



In October 2015, the campus of Yale University broke out in controversy over a series of emails written by administrators about Halloween. The uproar began when an initial email went out from an Intercultural Affairs Committee representing Native American, Black, Jewish, Latino, Asian American, and international students: "The end of October is quickly approaching, and along with the falling leaves and cooler nights come the Halloween celebrations on our campus and our community," the memo began. "These celebrations provide opportunities for students to socialize as well as to make positive contributions to our community. . . . However, Halloween is also unfortunately a time when the normal thoughtfulness and sensitivity of most Yale students can sometimes be forgotten and some poor decisions can be made, including wearing feathered headdresses, turbans, wearing 'war paint' or modifying skin tone or wearing blackface or redface."

While acknowledging students' right to free expression, the administrators asked students to consider how "culturally unaware or insensitive choices" might affect other groups. The

memo proposed that students ask themselves a series of questions before deciding on their costumes:

1. For a funny costume, is the humor based on “making fun” of real people, human traits, or cultures?
2. For a historical costume, does it further historical inaccuracies or misinformation?
3. For a cultural costume, does it reduce cultural differences to stereotypes or jokes?
4. For a religious costume, does it mock or belittle someone’s deeply held faith tradition?

A few days after the Intercultural Affairs Committee sent out this advice to students, the deputy director of one of the Yale dormitories wrote a pointed response that questioned whether it was appropriate for college administrators to police the costumes of young adults. In an email to the dorm residents, she asked, “Is there no room anymore for a child or young person to be a little bit obnoxious, a little bit inappropriate or provocative, or yes, offensive? American universities were once a safe space not only for maturation but also for a certain regressive, or even transgressive, experience; increasingly, it seems, they have become places of censure and prohibition.”

This email set in motion a series of protests, with many students calling for her resignation (and that of her husband, who defended her email in his capacity as the dorm’s director). Many felt that she was dismissing the power of harmful stereotypes to further degrade marginalized groups by encouraging those who take offense to a person’s costume to “look away.” Although the president of Yale and the Yale College dean came out in support of the dorm director and his wife keeping their jobs, she ultimately decided to resign from teaching at the college.

So why were the Yale students so upset? At the heart of this controversy over Halloween costumes is a concept that sociologists refer to as **cultural appropriation**, which occurs when members of one cultural group borrow elements of another’s culture, such as when a non-Indian person dons a sari or a non-Japanese person wears a kimono. Is it always offensive to take on elements of a culture to which you don’t belong? Even the most well-intentioned and seemingly benign decisions to borrow the cultural style of another group can be understood quite differently by those who come from that culture. There are no hard-and-fast rules that can resolve such conflicts. One thing we can do is be aware of what is at stake here. Sometimes cultural appropriation can reduce an entire way of life to a demeaning stereotype that exacer-

bates historically unequal power relations. For this reason, many schools have banned the use of Native American mascots.

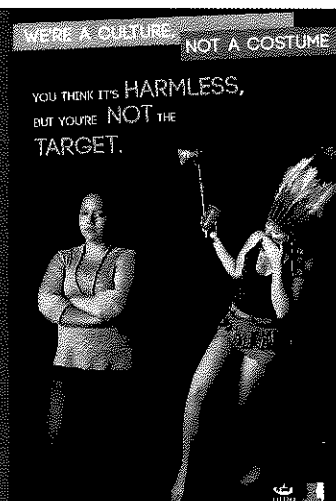
Similarly, it was this sociological insight that led the Intercultural Affairs Committee to urge students to be particularly thoughtful and sensitive to others’ feelings on Halloween.

As the protests at Yale demonstrate, issues related to cultural appropriation often come to a head at Halloween and at other campus parties. But culture is more than just how we dress. In this chapter, we will look at what culture is and its role in encouraging conformity to shared ways of thinking and acting. We then consider the early development of human culture, emphasizing features that distinguish human behavior from that of other species. After assessing the role of biology in shaping human behavior, we examine the aspects of culture that are essential for human society. This

cultural appropriation

When members of one cultural group borrow elements of another group’s culture.

“We’re a culture, not a costume” was a poster campaign launched by Ohio University that sparked a national conversation about racially insensitive Halloween costumes.



leads to a discussion of cultural diversity, examining the cultural variations not only across different societies but also within a single society, such as the United States.

Cultural variations among human beings are linked to different types of society, and we will compare and contrast the main forms of society found in history. The point of doing this is to tie together closely the two aspects of human social existence: the different cultural values and products that human beings have developed and the contrasting types of society in which such cultural development has occurred. Too often, culture is discussed separately from society, as though the two were disconnected, whereas in fact, they are closely intertwined. Throughout the chapter, we concentrate on how social change has affected cultural development. One instance of this is the effect of technology and globalization on the many cultures of the world.

What Is Culture?

The sociological study of culture began with Émile Durkheim in the nineteenth century and soon became the basis of anthropology, a social science specifically focused on the study of cultural differences and similarities among the world's peoples. Early social scientists assumed that "primitive" cultures were inferior, lagging far behind modern European "civilization." Sociologists and anthropologists now recognize that different cultures have their own distinctive characteristics. The task of social science is to understand this cultural diversity, which is best done by avoiding value judgments.

When we use the term *culture* in daily conversation, we often think of "high culture," such as fine art, literature, classical music, or ballet. From a sociological perspective, the concept includes these activities but also many more. **Culture** consists of the values held by members of a particular group, the languages they speak, the symbols they revere, the norms they follow, and the material goods they create and that become meaningful for them—bows and arrows, plows, factories and machines, computers, books, dwellings. It refers to the ways of life of the individual members or groups within a society: their apparel, marriage customs and family life, patterns of work, religious ceremonies, and leisure pursuits. We should think of culture as a "design for living" or "tool kit" of practices, knowledge, and symbols acquired—as we shall see later—through learning rather than by instinct (Kluckhohn 1949; Swidler 1986). Some elements of culture, especially the beliefs and expectations people have about one another and the world they inhabit, are a component of all social relations.

Sociologists and anthropologists distinguish between two forms of culture: "non-material culture," the cultural ideas that are not themselves physical objects, and "material culture," the physical objects that a society creates.

Defining "Culture": Nonmaterial Culture

Nonmaterial culture comprises the nonphysical components of culture, including values and norms, symbols, language, and speech and writing.

VALUES AND NORMS

Values are abstract ideals. For example, monogamy—being faithful to one's sole romantic partner—is a prominent value in most Western societies. In other cultures, alternatively, a



Know what culture consists of, and recognize how it differs from society.

culture

The values, norms, and material goods characteristic of a given group. The notion of culture is widely used in sociology and the other social sciences (particularly anthropology). Culture is one of the most distinctive properties of human social association.

values

Ideas held by individuals or groups about what is desirable, proper, good, and bad. What individuals value is strongly influenced by the specific culture in which they happen to live.

person may be permitted to have several wives or husbands simultaneously. Similarly, some cultures value individualism highly, whereas others place great emphasis on collectivism. A simple example makes this clear. Most pupils in the United States would be outraged to find another student cheating on an examination. In the United States, copying from someone else's paper goes against core values of individual achievement, equality of opportunity, hard work, and respect for the rules. Russian students, however, might be puzzled by this sense of outrage among their American peers. Helping one another pass an examination reflects the value Russians place on equality and on collective problem solving in the face of authority.

Within a single society or community, values may also conflict: Some groups or individuals may value traditional religious beliefs, whereas others may favor freedom of expression, individual rights, and gender-based equality. Some people may prefer material comfort and success, whereas others may favor simplicity and a quiet life. The Yale Halloween incident vividly highlights an instance when the competing values of freedom of expression and sensitivity to the feelings of minority group members came into conflict. In our changing age—filled with the global movement of people, ideas, goods, and information—it is not surprising that we encounter instances of cultural values in conflict.

