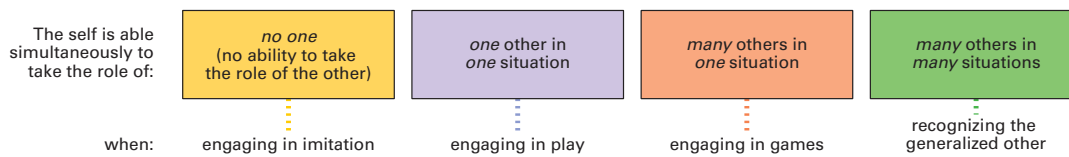| The self is able simultaneously to take the role of: | *no one* (no ability to take the role of the other) | *one* other in *one* situation | *many* others in *one* situation | *many* others in *many* situations |
| when: | engaging in imitation | engaging in play | engaging in games | recognizing the generalized other |

FIGURE 5–1   Building on Social Experience

George Herbert Mead described the development of the self as a process of gaining social experience. That is, the self develops as we expand our capacity to take the role of the other.

ton Cooley (1864–1929) used the phrase **looking-glass self** to mean *a self-image based on how we think others see us* (1964, orig. 1902).

The I and the Me

Mead's sixth point is that *by taking the role of the other, we become self-aware.* Another way of saying this is that the self has two parts. One part of the self operates as the subject, being active and spontaneous. Mead called the active side of the self the "I" (the subjective form of the personal pronoun). The other part of the self works as an object, that is, the way we imagine others see us. Mead called the objective side of the self the "me" (the objective form of the personal pronoun). All social experience has both components: We initiate an action (the I-phase, or subject side, of self), and then we continue the action based on how others respond to us (the me-phase, or object side, of self).

George Herbert Mead wrote, "No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between our own selves and the selves of others." The artwork *Manyness* by Rimma Gerlovina and Valeriy Gerlovin conveys this important truth. Although we tend to think of ourselves as unique individuals, each person's characteristics develop in an ongoing process of interaction with others.
Rimma Gerlovina and Valeriy Gerlovin, *Manyness,* 1990. © the artists, New City, N.Y.

Development of the Self

According to Mead, the key to developing the self is learning to take the role of the other. Because of their limited social experience, infants can do this only through *imitation.* They mimic behavior without understanding underlying intentions, and so at this point, they have no self.

As children learn to use language and other symbols, the self emerges in the form of *play.* Play involves assuming roles modeled on **significant others**, *people, such as parents, who have special importance for socialization.* Playing "mommy and daddy" is an important activity that helps young children imagine the world from a parent's point of view.

Gradually, children learn to take the roles of several others at once. This skill lets them move from simple play (say, playing catch) with one other to complex *games* (such as baseball) involving many others. By about age seven, most children have the social experience needed to engage in team sports.

Figure 5–1 charts the progression from imitation to play to games. But there is a final stage in the development of the self. A game involves taking the role of specific people in just one situation. Everyday life demands that we see ourselves in terms of cultural norms as *any* member of our society might. Mead used the term **generalized other** to refer to *widespread cultural norms and values we use as references in evaluating ourselves.*

As life goes on, the self continues to change along with our social experiences. But no matter how much the world shapes us, we always remain creative beings, able to react to the world around us. Thus, Mead concluded, we play a key role in our own socialization.

● **Evaluate**   Mead's work explores the character of social experience itself. In the symbolic interaction of human beings, he believed he had found the root of both self and society.

Mead's view is completely social, allowing no biological element at all. This is a problem for critics who stand with Freud (who said our general drives are rooted in the body) and Piaget (whose stages of development are tied to biological maturity).

Be careful not to confuse Mead's concepts of the I and the me with Freud's id and superego. For Freud, the id originates in our biology, but Mead rejected any biological element of the self (although he never clearly spelled out the origin of the I). In addition, the id and the superego are locked in continual combat, but the I and the me work cooperatively together (Meltzer, 1978).

CHECK YOUR LEARNING   Explain the meaning and importance of Mead's concepts of the I and the me. What did Mead mean by "taking the role of the other"? Why is this process so important to socialization?

Erik H. Erikson's Eight Stages of Development

Although some analysts (including Freud) point to childhood as the crucial time when personality takes shape, Erik H. Erikson (1902–1994) took a broader view of socialization. He explained that we face challenges throughout the life course (1963, orig. 1950).

Stage 1: Infancy—the challenge of trust (versus mistrust). Between birth and about eighteen months, infants face the first of life's challenges: to establish a sense of trust that their world is a safe place. Family members play a key part in how any infant meets this challenge.

Stage 2: Toddlerhood—the challenge of autonomy (versus doubt and shame). The next challenge, up to age three, is to learn skills to cope with the world in a confident way. Failing to gain self-control leads children to doubt their abilities.

Stage 3: Preschool—the challenge of initiative (versus guilt). Four- and five-year-olds must learn to engage their surroundings—including people outside the family—or experience guilt at failing to meet the expectations of parents and others.

Stage 4: Preadolescence—the challenge of industriousness (versus inferiority). Between ages six and thirteen, children enter school, make friends, and strike out on their own more and more. They either feel proud of their accomplishments or fear that they do not measure up.

Stage 5: Adolescence—the challenge of gaining identity (versus confusion). During the teen years, young people struggle to establish their own identity. In part, teenagers identify with others, but they also want to be unique. Almost all teens experience some confusion as they struggle to establish an identity.

Stage 6: Young adulthood—the challenge of intimacy (versus isolation). The challenge for young adults is to form and maintain intimate relationships with others. Falling in love (as well as making close friends) involves balancing the need to bond with the need to have a separate identity.

Stage 7: Middle adulthood—the challenge of making a difference (versus self-absorption). The challenge of middle age is contributing to the lives of others in the family, at work, and in the larger world. Failing at this, people become self-centered, caught up in their own limited concerns.

Stage 8: Old age—the challenge of integrity (versus despair). As the end of life approaches, people hope to look back on what they have accomplished with a sense of integrity and satisfaction. For those who have been self-absorbed, old age brings only a sense of despair over missed opportunities.

🟡 **Evaluate** Erikson's theory views personality formation as a lifelong process, with success at one stage (say, as an infant gaining trust) preparing us to meet the next challenge. However, not everyone faces these challenges in the exact order presented by Erikson. Nor is it clear that failure to meet the challenge of one stage of life means that a person is doomed to fail later on. A broader question, raised earlier in our discussion of Piaget's ideas, is whether people

in other cultures and in other times in history would define a successful life in Erikson's terms.

In sum, Erikson's model points out that many factors, including the family and school, shape our personalities. In the next section, we take a close look at these important agents of socialization.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING In what ways does Erikson take a broader view of socialization than other thinkers presented in this chapter?