Norms are widely agreed-upon principles or rules people are expected to observe; they represent the dos and don'ts of social life. Norms of behavior in marriage include, for example, how husbands and wives are supposed to behave toward their in-laws. In some societies, they are expected to develop a close relationship; in others, they keep a clear distance. Many of our everyday behaviors and habits are grounded in cultural norms. Movements, gestures, and expressions are strongly influenced by cultural factors. A clear example can be seen in the way people smile—particularly in public contexts—across different cultures. Among the Inuit (Eskimos) of Greenland, for example, one does not find the strong tradition of public smiling that exists in many areas of western Europe and North America. This does not mean that the Inuit are cold or unfriendly; it is simply not their common practice to smile at or exchange pleasantries with strangers.

Norms, like the values they reflect, vary widely both across and within cultures. Among most Americans, for example, one norm calls for direct eye contact between persons engaged in conversation; completely averting one's eyes is usually interpreted as a sign of weakness or rudeness. Yet, among the Navajo, a cultural norm calls for averting one's eyes as a sign of respect. Direct eye contact, particularly between strangers, is considered rude because it violates a norm of politeness.

Norms also change over time. For example, beginning in 1964, with the U.S. surgeon general's report "Smoking and Health," which presented definitive medical evidence linking smoking with a large number of serious health problems, the U.S. government waged a highly effective campaign to discourage people from smoking. A social norm favoring smoking—once associated with independence, sex appeal, and glamour—has given way to an equally strong antismoking social norm that depicts smoking as unhealthful, unattractive, and selfish. In 2016, the proportion of American adults who smoked was less than 16 percent, compared to 42 percent in 1964, when the surgeon general's report was issued (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2018).

Values and norms work together to shape how members of a culture behave within their surroundings. Even within a single culture, the norms of conduct differ by age, gender, and other important social subgroups. Gender norms are particularly powerful; women are expected to be more docile, more caring, and even more moral than men.

norms

Rules of conduct that specify appropriate behavior in a given range of social situations. A norm either prescribes a given type of behavior or forbids it. All human groups follow definite norms, which are always backed by sanctions of one kind or another—varying from informal disapproval to physical punishment.



"... no-one shall take it away"
How careless memory can be. It can mislay years of happiness, and offer up, instead, one brief moment of enjoyment. But this, at least, is yours to keep, and no-one shall take it away. To millions of men and women, Craven 'A' comes readily to mind. Remembering the cool, firm feel of the natural cork tip, so kind to their lips, and recalling the rare flavour of the rich tobacco, so kind to their throat, the significance of other cigarettes escapes their memory.



Those who smoke Craven 'A' seldom care for other cigarettes

A TIP FROM A
FORMER
SMOKER

**RECORD YOUR
VOICE FOR LOVED
ONES WHILE
YOU STILL CAN.**

Temie, Age 52
North Carolina



Smoking causes irreversible damage to your body.
For Temie, it gave her blood cancer. She's afraid
for the help of 1-800-QUIT-NOW.



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Smoking was portrayed as sophisticated and elegant in the 1950s. Today, smokers are vilified for harming themselves and their children. What has contributed to these drastic changes in our perceptions of smokers?

LANGUAGE

Language demonstrates both the unity and the diversity of human culture because there are no cultures without language, yet there are thousands of different languages spoken in the world. Anyone who has visited a foreign country armed only with a dictionary knows how difficult it is to understand anything or to be understood. Although languages that have similar origins have words in common with one another—as do, for example, German and English—most of the world's major language groups have no words in common at all.

Language is involved in virtually all our activities. In the form of ordinary talk or speech, it is the means by which we organize most of what we do. However, language is involved not just in mundane, everyday activities but also in ceremony, religion, poetry, and many other spheres. One of the most distinctive features of human language is that it allows us to vastly extend the scope of our thought and experience. Using language, we can convey information about events remote in time or space and can discuss things we have never seen. We can develop abstract concepts, tell stories, make jokes, and express sarcasm.

Languages—indeed, all symbols—are representations of reality. The symbols we use may signify things we imagine, such as mathematical formulas or fictitious creatures, or they may represent (i.e., “re-present,” or make present again in our minds) things initially experienced through our senses. Symbols even represent emotions, as the common emoticons of :) (happy) and ;) (good-natured winking) reveal. Human behavior is oriented toward the symbols we use to represent reality rather than toward the reality itself—and these symbols are determined within a particular culture. Because symbols are representations, their cultural meanings must be interpreted when they are used. When you see a four-footed furry animal, for example, you must determine which cultural symbol

language

A system of symbols that represent objects and abstract thoughts; the primary vehicle of meaning and communication in a society.

linguistic relativity hypothesis

A hypothesis, based on the theories of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, that perceptions are relative to language; also referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

to attach to it. Do you decide to call it a dog, a wolf, or something else? If you determine it is a dog, what cultural meaning does that convey? In American culture, dogs are typically regarded as household pets and lavished with affection. Among the Akha of northern Thailand, dogs are seen as food and treated accordingly. The diversity of cultural meanings attached to the word *dog* thus requires an act of interpretation. In this way, we are freed, in a sense, from being directly tied to the physical world around us.

In the 1930s, the anthropological linguist Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf advanced the **linguistic relativity hypothesis**, or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which argues that the language we use influences our perceptions of the world. That is because we are much more likely to be aware of things in the world if we have words for them (Haugen 1977; Malotki 1983; Witkowski and Brown 1982). Expert skiers or snowboarders, for example, use terms such as *black ice*, *corn*, *powder*, and *packed powder* to describe different snow and ice conditions. Such terms enable them to more readily perceive potentially life-threatening situations that would escape the notice of a novice. In a sense, then, experienced winter athletes have a different perception of the world—or at least, a different perception of the alpine slopes—than novices do.

Language also helps give permanence to a culture and an identity to a people. Language outlives any particular speaker or writer, affording a sense of history and cultural continuity, a feeling of “who we are.” One of the central paradoxes of our time is that despite the globalization of the English language through the Internet and other forms of global media, local attachments to language persist, often out of cultural pride. For example, the French-speaking residents of the Canadian province of Quebec are so passionate about their linguistic heritage that they often refuse to speak English, the dominant language of Canada, and periodically seek political independence from the rest of Canada.

SPEECH AND WRITING

All societies use speech as a vehicle of language. However, there are other ways of “carrying,” or expressing, language—most notably, writing. The invention of writing marked a major transition in human history. Writing first began as the drawing up of lists. Marks would be made on wood, clay, or stone to keep records about significant events, objects, or people. For example, a mark, or sometimes a picture, might be drawn to represent each tract of land possessed by a particular family or set of families (Gelb 1952). Writing began as a means of storing information and as such was closely linked to the administrative needs of early civilizations. A society that possesses writing can locate itself in time and space. Documents can be accumulated that record the past, and information can be gathered about present-day events and activities.

Writing is not just the transfer of speech to paper or some other durable material. It is a phenomenon of interest in its own right. Written documents or texts have qualities in some ways quite distinct from the spoken word. The impact of speech is always by definition limited to the particular contexts in which words are uttered. Ideas and experiences can be passed down through generations in cultures without writing, but only if they are regularly repeated and passed on by word of mouth. Written texts, conversely, can endure for thousands of years, and through them, people from past ages can in a certain sense address us directly. This is, of course, why documentary research is so important to historians. By interpreting the texts that past generations leave behind, historians can reconstruct what their lives were like.

Defining “Culture”: Material Culture

Material culture consists of the physical objects that individuals in society create. These objects, in turn, influence how we live. They include the food we eat; the clothes we wear; the cars we drive to the homes we live in; the tools and technologies we use to make those goods, from sewing machines to computerized factories; and the towns and cities that we build as places in which to live and work.

While the symbols expressed in speech and writing are the chief ways in which cultural meanings are formed and expressed, they are not the only ways. Material objects can also be used to generate meanings. A **signifier** is any vehicle of meaning—any set of elements used to communicate. The sounds made in speech are signifiers, as are the marks made on paper or other materials in writing. Other signifiers, however, include dress, pictures or visual signs, modes of eating, forms of building or architecture, and many other material features of culture (Hawkes 1977).

Styles of dress, for example, normally help signify differences between the sexes. Even colors can signify important aspects of culture. In contemporary society, young girls are typically dressed in pink, whereas boys are dressed in blue—but this wasn’t always the case (Paoletti 2012). In the nineteenth century, both boys and girls wore frilly white clothing. A June 1918 article in *Ladies’ Home Journal* stated, “The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl” (Paoletti 2012). As we saw in the case of the Yale Halloween incident, material goods, such as costumes, can communicate very powerful social meanings. Although dressing up like a Native American might be deeply offensive on a college campus, the response might be different at a Chicago Blackhawks hockey game, where there is no expectation that students will be in a “safe space.”

But material culture is not simply symbolic; it is also vital for catering to physical needs—in the tools or technology used to acquire food, make weaponry, construct dwellings, manufacture our clothing, and so forth. We have to study both the practical and the symbolic aspects of material culture to understand it completely.

Today, material culture is rapidly becoming globalized, largely through modern information technology, such as the computer and the Internet. Although the United States has been at the forefront of this technological revolution, most other industrial countries are catching up. In fact, it no longer makes sense to speak of an exclusively “U.S. technology” any more than it makes sense to speak of a U.S. car. The iPhone, for example, contains hundreds of components that are sourced from some 200 manufacturers across the planet, embodying technology developed in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Europe, and the United States (Menasians 2016). Another example of the globalization of material culture is the way that classrooms and department stores the world over increasingly resemble one another and the fact that McDonald’s restaurants are now found on nearly every continent.

Culture and Society

“Culture” can be distinguished from “society,” but these notions are closely connected. A **society** is a system of interrelationships that connects individuals together. No culture could exist without a society; equally, no society could exist without culture. Without

material culture

The physical objects that society creates that influence the ways in which people live.

signifier

Any vehicle of meaning and communication.

society

A group of people who live in a particular territory, are subject to a common system of political authority, and are aware of having a distinct identity from other groups. Some societies, like hunting-and-gathering societies, are small, numbering no more than a few dozen people. Others are large, numbering millions—modern Chinese society, for instance, has a population of more than a billion people.

In the photo on the right, members of a 1970s commune relax outdoors. On the left, a Harajuku girl poses for a photograph in Tokyo, Japan. Though their distinctive styles set them apart from mainstream society, these people are not as nonconformist as they may think they are. Both subcultures conform to the norms of their respective social groups.



culture, we would not be human at all, in the sense in which we usually understand that term. We would have no language in which to express ourselves, we would have no sense of self-consciousness, and our ability to think or reason would be severely limited.

Culture also serves as a society's glue because culture is an important source of conformity, providing its members with ready-made ways of thinking and acting. For example, when you say that you subscribe to a particular value, such as formal learning, you are probably voicing beliefs that conform to those of your family members, friends, teachers, or others who are significant in your life. Cultures differ, however, in how much they value conformity. Research based on surveys of more than 100,000 adults in over sixty countries shows that Japanese culture lies at one extreme in terms of valuing conformity (Hofstede 1997), while at the other extreme lies American culture, one of the least conformist, ranking among the world's highest in cherishing individualism (Hamamura 2012).

American high school and college students often see themselves as especially nonconformist. The hipsters of today, like the hippies of the 1960s and the punks of the 1980s, sport distinctive clothing styles, haircuts, and other forms of bodily adornment. Yet how individualistic are they? Are young people with piercings or tattoos really acting independently? Or are their styles perhaps as much the "uniforms" of their group as navy blue suits are among middle-aged businesspeople? There is an aspect of conformity to their behavior—conformity to their own group.

Since some degree of conformity to norms is necessary for any society to exist, one of the key challenges for all cultures is to instill in people a willingness to conform. This is accomplished in two ways (Parsons 1964). First, individuals learn the norms of their culture. While this occurs throughout a person's life, the most crucial learning occurs during childhood, and parents play a key role. When learning is successful, the norms are so thoroughly internalized that they become unquestioned ways of thinking and acting; they come to appear "normal." (Note the similarity between the words *norm* and *normal*.)

When a person fails to learn and adequately conform to a culture's norms, a second way of instilling cultural conformity comes into play: social control. Social control often involves

the punishment of rule breaking. Administration of punishment includes such informal behavior as rebuking friends for minor breaches of etiquette, gossiping behind their backs, or ostracizing them from the group. Official, formal forms of discipline might range from parking tickets to imprisonment (Foucault 1979). Durkheim, one of the founders of sociology, argued that punishment serves not only to help guarantee conformity among those who would violate a culture's norms and values but also to vividly remind others what the norms and values are.

Is it possible to describe an "American" culture? Although the United States is culturally diverse, we can identify several characteristics of a uniquely American culture. First, it reflects a particular range of values shared by many, if not all, Americans, such as the belief in the merits of individual achievement or in equality of opportunity. Second, these values are connected to specific norms: For example, it is usually expected that people will work hard to achieve occupational success (Bellah et al. 1985; Parsons 1964). Third, it involves the use of material artifacts created mostly through modern industrial technology, such as cars, mass-produced food, and clothing.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Describe two examples of nonmaterial culture and two examples of material culture.
2. What is the linguistic relativity hypothesis?
3. What role does culture play in society?

How Does Human Culture Develop?

Human culture and human biology are closely intertwined. Understanding how culture is related to the physical evolution of the human species can help us better understand the central role that culture plays in shaping our lives.

Early Human Culture: Adaptation to Physical Environment

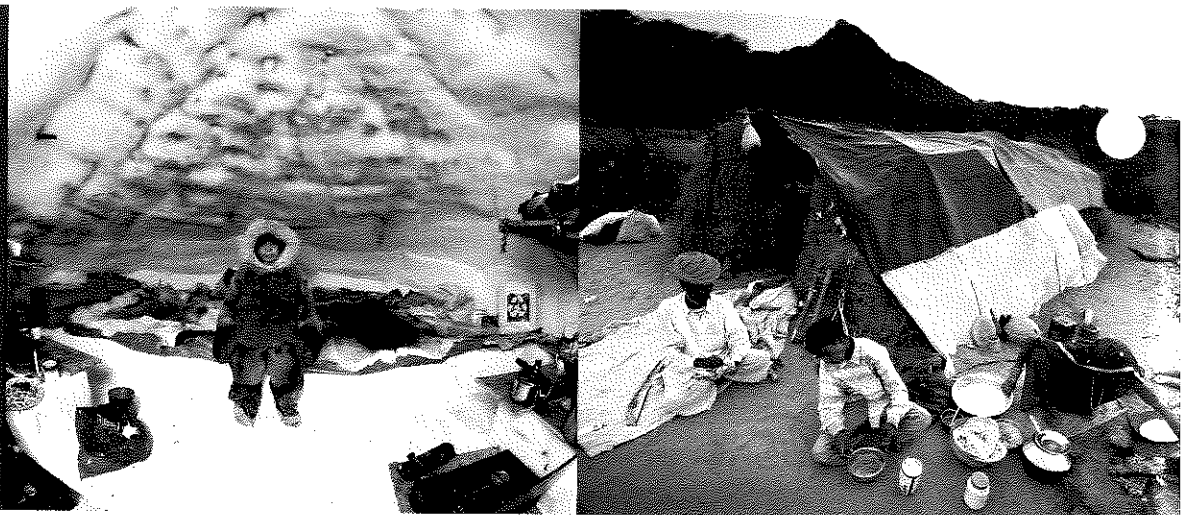
Scientists believe that the first humans evolved from apelike creatures on the African continent some 4 million years ago. Their conclusion is based on archaeological evidence and knowledge of the close similarities in blood chemistry and genetics between chimpanzees and humans. The first evidence of humanlike culture dates back only 2 million years. In these early cultures, humans fashioned stone tools, derived sustenance by hunting animals and gathering nuts and berries, harnessed the use of fire, and established a highly cooperative way of life. Because early humans planned their hunts, they must also have had some ability for abstract thought.