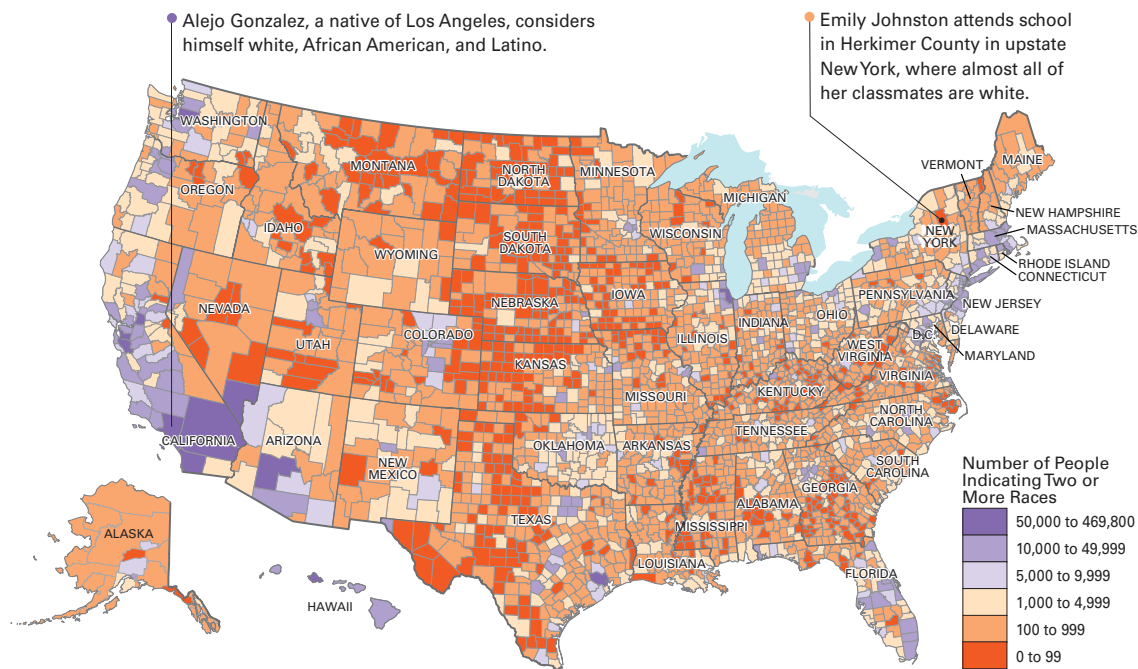## Agents of Socialization

🔴 **Analyze**

Every social experience we have affects us in at least a small way. However, several familiar settings have special importance in the socialization process. These include the family, school, peer group, and the mass media.

Sociological research indicates that wealthy parents tend to encourage creativity in their children while poor parents tend to foster conformity. Although this general difference may be valid, parents at all class levels can and do provide loving support and guidance by simply involving themselves in their children's lives. Henry Ossawa Tanner's painting *The Banjo Lesson* stands as a lasting testament to this process.

Henry Ossawa Tanner, *The Banjo Lesson,* 1893. Oil on canvas. Hampton University Museum, Hampton, Virginia.

Alejo Gonzalez, a native of Los Angeles, considers himself white, African American, and Latino.

Emily Johnston attends school in Herkimer County in upstate New York, where almost all of her classmates are white.

Number of People Indicating Two or More Races

50,000 to 469,800
10,000 to 49,999
5,000 to 9,999
1,000 to 4,999
100 to 999
0 to 99

Seeing Ourselves

NATIONAL MAP 5–1   Racially Mixed People across the United States

This map shows, for 2010, the county-by-county distribution of people who described themselves as racially mixed. How do you think growing up in an area with a high level of racially mixed people (such as Los Angeles or Miami) would be different from growing up in an area with few such people (for example, in upstate New York or the Plains States in the middle of the country)?

Explore the percentage of racially mixed people in your local community and in counties across the United States on **mysoclab.com**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2010).

The Family

The family affects socialization in many ways. For most people, in fact, the family may be the most important socialization agent of all.

Nurture in Early Childhood

Infants are totally dependent on others for care. The responsibility for providing a safe and caring environment typically falls on parents and other family members. For several years—at least until children begin school—the family also has the job of teaching children skills, values, and beliefs. Overall, research suggests, nothing is more likely to produce a happy, well-adjusted child than a loving family (Gibbs, 2001).

Not all family learning results from intentional teaching by parents. Children also learn from the type of environment adults create for them. Whether children learn to see themselves as strong or weak, smart or stupid, loved or simply tolerated—and as Erik Erikson suggests, whether they see the world as trustworthy or dangerous—depends largely on the quality of the surroundings provided by parents and other caregivers.

Race and Class

Through the family, parents give a social identity to children. In part, social identity involves race. Racial identity can be complex because, as Chapter 14 ("Race and Ethnicity") explains, societies define race in various ways. In addition, in 2010, more than 7.5 million people (2.4 percent) said they consider themselves to be of two or more racial categories. This number was 1.4 percent back in 2000, so it is rising. The figure is certain to continue to go up, as an even larger share (about 4 percent) of all births in the United States are now recorded as interracial (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). National Map 5–1 shows where people who describe themselves as racially mixed live.

Social class, like race, plays a large part in shaping a child's personality. Whether born into families of high or low social position, children gradually come to realize that their family's social standing affects how others see them and, in time, how they come to see themselves.

In addition, research shows that class position affects not just how much money parents have to spend on their children but also what parents expect of them (Ellison, Bartkowski, & Segal, 1996).

Solly: *(seeing several friends walking down the dorm hallway, just returned from dinner)* Yo, guys! Jeremy's twenty-one today. We're going down to the Box Car to celebrate.

Matt: *(shaking his head)* Dunno, dude. I got a lab to finish up. It's just another birthday.

Solly: Not just any birthday, my friend. He's twenty-one—an *adult*!

Matt: *(sarcastically)* If turning twenty-one would make me an adult, I wouldn't still be clueless about what I want to do with my life!

Are you an adult or still an adolescent? Does turning twenty-one make you a "grown-up"? According to the sociologist Tom Smith (2003), in our society, there is no one factor that announces the onset of adulthood. In fact, the results of his survey—using a representative sample of 1,398 people over the age of eighteen—suggest that many factors play a part in our decision to consider a young person "grown up."

According to the survey, the single most important transition in claiming adult standing in the United States today is the completion of schooling. But other factors are also important: Smith's respondents linked adult standing to taking on a full-time

job, gaining the ability to support a family financially, no longer living with parents, and finally, marrying and becoming a parent. In other words, almost everyone in the United States thinks a person who has done *all* of these things is fully "grown up."

At what age are these transitions likely to be completed? On average, the answer is about twenty-six. But such an average masks an important difference based on social class. People who do not attend college (more commonly among people growing up in lower-income families) typically finish school before age twenty, and a full-time job, independent living, marriage, and parenthood may follow in a year or two. Those from more privileged backgrounds are likely to attend college and may even go on to graduate or professional school, delaying the process of becoming an adult for as long as ten years, past the age of thirty.

Join the Blog!

Do you consider yourself an adult? At what age do you think adulthood begins? Why? Go to MySocLab and join the Sociology in Focus blog to share your opinions and experiences and to see what others think.

What significance does graduating from college have in the process of becoming an adult?

When people in the United States were asked to pick from a list of traits that are desirable in a child, parents of all social class backgrounds claim that they want their child to be "popular." But almost 60 percent of parents from the lower class point to "obedience" as a key trait in a child, compared to only about 40 percent of parents in the upper class. By contrast, well-to-do parents are more likely than low-income parents to praise children who can "think for themselves" (NORC, 2011).

What accounts for the difference? Melvin Kohn (1977) explains that people of lower social standing usually have limited education and perform routine jobs under close supervision. Expecting that their children will hold similar positions, they encourage obedience and may even use physical punishment like spanking to get it. Because well-off parents have had more schooling, they usually have jobs that demand independence, imagination, and creativity, so they try to inspire the same qualities in their children. Consciously or not, all parents act in ways that encourage their children to follow in their footsteps.