Culture enabled early humans to compensate for their physical limitations, such as lack of claws, sharp teeth, and running speed, relative to other animals (Deacon 1998). Culture freed humans from dependence on the instinctual and genetically determined set of responses to the environment characteristic of other species. The larger, more complex human brain permitted a greater degree of adaptive learning in dealing with major environmental changes, such as the Ice Age. For example, humans figured out how to build fires and sew clothing for warmth. Through greater flexibility, humans were able to survive unpredictable challenges in their surroundings and shape the world with their ideas and tools.



Begin to understand how both biological and cultural factors influence our behavior. Learn the ideas of sociobiology and how others have tried to refute these ideas by emphasizing cultural differences.

As these pictures of members of a North Pole community (left) and a desert community (right) demonstrate, culture is powerfully influenced by geographic and climate conditions.



Yet early humans were closely tied to their physical environment, because they still lacked the technological ability to modify their immediate surroundings significantly (Bennett 1976; Harris 1975, 1978, 1980). Their ability to secure food and make clothing and shelter depended largely on the physical resources that were close at hand. Cultures in different environments varied widely as a result of adaptations by which people fashioned their cultures to be suitable to specific geographic and climatic conditions. For example, the cultures developed by desert dwellers, where water and food were scarce, differed significantly from the cultures that developed in rain forests, where such natural resources abounded. Human inventiveness spawned a rich tapestry of cultures around the world. As you will see at the conclusion of this chapter, modern technology and other forces of globalization pose both challenges and opportunities for future global cultural diversity.

Nature or Nurture?

Because humans evolved as a part of the world of nature, it would seem logical to assume that human thinking and behavior are the result of biology and evolution. In fact, one of the oldest and most enduring controversies in the social sciences is the “nature/nurture” debate: Are we shaped by our biology, or are we products of learning through life’s experiences, that is, of nurture? Biologists and some psychologists emphasize biological factors in explaining human thinking and behavior. Sociologists, not surprisingly, stress the role of learning and culture. They are also likely to argue that because human beings are capable of making conscious choices, neither biology nor culture wholly determines human behavior.

The “nature/nurture” debate has raged for more than a century. In the 1930s and 1940s, many social scientists focused on biological factors, with some researchers seeking (unsuccessfully), for example, to prove that a person’s physique determined his or her personality. In the 1960s and 1970s, scholars in different fields emphasized culture. For example, social psychologists argued that even the most severe forms of mental illness were the result of the labels that society attaches to unusual behavior rather than the result of biochemical processes (Scheff 1966). Today, partly because of new understandings in genetics and brain neurophysiology, the pendulum is again swinging toward the side of biology.

The resurgence of biological explanations for human behavior began in the 1970s, when the evolutionary biologist Edward O. Wilson published *Sociobiology: The New*

Synthesis (1975). The term **sociobiology** refers to the application of biological principles to explain the social activities of animals, including human beings. Using studies of insects and other social creatures, Wilson argued that genes influence not only physical traits but behavior as well. In most species, for example, males are larger and more aggressive than females and tend to dominate the “weaker sex.” Some suggest that genetic factors explain why, in all human societies that we know of, men tend to hold positions of greater authority than women.

One way in which sociobiologists have tried to illuminate the relations between the sexes is by means of the idea of “reproductive strategy.” A reproductive strategy is a pattern of behavior, arrived at through evolutionary selection, that favors the chances of survival of offspring. The female body has a larger investment in its reproductive cells than the male body does—a fertilized egg takes nine months to develop. Thus, according to sociobiologists, women will not squander that investment and are not driven to have sexual relations with many partners; their overriding aim is the care and protection of children. Men, on the other hand, tend toward promiscuity. Their wish to have sex with many partners is sound strategy from the point of view of the species; to carry out their mission, which is to maximize the possibility of impregnation, they move from one partner to the next. In this way, it has been suggested, we can explain differences in sexual behavior and attitudes between men and women.

Sociobiologists do not argue that our genes determine 100 percent of our behavior. For example, they note that depending on the circumstances, men can choose to act in nonaggressive ways. Even though this argument would seem to open up the field of sociobiology to culture as an additional explanatory factor in describing human behavior, social scientists have roundly condemned sociobiology for claiming that a propensity for particular behaviors, such as violence, is somehow “genetically programmed” into our brains (Seville Statement on Violence 1990).

How Nature and Nurture Interact

Most sociologists today would acknowledge a role for nature in determining attitudes and behavior, but with strong qualifications. For example, babies are born with the ability to recognize faces: Babies a few minutes old turn their heads in response to patterns that resemble human faces but not in response to other patterns (Cosmides and Tooby 1997; Johnson and Morton 1991). But it is a large leap to conclude that because babies are born with basic reflexes, the behavior of adults is governed by **instincts**: inborn, biologically fixed patterns of action found in all cultures. Sociologists tend to argue strongly against **biological determinism**, or the belief that differences we observe between groups of people, such as men and women, are explained wholly by biological (rather than social) causes.

Sociologists no longer pose the question as one of nature or nurture. Instead, they ask how nature and nurture interact to produce human behavior. Recent studies exploring the relationship between genetics and social influences have generally concluded that although genetics is important, how genes might affect behavior depends largely on the social context. For example, a study of obesity among adolescents found that social and behavioral factors, such as a family’s lifestyle (for example, how much time a family spends watching TV or how often a family skips meals), have a significant effect on the likelihood that children will end up overweight, even when both parents are heavy (Martin 2008). Similarly, an international study of gender differences in mathematical ability found that

sociobiology

An approach that attempts to explain the behavior of both animals and human beings in terms of biological principles.

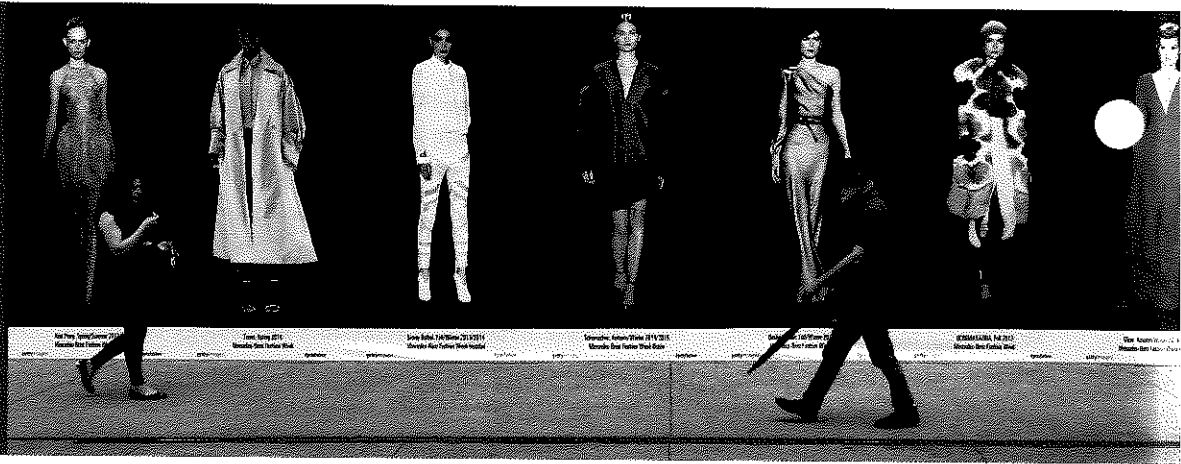
instinct

A fixed pattern of behavior that has genetic origins and that appears in all normal animals within a given species.

biological determinism

The belief that differences we observe between groups of people, such as men and women, are explained wholly by biological causes.

Sociologists argue that our preferences for particular body types are not biologically ingrained but rather shaped by the cultural norms of beauty communicated through magazine ads, commercials, and movies.



such differences varied widely across countries, with differences in high mathematical performance between males and females reflecting the country's level of gender inequality rather than purely biological factors (Penner 2008). Even alcoholism is strongly affected by social context: Although a specific gene has been identified as increasing one's propensity for alcohol dependence, a strong family support system can greatly reduce that risk (Pescosolido et al. 2008).

Sociologists' main concern, therefore, is with how our different ways of thinking and acting are learned through interactions with family, friends, schools, television, and every other facet of the social environment. For example, sociologists argue that it's not an inborn biological disposition that makes American heterosexual males feel romantically attracted to a particular type of woman. Rather, it is the exposure they've had throughout their lives to tens of thousands of magazine ads, TV commercials, and film stars that emphasize specific cultural standards of female beauty.

Early child rearing is especially relevant to this kind of learning. Human babies have a large brain, requiring birth relatively early in their fetal development, before their heads have grown too large to pass through the birth canal. As a result, human babies are totally unequipped for survival on their own, compared with the young of other species, and must spend a number of years in the care of adults. This need, in turn, fosters a lengthy period of learning, during which the child is taught his or her society's culture.

Because humans think and act in so many different ways, sociologists do not believe that "biology is destiny." If biology were all-important, we would expect all cultures to be highly similar, if not identical. Yet this is hardly the case. This is not to say that human cultures have nothing in common. Surveys of thousands of different cultures have concluded that all known human cultures have such common characteristics as language, forms of emotional expression, rules that tell adults how to raise children or engage in sexual behavior, and even standards of beauty (Brown 1991). But there is enormous variety in exactly how these common characteristics play themselves out.

All cultures provide for childhood socialization, but what and how children are taught varies greatly from culture to culture. An American child learns the multiplication tables from a classroom teacher, while a child born in the forests of Borneo learns to hunt with older members of the tribe. All cultures have standards of beauty and ornamentation, but what is regarded as beautiful in one culture may be seen as ugly in another (Elias 1987;

Elias and Dunning 1987; Foucault 1988). However, some feminist scholars have argued that with global access to Western images of beauty on the Internet, cultural definitions of beauty throughout the world are growing narrower and increasingly emphasize the slender physique that is so cherished in many Western cultures (Sepúlveda and Calado 2012).

Cultural Diversity

The study of cultural differences highlights the importance of cultural learning as an influence on our behavior. Human behavior and practices—as well as beliefs—vary widely from culture to culture and often contrast radically with what people from Western societies consider normal. In the West, we eat oysters, but we do not eat kittens or puppies, both of which are regarded as delicacies in some parts of the world. Westerners regard kissing as a normal part of sexual behavior, but in other cultures the practice is either unknown or regarded as disgusting. All these different kinds of behavior are aspects of broad cultural differences that distinguish societies from one another.

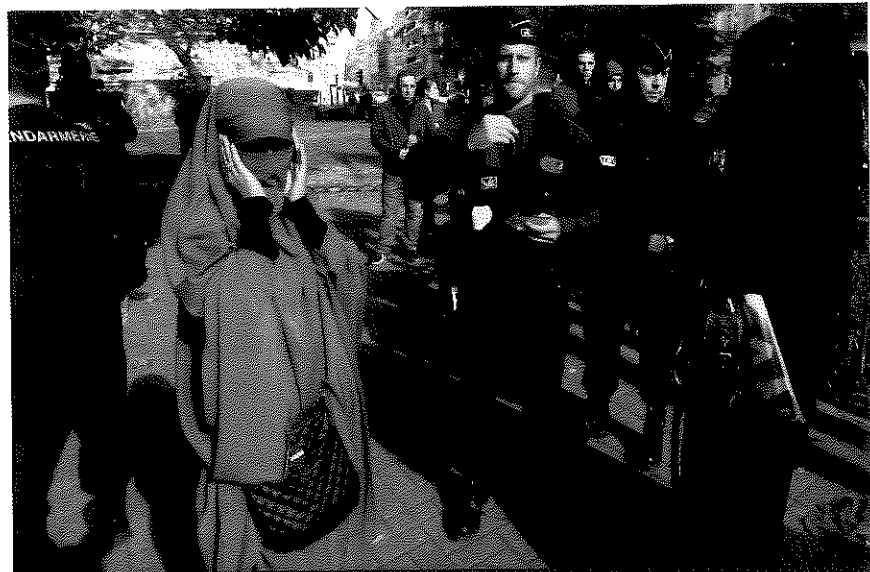
SUBCULTURES

Small societies tend to be culturally uniform, but industrialized societies are themselves culturally diverse or multicultural, involving numerous **subcultures**. As you will discover in the discussion of global migration in Chapter 10, practices and social processes like slavery, colonialism, war, migration, and contemporary globalization have led to populations dispersing across borders and settling in new areas. This, in turn, has led to the emergence of societies that are cultural composites, meaning that the population is made up of groups from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In modern cities, many subcultural communities live side by side. Some experts have estimated that as many as 800 different languages are regularly spoken by residents of New York City and its surrounding boroughs (Roberts 2010).

Most major European cities have become increasingly diverse in recent decades, as large numbers of persons from North Africa have arrived. As transnational migration has increased, many European societies have struggled with how to integrate persons who bring with them distinct cultural and religious backgrounds. For example, in 2011, the French government made it a punishable offense for Muslim women to wear full-face veils in public spaces (except for houses of worship and private cars). France is a country based on the values of “liberty and equality” for all, and the *niqab*, a veil that covers a woman’s hair and face, leaving only the eyes clearly visible, is viewed as a cultural practice that oppresses women and deprives them of their freedoms (Erlanger 2011). This controversy

subcultures

Cultural groups within a wider society that hold values and norms distinct from those of the majority.



The tension between subgroup values and national values came to a head in 2011 when the French government banned Muslim women from wearing full-face veils in public. French policymakers believed that the *niqab* oppressed women and violated the nation’s values of liberty and equality.

countercultures

Cultural groups within a wider society that largely reject the values and norms of the majority.

assimilation

The acceptance of a minority group by a majority population, in which the new group takes on the values and norms of the dominant culture.

multiculturalism

The viewpoint according to which ethnic groups can exist separately and share equally in economic and political life.

over Muslim women's veils vividly portrays the challenges when different subcultural communities live side by side.

Subculture does not refer only to people from different cultural backgrounds, or who speak different languages, within a larger society. It can also refer to any segment of the population that is distinguishable from the rest of society by its cultural patterns. Examples might include goths, computer hackers, hipsters, Rastafarians, and fans of hip-hop. Some people might identify themselves clearly with a particular subculture, whereas others may move fluidly among a number of different ones.

Culture plays an important role in perpetuating the values and norms of a society, yet it also offers important opportunities for creativity and change. Subcultures and **countercultures**—groups that largely reject the prevailing values and norms of society—can promote views that represent alternatives to the dominant culture. Social movements or groups of people sharing common lifestyles are powerful forces of change within societies. In this way, subcultures give people the freedom to express and act on their opinions, hopes, and beliefs. For example, throughout most of the twentieth century, gays and lesbians formed a distinct counterculture in opposition to dominant cultural norms. In a few cities, such as San Francisco, New York, and Chicago, gays and lesbians lived in distinct enclaves and even developed political power bases. Over time, their political claims and lifestyle became more and more acceptable to mainstream Americans, so much so that gay marriage was legalized nationwide in 2015. Today, gays and lesbians are no longer a counterculture. As the wider society has increasingly embraced their demand to be included in the institution of marriage, gays and lesbians have embraced one of the most significant institutions of mainstream society.