Wealthier parents are more likely to push their children to achieve, and they also typically provide their daughters and sons with an extensive program of leisure activities, including sports, travel, and music lessons. These enrichment activities—far less available to children

growing up in low-income families—build *cultural capital*, which advances learning and creates a sense of confidence in these children that they will succeed later in life (Lareau, 2002; NORC, 2011).
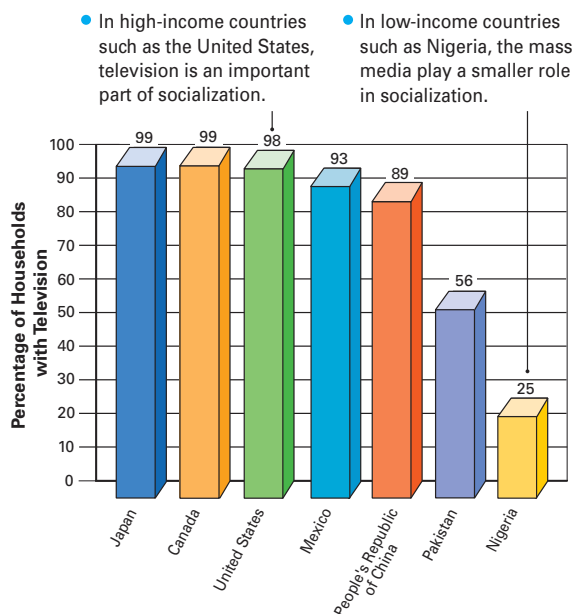
Social class also affects how long the process of growing up takes, as the Sociology in Focus box explains.

The School

Schooling enlarges children's social world to include people with backgrounds different from their own. It is only as they encounter people who differ from themselves that children come to understand the importance of factors such as race and social position. As they do, they are likely to cluster in playgroups made up of one class, race, and gender.

Gender

Schools join with families in socializing children into gender roles. Studies show that at school, boys engage in more physical activities and spend more time outdoors, and girls are more likely to help teachers with various housekeeping chores. Boys also engage in more aggressive behavior in the classroom, while girls are typically quieter and better behaved (Best, 1983; Jordan & Cowan, 1995).

- In high-income countries such as the United States, television is an important part of socialization.
- In low-income countries such as Nigeria, the mass media play a smaller role in socialization.

Global Snapshot

FIGURE 5–2 Television Ownership in Global Perspective

Television is popular in high- and middle-income countries, where almost every household owns at least one TV set.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (2010); World Bank (2010).

What Children Learn

Schooling is not the same for children living in rich and poor communities. As Chapter 20 ("Education") explains, children from well-off families typically have a far better experience in school than those whose families are poor.

For all children, the lessons learned in school include more than the formal lesson plans. Schools also informally teach many things, which together might be called the *hidden curriculum.* Activities such as spelling bees teach children not only how to spell words but also how society divides the population into "winners" and "losers." Organized sports help students develop their strength and skills and also teach children important life lessons in cooperation and competition.

For most children, school is also the first experience with bureaucracy. The school day is based on impersonal rules and a strict time schedule. Not surprisingly, these are also the traits of the large organizations that will employ young people later in life.

The Peer Group

By the time they enter school, children have joined a **peer group**, *a social group whose members have interests, social position, and age in common*. Unlike the family and the school, the peer group lets children escape the direct supervision of adults. Among their peers, children learn how to form relationships on their own. Peer groups also

offer the chance to discuss interests that adults may not share with their children (such as clothing and popular music) or permit (such as drugs and sex).

It is not surprising, then, that parents often express concern about who their children's friends are. In a rapidly changing society, peer groups have great influence, and the attitudes of young and old may differ because of a "generation gap." The importance of peer groups typically peaks during adolescence, when young people begin to break away from their families and think of themselves as adults.

Even during adolescence, however, parental influence on children remains strong. Peers may affect short-term interests such as music or films, but parents have greater influence on long-term goals, such as going to college (Davies & Kandel, 1981).

Finally, any neighborhood or school is made up of many peer groups. As Chapter 7 ("Groups and Organizations") explains, individuals tend to view their own group in positive terms and put down other groups. In addition, people are influenced by peer groups they would like to join, a process sociologists call **anticipatory socialization**, *learning that helps a person achieve a desired position*. In school, for example, young people may copy the styles and slang of a group they hope will accept them. Later in life, a young lawyer who hopes to become a partner in the law firm may conform to the attitudes and behavior of the firm's partners in order to be accepted.

The Mass Media

August 30, Isle of Coll, off the west coast of Scotland. The last time we visited this remote island, there was no electricity and most of the people spoke the ancient Gaelic language. Now that a power cable comes from the mainland, homes have lights, appliances, television, and the Internet! Almost with the flip of a switch, this tiny place has been thrust into the modern world. It is no surprise that the island's traditions are fast disappearing, with few performances of its historical dancing or music to be found. A rising share of the population now consists of mainlanders who ferry over with their cars to spend time in their vacation homes. And everyone now speaks English.

The **mass media** are *the means for delivering impersonal communications to a vast audience.* The term *media* (plural of *medium*) comes from the Latin word for "middle," suggesting that media connect people. *Mass* media arise as communications technology (first newspapers and then radio, television, films, and the Internet) spreads information on a massive scale.

In the United States today, the mass media have an enormous influence on our attitudes and behavior. Television, introduced in the 1930s, became the dominant medium after World War II, and 98 percent of U.S. households now have at least one set (by comparison, just 95 percent have telephones). Five out of six households also have cable or satellite television. As Figure 5–2 shows, the United States has one of the highest rates of television ownership in the world. In this country, it is people with lower incomes who spend the most time watching TV as well as using their television to watch movies and to play video games (Nielsen Media Research, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

The Extent of Mass Media Exposure

Just how "glued to the tube" are we? Survey data show that the average household has at least one television set turned on for eight hours each day and that people spend more than half their free time watching television. One study, by the Kaiser Family Foundation, found that, compared to adults, school-age youngsters typically spend even more time—about seven and a half hours each day—watching television or playing video games. The extent of daily television viewing is greater for African American children (averaging almost six hours) and Hispanic children (almost five and a half hours) than for white children (about three and a half hours).

About two-thirds of U.S. children report that the television is typically on during meals, and more than 70 percent claim that parents do not limit the amount of time they spend in front of the screen. Younger children favor watching television and playing video games; as children get older, music videos and Web surfing become a bigger part of the mix. At all ages, boys favor video games and girls lean toward music videos (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; Nielsen Media Research, 2011).

Years before children learn to read, television watching is a regular part of their daily routine. As they grow, children spend as many hours in front of a television as they do in school or interacting with their parents. This is the case despite research suggesting that television makes children more passive and less likely to use their imagination. Researchers explain that most television is not itself harmful to children; however, watching television prevents children from engaging in other activities—especially interacting with other children and adults—which is vital to social and mental development (American Psychological Association, 1993; Fellman, 1995; Shute, 2010).

Television and Politics

The comedian Fred Allen once quipped that we call television a "medium" because it is "rarely well done." For a number of reasons, television (as well as other mass media) provokes plenty of criticism. Some liberal critics argue that for most of television's history, racial and ethnic minorities have not been visible or have been included only in stereotypical roles (such as African Americans playing butlers and maids, Asian Americans playing gardeners, or Hispanics playing new immigrants). In recent years, however, minorities have moved closer to center stage on television. There are ten times as many Hispanic actors on prime-time television as there were in the 1970s, and they play a far larger range of characters (Lichter & Amundson, 1997; Fetto, 2003b).

On the other side of the fence, conservative critics charge that the television and film industries are dominated by a liberal "cultural elite." In recent years, they claim, "politically correct" media have advanced liberal causes, including feminism and gay rights (Rothman, Powers, & Rothman, 1993; B. Goldberg, 2002). But not everyone agrees, with some studies suggesting that the mainstream media

are fairly conservative on many issues (Adkins & Washburn, 2007). In addition, some television cable channels (such as MSNBC) have a decidedly liberal point of view, while others (such as Fox Network) are more conservative.

One study of the 2008 presidential election found that the Democratic candidate Barack Obama was endorsed by almost three times as many U.S. newspapers as Republican candidate John McCain ("Ongoing Tally," 2008). At the same time, research suggests that a wide range of political opinion is available in today's mass media and that most of us tend to focus on those media sources, whether more liberal or more conservative, that are closer to our own personal opinions (Morris, 2007).
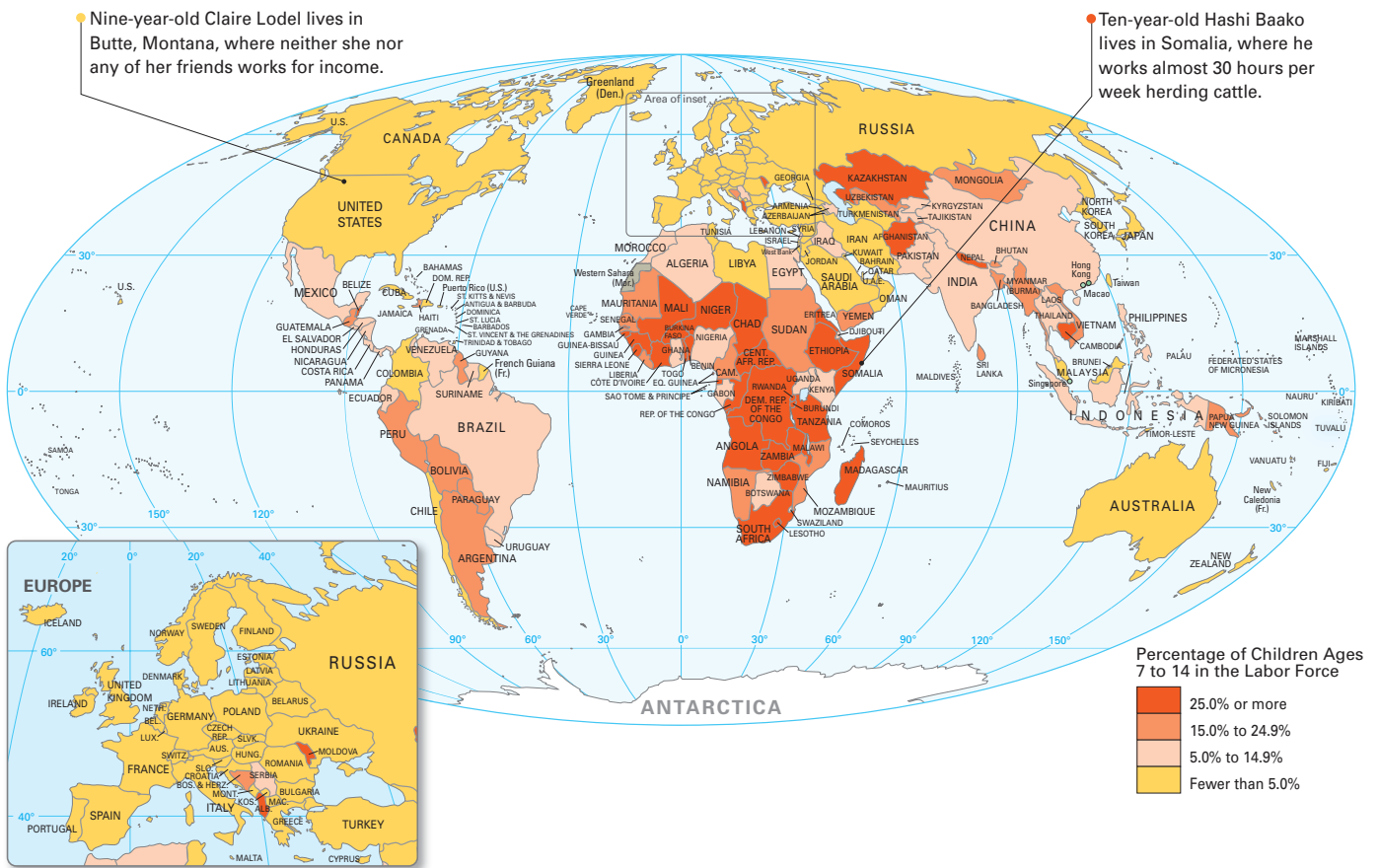
Television and Violence

In 1996, the American Medical Association issued the startling statement that violence in television and films had reached such a high level that it posed a hazard to our health. More recently, a study found a strong link between aggressive behavior and the amount of time elementary school children spend watching television and playing video games (Robinson et al., 2001). The public is concerned about this issue: Three-fourths of U.S. adults report having walked out of a movie or turned off the television because of too much violence. About two-thirds of parents say that they are "very concerned" that their children are exposed to too much media violence. There may be reason for this concern: Almost two-thirds of television programs contain violence, and in most such scenes, violent characters show no remorse and are not punished (B. J. Wilson, 1998; Rideout, 2007).

Back in 1997, the television industry adopted a rating system. But we are left to wonder whether watching sexual or violent programming harms people as much as critics say. More important,

Concern with violence and the mass media extends to the world of video games, especially those popular with young boys. Among the most controversial games, which include high levels of violence, is "Call of Duty." Do you think the current rating codes are sufficient to guide parents and children who buy video games, or would you support greater restrictions on game content?

Nine-year-old Claire Lodel lives in Butte, Montana, where neither she nor any of her friends works for income.

Ten-year-old Hashi Baako lives in Somalia, where he works almost 30 hours per week herding cattle.

Percentage of Children Ages 7 to 14 in the Labor Force

- 25.0% or more
- 15.0% to 24.9%
- 5.0% to 14.9%
- Fewer than 5.0%

Window on the World

GLOBAL MAP 5–1   Child Labor in Global Perspective

Because industrialization extends childhood and discourages children from working and other activities considered suitable only for adults, child labor is uncommon in the United States and other high-income countries. In less economically developed nations of the world, however, children are a vital economic asset, and they typically begin working as soon as they are able. How would childhood in, say, the African nation of Chad or Sudan differ from that in the United States or Canada?

Sources: UNICEF (2010) and World Bank (2010).

why do the mass media contain so much sex and violence in the first place?

Television and the other mass media enrich our lives with entertaining and educational programming. The media also increase our exposure to diverse cultures and provoke discussion of current issues. At the same time, the power of the media—especially television—to shape how we think remains highly controversial.

Evaluate   This section shows that socialization is complex, with many different factors shaping our personalities as we grow. In addition, these factors do not always work together. For instance, children learn certain things from peer groups and the mass media that may conflict with what they learn at home.

Beyond family, school, peer group, and the media, other spheres of life also play a part in social learning. For most people in the United States, these include the workplace, religious organizations, the military, and social clubs. In the end, socialization proves to be not just a simple matter of learning but a complex balancing act as we absorb information from a variety of sources. In the process of sorting and weighing all the information we receive, we form our own distinctive personalities.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING   Identify all the major agents of socialization discussed in this section of the chapter. What are some of the unique ways that each of these helps us develop our individual personalities?

Socialization and the Life Course

● Apply

Although childhood has special importance in the socialization process, learning continues throughout our lives. An overview of the life course reveals that our society organizes human experience according to age—childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age.

Childhood

A few years ago, the Nike Corporation, maker of popular athletic shoes, came under attack. Its shoes are made in Taiwan and Indonesia, in many cases by children who work in factories instead of going to school. About 200 million of the world's children work, with 60 percent of working children doing farming. Half of the world's working children are in Asia, while another one-fourth are in Africa. About half of them labor full time, and one-third of these boys and girls do work that is dangerous to their physical and mental health. For their efforts, they earn very little—typically, about 50 cents an hour (Human Rights Watch, 2006; International Labor Organization, 2010; Thrupkaew, 2010; U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Global Map 5–1 shows that child labor is most common in Africa and Asia.