U.S. schoolchildren are frequently taught that the United States is a vast melting pot into which various subcultures are assimilated. **Assimilation** is the process by which different cultures are absorbed into a single mainstream culture. Although it is true that virtually all peoples living in the United States take on many common cultural characteristics, many groups strive to retain some subcultural identity. In fact, identification based on race or country of origin in the United States persists today and is particularly strong among African Americans and immigrants from Asia, Mexico, and Latin America (Totti 1987).

Given the immense cultural diversity and number of subcultures in the United States, a more appropriate metaphor than the assimilationist “melting pot” might be the culturally diverse “salad bowl,” in which all the various ingredients, though mixed together, retain some of their original flavor and integrity, contributing to the richness of the salad as a whole. This viewpoint, termed **multiculturalism**, calls for respecting cultural diversity and promoting equality of different cultures. Adherents to multiculturalism acknowledge that certain central cultural values are shared by most people in a society but also that certain important differences deserve to be preserved (Anzaldúa 1990).

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND ETHNOCENTRISM

Every culture displays its own unique patterns of behavior, and these may seem alien to people from other cultural backgrounds. If you have traveled abroad, you are probably familiar with the sensation that can result when you find yourself in a new culture. Everyday habits, customs, and behaviors that you take for granted in your own culture

The Secret Power of Cultural Norms and Values

Norms are widely agreed-upon principles or rules that people are expected to observe; they represent the dos and don'ts of social life. One way to illustrate the power of a social norm is to examine reactions to norm violations. Those who violate norms are often subject to the overt or subtle disapproval of others. Common reactions might include being scolded or mocked by friends for minor breaches of etiquette, being gossiped about behind our backs, or being ostracized from the social group. Yet norms are so powerful that violators often feel shame or self-criticism even in the absence of others' words or actions.

A vivid display of the power of norms is PostSecret, an ongoing community art project where people mail in their secrets anonymously on one side of a homemade postcard. The postcards are then posted online for others to view or comment on. What does it tell us about social norms when a young woman confesses, "He found my vomit in the sink. . . . I said I was fine. I LIED"? In American society, eating disorders like bulimia violate a social norm that says we shouldn't hurt ourselves. Yet it also subtly conveys another norm: Young women are expected to be thin to live up to our cultural ideals of "beauty." Using means other than the socially approved strategies of healthy diet and exercise, however, is a source of shame.

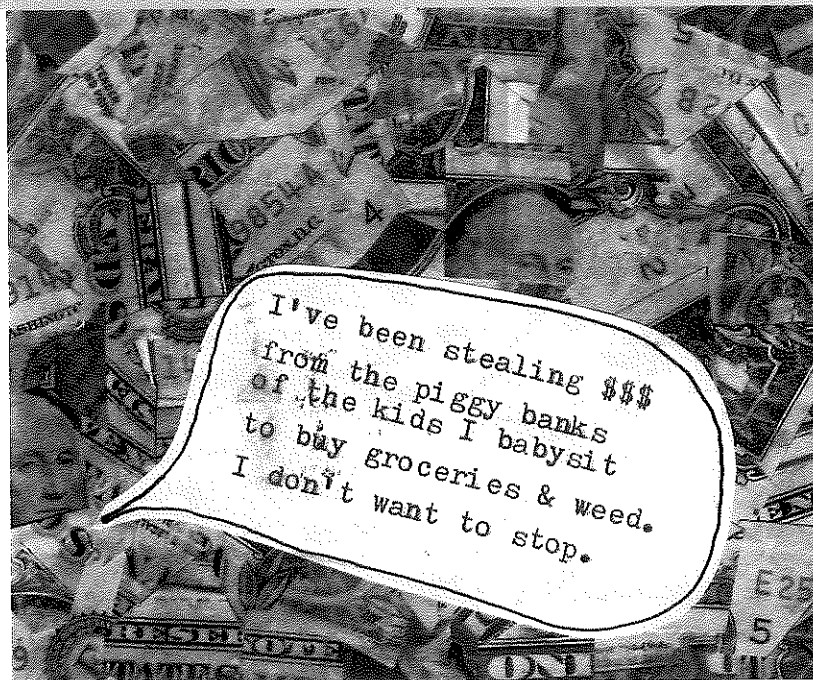
Other postcards make claims like "I've been stealing \$\$\$ from the piggy banks of the kids I babysit to buy groceries and

weed." This postcard reveals the violations of several important norms and values (and laws): that we should not steal (especially from children), that we should not do drugs, and that poverty is a stigmatized status—and one that people are often ashamed of.

A simple scroll through the postcards on the PostSecret website reveals the many social norms at play in our culture and the deep shame or fear of reprisal that comes from violating these behavioral expectations. Yet the fact that people throughout the world are willing to anonymously share their transgressions with others shows just how common norm violations are. It also shows just how powerful and even oppressive norms can be, given how many seek refuge by silently and anonymously "confessing" their wrongs on PostSecret.

A quick look at the site also reveals that the vast majority of participants are women. As we noted earlier in the chapter, some scholars have argued that norms regarding women's behavior are more rigid than those guiding men's behavior. Can you think of secrets that men may post and how they might differ from those posted by women? How might sites like PostSecret reinforce or challenge social norms, especially gender norms? Do you think a forum like PostSecret would work in a venue other than the anonymous world of the Internet?

Our secrets powerfully reveal the social norms that govern our behavior. Postcards submitted to PostSecret, an ongoing community art project, highlight how certain behaviors, such as theft, eating disorders, and infidelity, are stigmatized.



ethnocentrism

The tendency to look at other cultures through the eyes of one's own culture and thereby misrepresent them.

cultural relativism

The practice of judging a society by its own standards.

may not be part of everyday life in other parts of the world—even in countries that share the same language. The expression *culture shock* is an apt one! Often people feel disoriented when they become immersed in a new culture. This is because they have lost the familiar reference points that help them understand the world around them and have not yet learned how to navigate the new culture.

A culture must be studied in terms of its own meanings and values—a key presupposition of sociology. Sociologists endeavor as far as possible to avoid **ethnocentrism**, or judging other cultures in terms of the standards of one's own. Because human cultures vary so widely, it is not surprising that people belonging to one culture frequently find it difficult to understand the ideas or behavior of people from a different culture. In studying and practicing sociology, we must remove our own cultural blinders to see the ways of life of different peoples in an unbiased light. The practice of judging a society by its own standards is called **cultural relativism**.

Applying cultural relativism—that is, suspending your own deeply held cultural beliefs and examining a situation according to the standards of another culture—can be fraught with uncertainty and challenge. Not only can it be hard to see things from a completely different point of view but cultural relativism sometimes raises troubling issues. Consider, for example, the ritual of female genital cutting, or what opponents have called “genital mutilation.” This is a painful ritual in which the clitoris and sometimes all or part of the vaginal labia of young girls are removed with a knife or a sharpened stone and the two sides of the vulva are partly sewn together as a means of controlling the young woman's sexual activity and increasing the sexual pleasure of her male partner.

In cultures where clitoridectomies have been practiced for generations, they are regarded as a normal, even expected practice. A study of 2,000 men and women in two Nigerian communities found that nine out of ten women interviewed had undergone clitoridectomies in childhood and that the large majority favored the procedure for their own daughters, primarily for cultural reasons; they would be viewed as social outcasts if they did not have the procedure. Yet a significant minority believed that the practice should be stopped (Ebomoyi 1987). Clitoridectomies are regarded with abhorrence by most people from other cultures and by a growing number of women in the cultures in which they are practiced (El Dareer 1982; Johnson-Odim 1991; Lightfoot-Klein 1989).