Criticism of Nike springs from the fact that most North Americans think of *childhood*—roughly the first twelve years of life—as a carefree time for learning and play. Yet as the historian Philippe Ariès (1965) explains, the whole idea of "childhood" is fairly new. During the Middle Ages, children of four or five were treated like adults and expected to fend for themselves.

We defend our idea of childhood because children are biologically immature. But a look back in time and around the world shows that the concept of childhood is grounded not in biology but in culture (LaRossa & Reitzes, 2001). In rich countries, not everyone has to work, so childhood can be extended to allow time for young people to learn the skills they will need in a high-technology workplace.

Because childhood in the United States lasts such a long time, some people worry when children seem to be growing up too fast. In part, this "hurried child" syndrome results from changes in the family—including high divorce rates and both parents in the labor force—that leave children with less supervision. In addition, "adult" programming on television (not to mention in films and on the Internet) carries grown-up concerns such as sex, drugs, and violence into young people's lives. Today's ten- to twelve-year-olds, says one executive of a children's television channel, have about the same interests and experiences typical of twelve- to fourteen-year-olds a generation ago. Perhaps this is why today's children, compared to kids fifty years ago, have higher levels of stress and anxiety (K. S. Hymowitz, 1998; Gorman, 2000; Hoffman, 2010).

Adolescence

At the same time that industrialization created childhood as a distinct stage of life,

adolescence emerged as a buffer between childhood and adulthood. We generally link *adolescence,* or the teenage years, with emotional and social turmoil as young people struggle to develop their own identities. Again, we are tempted to attribute teenage rebelliousness and confusion to the biological changes of puberty. But it is in fact the result of cultural inconsistency. For example, the mass media glorify sex and schools hand out condoms, even as parents urge restraint. Consider, too, that an eighteen-year-old may face the adult duty of going to war but lacks the adult right to drink a beer. In short, adolescence is a time of social contradictions, when people are no longer children but not yet adults.

As is true of all stages of life, adolescence varies according to social background. Most young people from working-class families move directly from high school into the adult world of work and parenting. Wealthier teens, however, have the resources to attend college and perhaps graduate school, stretching their adolescent years into the late twenties and even the thirties (T. W. Smith, 2003). The Thinking About Diversity box on page 116 provides an example of how race and ethnicity can shape the academic performance of high school students.

Adulthood

If stages of the life course were based on biological changes, it would be easy to define *adulthood.* Regardless of exactly when it begins, adulthood is the time when most of life's accomplishments take place, including pursuing a career and raising a family. Personalities are largely formed by then, although marked changes in a person's environment—such as unemployment, divorce, or serious illness—may cause significant changes to the self.

Early Adulthood

During early adulthood—until about age forty—young adults learn to manage day-to-day affairs for themselves, often juggling conflicting

In recent decades, some people have become concerned that U.S. society is shortening childhood, pushing children to grow up faster and faster. In the television show *Pretty Little Liars*, this young woman in high school is having an affair with her teacher. Do television programs and films like this contribute to a "hurried child syndrome"? Do you see this as a problem or not? Why?

The Development of Self among High School Students

Adolescence is a time when people ask questions like "Who am I?" and "What do I want to become?" In the end, we all have to answer these questions for ourselves. But race and ethnicity are likely to have an effect on what our answers turn out to be.

Grace Kao (2000) studied the identity and goals of students enrolled in Johnstown High School, a large (3,000-student) school in a Chicago suburb. Johnstown High is considered a good school with above-average test scores. It is also racially and ethnically diverse: 47 percent of the students are white, 43 percent are African American, 7 percent are Hispanic, and 3 percent are of Asian descent.

Kao interviewed sixty-three Johnstown students, female and male, both individually and in small groups with others of the same race and ethnicity. Talking with them, she learned how important racial and ethnic stereotypes are in young people's developing sense of self.

What are these stereotypes? White students are seen as hardworking in school and concerned about getting high grades. African American students are thought to study less, either because they are not as smart or because they just don't try as hard. In any case, students see African Americans at high risk of failure in school. Because the stereotype says that His-

panics are headed for manual occupations—as gardeners or laborers—they are seen as not caring very much about doing well. Finally, Asian American students are seen as hardworking high achievers, either because they are smart or because they spend their time on academics rather than, say, sports.

From her interviews, Kao learned that most students think these stereotypes are true and take them personally. They expect people, including themselves, to perform in school more or less the way the stereotype predicts. In addition, young people—whether white, black, Hispanic, or Asian—mostly hang out with others like themselves, which gives them little chance to find out that their beliefs are wrong.

Students of all racial and ethnic categories say they *want* to do well in school. But not getting to know those who differ from themselves means that they measure success *only in relation to their own category*. To African American students, in other words, "success" means doing as well as other black students and not flunking out. To Hispanics, "success" means avoiding manual labor and ending up with any job in an office. Whites and Asians, by contrast, define "success" as earning high grades and living up to the high-achievement stereotype. For all these young people, then, "self" develops through the lens of how race and ethnicity are defined by our society.

What Do You Think?

1. Were you aware of racial and ethnic stereotypes similar to those described here in your high school? What about your college?

2. Do you think that gender stereotypes affect the performance of women and men in school as much as racial and ethnic stereotypes? Explain.

3. What can be done to reduce the damaging effects of racial and ethnic stereotypes?

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priorities: schooling, job, partner, children, and parents. During this stage of life, many women try to "do it all," a pattern that reflects the fact that our culture gives them the major responsibility for child rearing and housework even if they have demanding jobs outside the home.

Middle Adulthood

In middle adulthood—roughly ages forty to sixty-five—people sense that their life circumstances are pretty well set. They also become more aware of the fragility of health, which the young typically take for granted. Women who have spent many years raising a family find middle adulthood emotionally trying. Children grow up and require less attention, and husbands become absorbed in their careers, leaving some women with spaces in their lives that are difficult to fill. Many women who divorce also face serious financial problems (Weitzman, 1985, 1996). For all these reasons, an increasing number of women in middle adulthood return to school and seek new careers.

For everyone, growing older means experiencing physical decline, a prospect our culture makes especially challenging for women. Because good looks are considered more important for women, the appearance of wrinkles and graying hair can be traumatic. Men have their own particular difficulties as they get older. Some must admit that they are never going to reach earlier career goals. Others realize that the price of career success has been neglect of family or personal health.

Old Age

Old age—the later years of adulthood and the final stage of life itself—begins around the mid-sixties. In the United States, about one in eight people is at least age sixty-five, and the elderly now outnumber teenagers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Once again, societies attach different meanings to this stage of life. As explained in Chapter 15 ("Aging and the Elderly"), it is older members of traditional societies who typically control most of the land and other wealth. Also, since traditional societies change slowly, older people possess useful wisdom gained over their lifetime, which earns them much respect.

In industrial societies, however, most younger people work and live apart from their parents, becoming independent of their elders. Rapid change also gives our society a "youth orientation" that defines the young as more "hip" and "with it," and what is old as unimportant or even obsolete. To younger people, the elderly may seem out of touch with new trends and fashions, and their knowledge and experience may seem of little value.

Perhaps this anti-elderly bias will decline as the share of older people in the United States steadily increases. The percentage of the U.S. population over age sixty-five has more than tripled in the past hundred years. With life expectancy still increasing, most men and women in their mid-sixties today (the "young elderly") can look forward to living decades longer. Analysts predict that by 2030, the number of seniors will double to 72 million, and the "average" person in the United States will be close to forty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).
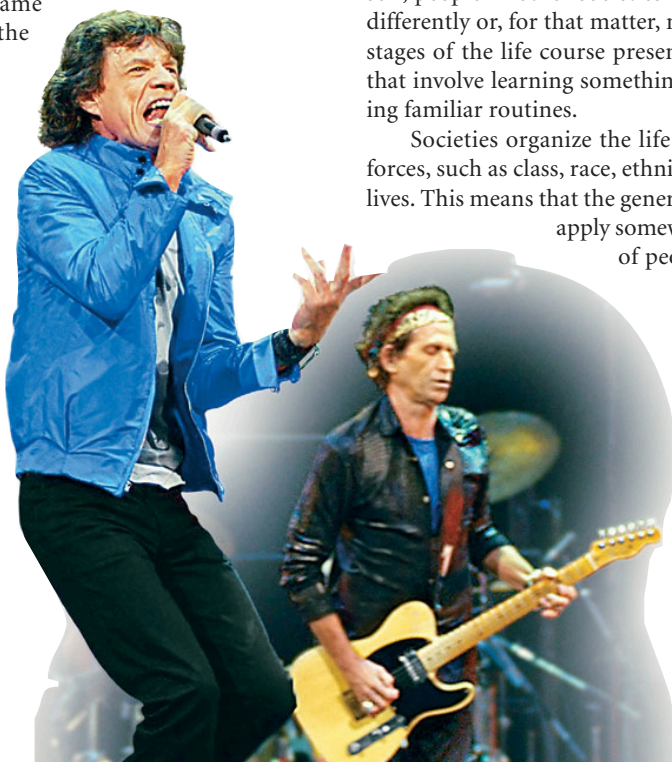
Old age differs in an important way from earlier stages in the life course. Growing up typically means entering new roles and taking on new responsibilities, but growing old is the opposite experience—leaving roles that provided both satisfaction and social identity. For some people, retirement is a period of restful activity, but for others, it can mean losing valued routines and even outright boredom. Like any life transition, retirement demands learning new patterns while at the same time letting go of habits from the past.

Death and Dying

Throughout most of human history, low living standards and limited medical technology meant that death from accident or disease could come at any stage of life. Today, however, 84 percent of people in the United States die after age fifty-five (Xu et al., 2010).

After observing many people as they were dying, the psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969) described death as an orderly transition involving five distinct stages. Typically, a person first faces death with *denial,* perhaps out of fear and perhaps because our culture tends to ignore the reality of death. The second phase is *anger,* when a person facing death sees it as a gross injustice. Third, anger gives way to *negotiation* as the person imagines the possibility of avoiding death by striking a bargain with God. The fourth response, *resignation,* is often accompanied by psychological depression. Finally, a complete adjustment to death requires *acceptance.* At this point, no longer paralyzed by fear and anxiety, the person whose life is ending sets out to find peace and makes the most of whatever time remains.

More recent research has shown that Kübler-Ross simplified the process of dying—not everyone passes through these stages or does so in the order in which she presents them (Konigsberg, 2011). At the same time, this research has helped draw attention to death and dying. As the share of women and men in old age increases, we can expect our culture to become more comfortable with the idea of death. In recent years, people in the United States have started talking about death more openly, and the trend is toward viewing dying as preferable to prolonged suffering. More married couples now prepare for death with legal and financial planning. This openness may ease somewhat the pain of the surviving spouse, a consideration for women, who, more often than not, outlive their husbands.

The Life Course: Patterns and Variations

This brief look at the life course points to two major conclusions. First, although each stage of life is linked to the biological process of aging, the life course is largely a social construction. For this reason, people in other societies may experience a stage of life quite differently or, for that matter, not at all. Second, in any society, the stages of the life course present certain problems and transitions that involve learning something new and, in many cases, unlearning familiar routines.

Societies organize the life course according to age, but other forces, such as class, race, ethnicity, and gender, also shape people's lives. This means that the general patterns described in this chapter apply somewhat differently to various categories of people.

People's life experiences also vary, depending on when, in the history of the society, they were born. A **cohort** is *a category of people with something in common, usually their age.* Because members of a particular age cohort are generally influenced by the same economic and cultural trends, they tend to have similar attitudes and values. Women and men born in the 1940s and 1950s, for example, grew up during a time of economic expansion that gave them a sense of optimism. Today's college students, who have grown up in an age of economic uncertainty, are less confident about the future.

A cohort is a category of similar-age people who share common life experiences. Just as audiences at Rolling Stones concerts in the 1960s were mainly young people, so many of the group's fans today are the same people, now over age sixty.

Resocialization: Total Institutions

A final type of socialization, experienced by about 2.5 million people in the United States, involves being confined—usually against their will—in prisons or mental hospitals (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010; U.S. National Institute of Mental Health, 2011). This is the world of the **total institution**, *a setting in which people are isolated from the rest of society and manipulated by an administrative staff*.

According to Erving Goffman (1961), total institutions have three important characteristics. First, staff members supervise all aspects of daily life, including when and where residents (often called "inmates") eat, sleep, and work. Second, life in a total institution is controlled and standardized, with the same food, uniforms, and activities for everyone. Third, formal rules dictate when, where, and how inmates perform their daily routines.

The purpose of such rigid routines is **resocialization**, *radically changing an inmate's personality by carefully controlling the environment*. Prisons and mental hospitals physically isolate inmates behind fences, barred windows, and locked doors and limit their access to the telephone, mail, and visitors. The institution becomes their entire world, making it easier for the staff to bring about personality change—or at least obedience—in the inmate.

Resocialization is a two-part process. First, the staff breaks down the new inmate's existing identity. For example, an inmate must give up personal possessions, including clothing and grooming articles used to maintain a distinctive appearance. Instead, the staff provides standard-issue clothes so that everyone looks alike. The staff subjects new inmates to "mortifications of self," which can include searches, head shaving, medical examinations, fingerprinting, and assignment of a serial number. Once inside the walls, individuals also give up their privacy as guards routinely inspect their living quarters.

In the second part of the resocialization process, the staff tries to build a new self in the inmate through a system of rewards and punishments. Having a book to read, watching television, or making a telephone call may seem like minor pleasures to the outsider, but in the rigid environment of the total institution, gaining such simple privileges as these can be a powerful motivation to conform. The length of confinement typically depends on how well the inmate cooperates with the staff.

Prisons are one example of a total institution in which inmates dress alike and carry out daily routines under the direct supervision and control of institutional staff. What do we expect prison to do to young people convicted of crimes? How well do you think prisons do what people expect them to?

Total institutions affect people in different ways. Some inmates may end up "rehabilitated" or "recovered," but others may change little, and still others may become hostile and bitter. Over a long period of time, living in a rigidly controlled environment can leave some people *institutionalized,* without the capacity for independent living.

But what about the rest of us? Does socialization crush our individuality or empower us to reach our creative potential? The Controversy & Debate box takes a closer look at this question.

Mike: Sociology is a really interesting course. Since my professor started telling us how to look at the world with a sociological eye, I'm realizing that a lot of who I am and where I am is because of society.

Kim: (*teasingly*) Oh, so *society* is responsible for you turning out so smart and witty and good-looking?

Mike: No, that's all me. But I'm seeing that being at college and playing football is maybe not all me. I mean, it's at least also about social class and gender. What people are and the society around them can never be completely separated.