These differences in views can result in a clash of cultural values, especially when people from cultures where clitoridectomies are common migrate to countries where the practice is actually illegal. In France, many mothers in the North African immigrant community arrange for traditional clitoridectomies to be performed on their daughters. Some of these women have been tried and convicted under French law for mutilating their daughters. These African mothers have argued that they were only engaging in the same cultural practice that their own mothers had performed on them, that their grandmothers had performed on their mothers, and so on. They complain that the French are ethnocentric, judging traditional African rituals by French customs. Feminists from Africa and the Middle East, while themselves strongly opposed to clitoridectomies, have been critical of Europeans and Americans who sensationalize the practice by calling it backward or primitive without seeking any understanding of the cultural and economic circumstances that sustain it (Accad 1991; Johnson-Odim 1991; Mohanty 1991). In this instance, globalization has led to

a fundamental clash of cultural norms and values that has forced members of both cultures to confront some of their most deeply held beliefs. The role of the sociologist is to avoid knee-jerk responses and to examine complex questions carefully from as many different angles as possible.

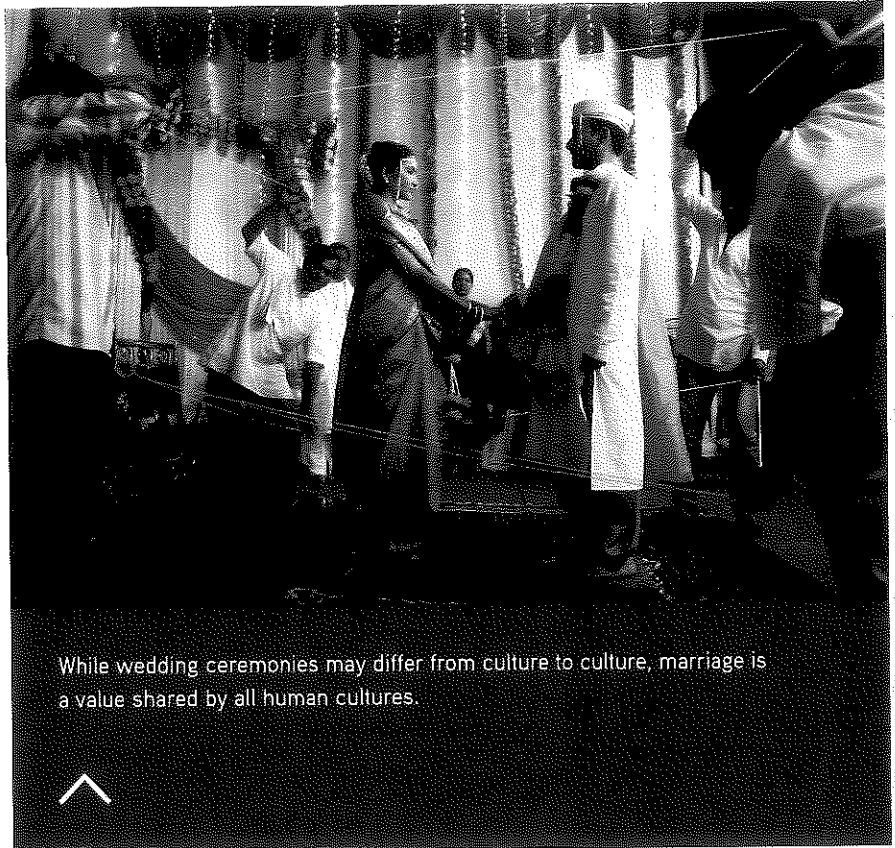
Cultural Universals

Amid the diversity of human behavior, several **cultural universals** prevail. For example, there is no known culture without a grammatically complex language. All cultures possess some recognizable form of family system, in which there are values and norms associated with the care of children. The institution of **marriage** is a cultural universal, as are religious rituals and property rights. All cultures also practice some form of incest prohibition—the banning of sexual relations between close relatives, such as father and daughter, mother and son, and brother and sister. A variety of other cultural universals have been identified by anthropologists, including art, dancing, bodily adornment, games, gift giving, joking, and rules of hygiene. Among the cultural characteristics shared by all societies, two stand out in particular. All cultures incorporate ways of communicating and expressing meaning. All cultures also depend on material objects in daily life.

Yet there are variations within each category. Consider, for example, the prohibition against incest. Incest is typically defined as sexual relations between members of the immediate family, but in some cultures, “the family” has been expanded to include cousins and others bearing the same family name. There have also been societies in which a small proportion of the population has been permitted to engage in incestuous practices. Within the ruling class of ancient Egypt, for instance, brothers and sisters were permitted to have sex with each other.

Culture and Social Development

Cultural traits are closely related to overall patterns in the development of society. The level of material culture reached in a given society influences, although by no means completely determines, other aspects of cultural development. This is easy to see, for example, in the level of technology. Many aspects of culture characteristic of our lives today—cars, smartphones, laptops and tablets, Wi-Fi, running water, electric light—depend on technological innovations that have been made only very recently in human history.



While wedding ceremonies may differ from culture to culture, marriage is a value shared by all human cultures.

cultural universals

Values or modes of behavior shared by all human cultures.

marriage

A socially approved sexual relationship between two individuals. Marriage normally forms the basis of a family of procreation; that is, it is expected that the married couple will produce and raise children.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Explain the “nature/nurture” debate.
2. Why do sociologists disagree with the claim that biology is destiny?
3. Give examples of subcultures that are typical of American society.
4. What is the difference between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism?
5. What are two examples of cultural universals?

The same is true at earlier phases of social development. Before the invention of the smelting of metal, for example, goods had to be made of organic or naturally occurring materials like wood or stone—a basic limitation on the artifacts that could be constructed. Variations in material culture provide the main means of distinguishing different forms of human society, but other factors are also influential. Writing is an example. As has been mentioned, not all human cultures have possessed writing—in fact, for most of human history, writing was unknown. The development of writing altered the scope of human cultural potentialities, making possible different forms of social organization than those that had previously existed. Yet writing continues to evolve even today. Think about the language you use when you send texts to your friends. If you sent your grandparents a text with acronyms like FOMO, YOLO, and SMH, would they understand what you were saying?

We now turn to analyzing the main types of society that existed in the past and that are still found in the world. In the present day, we are accustomed to societies that contain millions of people, many of them living crowded together in urban areas. But for most of human history, the Earth was much less densely populated than it is now, and it is only over the past hundred years or so that any societies have existed in which the majority of the population were city dwellers. To understand the forms of society that existed before modern industrialism, we have to call on the historical dimension of the sociological imagination.

What Happened to Premodern Societies?

Learn how societies have changed over time.

Premodern societies can actually be grouped into three main categories: hunters and gatherers, larger agrarian or pastoral societies (involving agriculture or the tending of domesticated animals), and nonindustrial civilizations or traditional states. We shall look at the main characteristics of these societies in turn.

The Earliest Societies: Hunters and Gatherers

For all but a tiny part of our existence on this planet, human beings have lived in hunting-and-gathering societies, small groups or tribes often numbering no more than thirty or forty people. Hunters and gatherers gain their livelihood from hunting, fishing, and gathering edible plants growing in the wild. Hunting-and-gathering cultures continue to exist in some parts of the world, such as in a few arid parts of Africa and in the jungles of Brazil and New Guinea. Most such cultures, however, have been destroyed or absorbed by the spread of Western culture, and those that remain are unlikely to stay intact for much longer. Currently fewer than a quarter of a million people in the world support themselves through hunting and gathering—only 0.004 percent of the world's population.

Compared with larger societies—particularly modern societies, such as the United States—most hunting-and-gathering groups were egalitarian. Thus, there was little difference among members of the society in the number or kinds of material possessions; there were no divisions of rich and poor. The material goods they needed were limited to

weapons for hunting, tools for digging and building, traps, and cooking utensils. Differences of position or rank tended to be limited to age and gender; men were almost always the hunters, while women gathered wild crops, cooked, and brought up the children.

Hunters and gatherers moved about a good deal, but not in a completely erratic way. They had fixed territories, around which they migrated regularly from year to year. Because they were without animal or mechanical means of transport, they could only take a few goods or possessions with them. Many hunting-and-gathering communities did not have a stable membership; people often moved among different camps, or groups split up and joined others within the same overall territory.