This chapter stresses one key theme: Society shapes how we think, feel, and act. If this is so, then in what sense are we free? To answer this important question, consider the Muppets, puppet stars of television and film that many of us remember from childhood. Watching the antics of Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy, and the rest of the troupe, we almost believe they are real rather than objects controlled from backstage or below. As the sociological perspective points out, human beings are like puppets in that we, too, respond to backstage forces. Society, after all, gives us a culture and also shapes our lives according to class, race, and gender. If this is so, can we really claim to be free?

Sociologists answer this question with many voices. The politically liberal response is that individuals are *not* free of society—in fact, as social creatures, we never could be. But if we have to live in a society with power over us, then it is important to do what we can to make our world more socially just. We can do this by trying to lessen inequality, working to reduce class differences and to eliminate barriers to opportunity that hold back minorities, including women. A more conservative response is that, yes, society does shape our lives but we should also realize that we can remain free all the same because, first, to the extent that we believe in our way of life, society does not seem oppressive. Second, even when we run up against social barriers that we do not accept, we remain free because society can never dictate our dreams. Our history as a nation, right from the revolutionary acts that led to its founding, is one story after another of people pursuing personal goals despite great odds.

All of these arguments can be found in George Herbert Mead's analysis of socialization. Mead knew that society makes demands on us, sometimes limiting our options. But he also saw that human beings are spontaneous and creative, capable of continually acting on society both with acceptance and with efforts to bring about change. Mead noted the power of society while still affirming the human capacity to evaluate, criticize, and ultimately choose and change.

In the end, then, we may seem like puppets, but this impression is correct only on the surface. A crucial difference is that we have the ability to stop, look up at the "strings" that make us move, decide what we think about them, and even yank on the strings defiantly (Berger, 1963:176). If our pull is strong enough, we can accomplish more than we might think. As Margaret Mead once remarked, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Does understanding more about how society shapes our lives give us greater power to "cut the strings" and choose for ourselves how to live?

What Do You Think?

1. Do you think that our society gives more freedom to males than to females? Why or why not?

2. Do you think that most people in our society feel that they have some control over their lives or not? Why?

3. Has learning about socialization increased or decreased your feeling of freedom? Why?

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

When do we grow up and become adults?

As this chapter explains, many factors come into play in the process of moving from one stage of the life course to another. In global perspective, what makes our society unusual is that there is no one event that clearly tells everyone (and us, too) that the milestone of adulthood has been reached. We have important events that say, for example, when someone completes high school (graduation ceremony) or becomes married (wedding ceremony). Look at the photos shown here. In each case, what do we learn about how the society defines the transition from one stage of life to another?

Hint Societies differ in how they structure the life course, including which stages of life are defined as important, what years of life various stages correspond to, and how clearly movement from one stage to another is marked. Given our cultural emphasis on individual choice and freedom, many people tend to say "You're only as old as you feel" and let people decide these things for themselves. When it comes to reaching adulthood, our society is not very clear—the box on page 111 points out many factors that figure into becoming an adult. So there is no widespread "adult ritual" as we see in these photos. Keep in mind that, for us, class matters a lot in this process, with young people from more affluent families staying in school and delaying full adulthood until well into their twenties or even their thirties. Finally, in these tough economic times, the share of young people in their twenties living with parents goes way up, which can delay adulthood for an entire cohort.

Among the Hamer people in the Omo Valley of Ethiopia, young boys must undergo a test to mark their transition to manhood. Usually the event is triggered by the boy's expressing a desire to marry. In this ritual, witnessed by everyone in his society, the boy must jump over a line of bulls selected by the girl's family. If he succeeds in doing this three times, he is declared a man and the wedding can take place (marking the girl's transition to womanhood). Does our society have any ceremony or event similar to this to mark the transition to adulthood?
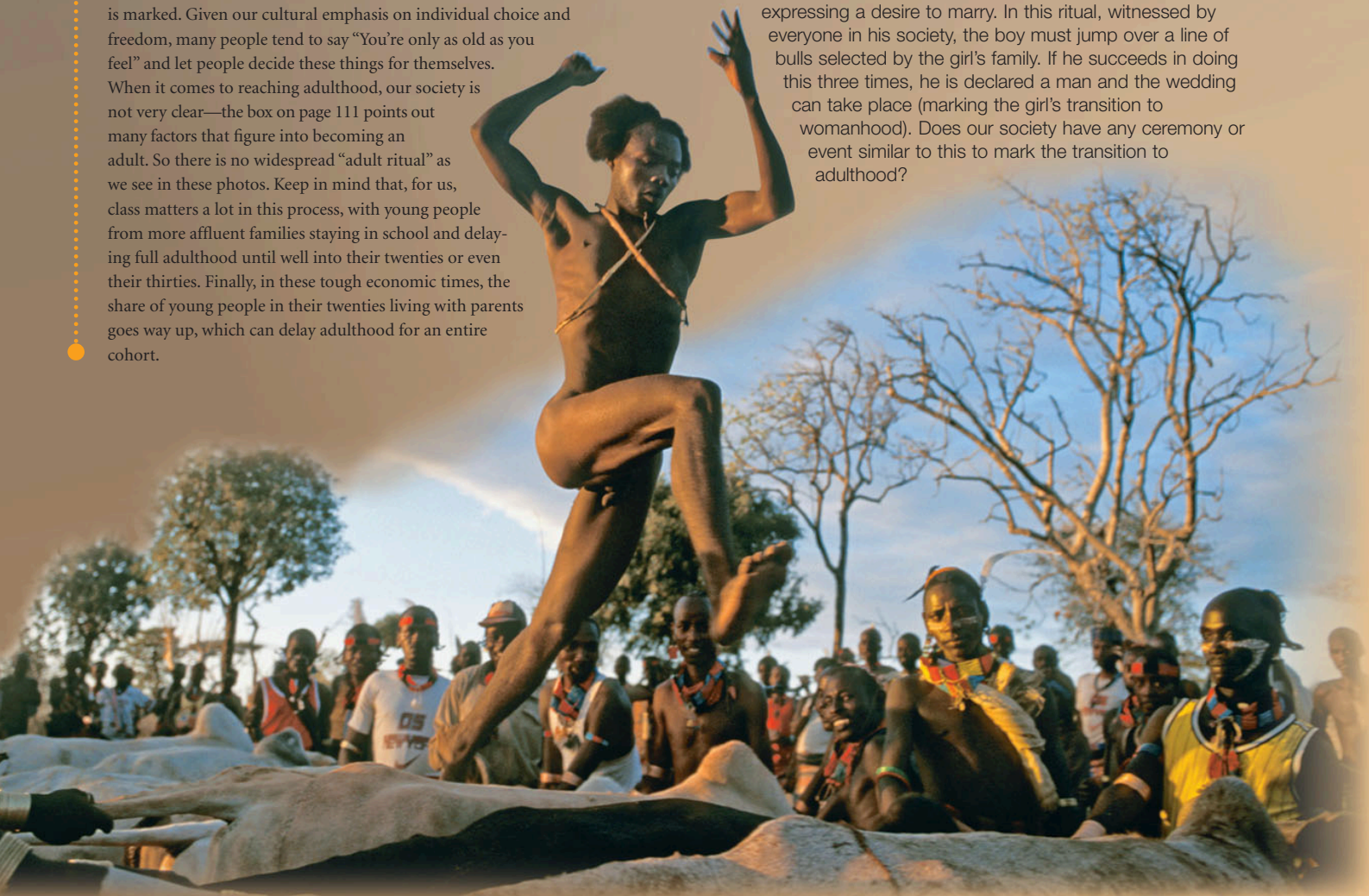
On the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona, young Apache girls perform the Sunrise Dance to mark their transition to adulthood. Carefully painted by an elder according to Apache tradition, each girl holds a special staff, which symbolizes her hope for a long and healthy life and spiritual happiness. Many of the world's societies time these coming-of-age rituals to correspond to a girl's first menstrual cycle. Why do you think this is so?

These young men and women in Seoul, South Korea, are participating in a Confucian ceremony to mark their becoming adults. This ritual, which takes place on the twentieth birthday, defines young people as full members of the community and also reminds them of all the responsibilities they are now expected to fulfill. If we had such a ritual in the United States, at what age would it take place? Would a person's social class affect the timing of this ritual?

Seeing Sociology in *Your* Everyday Life

1. Across the United States, many families plan elaborate parties to celebrate a young person's graduation from high school. In what respects is this event a ritual that symbolizes a person reaching adulthood? How does social class affect whether or not people define high school graduation as an achievement that marks the beginning of adulthood?

2. In the United States, when does the stage of life we call "old age" begin? Is there an event that marks the transition to old age? Has the meaning of old age, and the age at which it begins, changed over the last several generations? Does social class play a part in defining this stage of life? If so, how?

3. In what sense are human beings free? After reading through this chapter, develop a personal statement of the extent to which you think you are able to guide your own life. Notice that some of the thinkers discussed in this chapter (such as Sigmund Freud) argued that there are sharp limits on our ability to act freely; by contrast, others (especially George Herbert Mead) claimed that human beings have significant ability to be creative. What is your personal statement about the extent of human freedom? Go to the "Seeing Sociology in *Your* Everyday Life" feature on mysoclab.com to learn more about the extent of personal freedom in society as well as suggestions about ways of making the most of the freedom we have.

What Is Socialization?

Socialization is a **lifelong process**.

- Socialization develops our humanity as well as our particular personalities.
- The importance of socialization is seen in the fact that extended periods of social isolation result in permanent damage (cases of Anna, Isabelle, and Genie). **pp. 102–4**

▣ **Read** the **Document** on **mysoclab.com**

Socialization is a matter of **nurture** rather than **nature**.

- A century ago, most people thought human behavior resulted from biological instinct.
- For us as human beings, it is our nature to nurture. **pp. 102–3**

socialization (p. 102) the lifelong social experience by which people develop their human potential and learn culture

personality (p. 102) a person's fairly consistent patterns of acting, thinking, and feeling

Important Contributions to Our Understanding of Socialization

Sigmund Freud's model of the human personality has three parts:

- **id:** innate, pleasure-seeking human drives
- **superego:** the demands of society in the form of internalized values and norms
- **ego:** our efforts to balance innate, pleasure-seeking drives and the demands of society **pp. 104–5**

Jean Piaget believed that human development involves both biological maturation and gaining social experience. He identified four stages of cognitive development:

- The **sensorimotor stage** involves knowing the world only through the senses.
- The **preoperational stage** involves starting to use language and other symbols.
- The **concrete operational stage** allows individuals to understand causal connections.
- The **formal operational stage** involves abstract and critical thought. **pp. 105–6**

Lawrence Kohlberg applied Piaget's approach to stages of moral development:

- We first judge rightness in **preconventional** terms, according to our individual needs.
- Next, **conventional** moral reasoning takes account of parental attitudes and cultural norms.
- Finally, **postconventional** reasoning allows us to criticize society itself. **p. 106**

Carol Gilligan found that gender plays an important part in moral development, with males relying more on abstract standards of rightness and females relying more on the effects of actions on relationships. **pp. 106–7**

◉ **Watch** the **Video** on **mysoclab.com**

To **George Herbert Mead:**

- The **self** is part of our personality and includes self-awareness and self-image.
- The self develops only as a result of social experience.
- Social experience involves the exchange of symbols.
- Social interaction depends on understanding the intention of another, which requires taking the role of the other.
- Human action is partly spontaneous (the I) and partly in response to others (the me).
- We gain social experience through imitation, play, games, and understanding the **generalized other**. **pp. 107–8**

Charles Horton Cooley used the term **looking-glass self** to explain that we see ourselves as we imagine others see us. **pp. 107–8**

Erik H. Erikson identified challenges that individuals face at each stage of life from infancy to old age. **p. 109**

id (p. 104) Freud's term for the human being's basic drives

ego (p. 104) Freud's term for a person's conscious efforts to balance innate pleasure-seeking drives with the demands of society

superego (p. 105) Freud's term for the cultural values and norms internalized by an individual

sensorimotor stage (p. 105) Piaget's term for the level of human development at which individuals experience the world only through their senses

preoperational stage (p. 105) Piaget's term for the level of human development at which individuals first use language and other symbols

concrete operational stage (p. 105) Piaget's term for the level of human development at which individuals first see causal connections in their surroundings

formal operational stage (p. 105) Piaget's term for the level of human development at which individuals think abstractly and critically

self (p. 107) George Herbert Mead's term for the part of an individual's personality composed of self-awareness and self-image

looking-glass self (p. 108) Cooley's term for a self-image based on how we think others see us

significant others (p. 108) people, such as parents, who have special importance for socialization

generalized other (p. 108) George Herbert Mead's term for widespread cultural norms and values we use as references in evaluating ourselves

Agents of Socialization

The **family** is usually the first setting of socialization.
- Family has the greatest impact on attitudes and behavior.
- A family's social position, including race and social class, shapes a child's personality.
- Ideas about gender are learned first in the family.   **pp. 110–11**

✳ **Explore** the **Map** on **mysoclab.com**

Schools give most children their first experience with bureaucracy and impersonal evaluation.
- Schools teach knowledge and skills needed for later life.
- Schools expose children to greater social diversity.
- Schools reinforce ideas about gender.   **pp. 111–12**

The **peer group** helps shape attitudes and behavior.
- The peer group takes on great importance during adolescence.
- The peer group frees young people from adult supervision.   **p. 112**

The **mass media** have a huge impact on socialization in modern, high-income societies.
- The average U.S. child spends as much time watching television and videos as attending school and interacting with parents.
- The mass media often reinforce stereotypes about gender and race.
- The mass media expose people to a great deal of violence.   **pp. 112–14**

peer group (p. 112) a social group whose members have interests, social position, and age in common

anticipatory socialization (p. 112) learning that helps a person achieve a desired position

mass media (p. 112) the means for delivering impersonal communications to a vast audience

Socialization and the Life Course

The concept of **childhood** is grounded not in biology but in culture. In high-income countries, childhood is extended.   **p. 115**

The emotional and social turmoil of **adolescence** results from cultural inconsistency in defining people who are not children but not yet adults. Adolescence varies by social class.   **p. 115**

Adulthood is the stage of life when most accomplishments take place. Although personality is now formed, it continues to change with new life experiences.   **pp. 115–16**

Old age is defined as much by culture as biology.
- Traditional societies give power and respect to elders.
- Industrial societies define elders as unimportant and out of touch.   **pp. 116–17**

Acceptance of **death and dying** is part of socialization for the elderly. This process typically involves five stages: denial, anger, negotiation, resignation, and acceptance.   **p. 117**

cohort (p. 117) a category of people with something in common, usually their age

Total Institutions

Total institutions include prisons, mental hospitals, and monasteries.
- Staff members supervise all aspects of life.
- Life is standardized, with all inmates following set rules and routines.   **p. 118**

Resocialization is a two-part process:
- breaking down inmates' existing identity
- building a new self through a system of rewards and punishments   **p. 118**

total institution (p. 118) a setting in which people are isolated from the rest of society and controlled by an administrative staff

resocialization (p. 118) radically changing an inmate's personality by carefully controlling the environment