Hunters and gatherers had little interest in developing material wealth beyond what was needed for their basic needs. Their main concerns were with religious values and ritual activities. Members participated regularly in elaborate ceremonials and often spent a great deal of time preparing the dress, masks, paintings, or other sacred objects used in such rituals.

Hunters and gatherers are not merely primitive peoples whose ways of life no longer hold any interest for us. Studying their cultures allows us to see more clearly that some of our institutions are far from being natural features of human life. While we shouldn't idealize the circumstances in which hunters and gatherers lived, the lack of major inequalities of wealth and power and the emphasis on cooperation rather than competition are instructive reminders that the world created by modern industrial civilization is not necessarily to be equated with progress.

Pastoral and Agrarian Societies

About 15,000 years ago, some hunting-and-gathering groups turned to the raising of domesticated animals and the cultivation of fixed plots of land as their means of livelihood.

Pastoral societies relied mainly on domesticated livestock, while **agrarian societies** grew crops (practiced agriculture). Some societies had mixed pastoral and agrarian economies.

Depending on the environment in which they lived, pastoralists reared animals, such as cattle, sheep, goats, camels, or horses. Some pastoral societies still exist in the modern world, concentrated especially in areas of Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. They are usually found in regions of dense grasslands or in desert or mountainous areas too poor in arable land for agriculture to be profitable.

At some point, hunting-and-gathering groups began to sow their own crops rather than simply collecting those growing in the wild. This practice first developed as what is usually called "horticulture," in which small gardens were cultivated by the use of simple hoes or digging instruments. Like pastoralism, horticulture provided for a more reliable supply of food than was possible from hunting and gathering and therefore could support larger communities. Because they were not on the move, people whose livelihood was horticulture could

pastoral societies

Societies whose subsistence derives from the rearing of domesticated animals.

agrarian societies

Societies whose means of subsistence are based on agricultural production (crop growing).



Pastoral societies still exist in certain areas of Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Tibetan nomads have wandered China's Tibetan Plateau, herding yaks, for thousands of years.

develop larger stocks of material possessions than people in either hunting-and-gathering or pastoral communities. Some peoples in the world still rely primarily on horticulture for their livelihood.

Traditional Societies or Civilizations

From about 6000 BCE onward, we find evidence of societies larger than any that existed before and that contrast in distinct ways with earlier types. These societies were based on the development of cities, led to pronounced inequalities of wealth and power, and were ruled by kings or emperors. Because writing was used and science and art flourished, these societies are often called “civilizations.” The earliest civilizations developed in the Middle East, usually in fertile river areas. The Chinese Empire originated in about 1800 BCE, at which time powerful states were also in existence in what are now India and Pakistan.

Most traditional (premodern) civilizations were also empires: They achieved their size through the conquest and incorporation of other peoples (Kautsky 1982). This was true, for instance, of traditional Rome and China. At its height, in the first century CE, the Roman Empire stretched from Britain in northwest Europe to beyond the Middle East. The Chinese Empire, which lasted for more than 2,000 years, up to the threshold of the twentieth century, covered most of the massive region of eastern Asia now occupied by modern China.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. Compare the two main types of premodern societies.
2. Contrast pastoral and agrarian societies.

Recognize the factors that transformed premodern societies, particularly how industrialization and colonialism influenced global development. Know the differences among industrialized societies, emerging economies, and developing societies and how these differences developed.

industrialization

The emergence of machine production, based on the use of inanimate power resources (such as steam or electricity).

How Has Industrialization Shaped Modern Society?

What happened to destroy the forms of society that dominated the whole of history up to two centuries ago? The answer, in a word, is **industrialization**—the emergence of machine production, based on the use of inanimate power resources (such as steam or electricity). The industrialized, or modern, societies differ in several key respects from any previous type of social order, and their development has had consequences stretching far beyond their European origins.

The Industrialized Societies

Industrialization originated in eighteenth-century Britain as a result of the Industrial Revolution, a complex set of technological changes that affected the means by which people gained their livelihood. These changes included the invention of new machines (such as the spinning jenny for weaving yarn), the harnessing of power resources (especially water and steam) for production, and the use of science to improve production methods. Because discoveries and inventions in one field lead to more in others, the pace of technological innovation in **industrialized societies** is extremely rapid compared with that of traditional social systems.

In even the most advanced of traditional civilizations, the majority of people were engaged in working on the land. The relatively low level of technological development did not permit more than a small minority to be freed from the chores of agricultural



People crowd the streets of Tokyo's entertainment district. Japan is an exemplar of an industrialized society. It is the third-largest economy, measured by GDP, lagging behind only the United States and China.

production. By contrast, a prime feature of industrialized societies today is that the large majority of the employed population work in factories, offices, or shops rather than in agriculture. And over 90 percent of people live in towns and cities, where most jobs are to be found and new job opportunities created. The largest cities are vastly greater in size than the urban settlements found in traditional civilizations. In cities, social life becomes more impersonal and anonymous than before, and many of our day-to-day encounters are with strangers. Large-scale organizations, such as business corporations or government agencies, come to influence the lives of virtually everyone.

A further feature of modern societies concerns their political systems, which are more developed and intensive than forms of government in traditional states. In traditional civilizations, the political authorities (monarchs and emperors) had little direct influence on the customs and habits of most of their subjects, who lived in fairly self-contained villages. With industrialization, transportation and communication became much more rapid, making for a more integrated "national" community.

The industrialized societies were the first **nation-states** to come into existence. Nation-states are political communities with clearly delimited borders dividing them from one another, rather than the vague frontier areas that used to separate traditional states. Nation-state governments have extensive powers over many aspects of citizens' lives, framing laws that apply to all those living within their borders. The United States is a nation-state, as are virtually all other societies in the world today.

The application of industrial technology has been by no means limited to peaceful processes of economic development. From the earliest phases of industrialization, modern production processes have been put to military use, and this has radically altered ways of waging war, creating weaponry and modes of military organization much more advanced than those of nonindustrial cultures. Together, superior economic strength, political cohesion, and military superiority account for the seemingly irresistible spread of Western ways of life across the world over the past two centuries.

industrialized societies

Highly developed nation-states in which the majority of the population work in factories or offices rather than in agriculture and in which most people live in urban areas.

nation-state

A particular type of state, characteristic of the modern world, in which a government has sovereign power within a defined territorial area and the population are citizens who know themselves to be part of a single nation.

Sociology first emerged as a discipline as industrial societies developed in Europe and North America and was strongly influenced by the changes taking place at that time. As we saw in Chapter 1, the major nineteenth-century sociological theorists (Durkheim, Marx, and Weber) all sought to explain these sweeping changes. Although they differed in their understanding and their predictions about the future, all shared a belief that industrial society was here to stay and that, as a result, the future would in many ways resemble the past.

Global Development

From the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century, the Western countries established colonies in numerous areas previously occupied by traditional societies. Although virtually all these colonies have now attained their independence, **colonialism** was central to shaping the social map of the globe as we know it today. In some regions, such as North America, Australia, and New Zealand, which were only thinly populated by hunting-and-gathering or pastoral communities, Europeans became the majority population. In other areas, including much of Asia, Africa, and South America, the local populations remained in the majority.

Societies of the first of these two types, including the United States, have become industrialized. Those in the second category are mostly at a much lower level of industrial development and are often referred to as less-developed societies, or the **developing world**. Such societies include India, most African countries (such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Algeria), and those in South America (such as Brazil, Peru, and Venezuela). Because many of these societies are situated south of the United States and Europe, they are sometimes referred to collectively as the Global South and contrasted to the wealthier, industrialized Global North.

THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The majority of countries in the Global South are in areas that underwent colonial rule. A few colonized areas gained independence early, such as Haiti, which became the first autonomous Black republic in January 1804. The Spanish colonies in South America acquired their freedom in 1810; Brazil broke away from Portuguese rule in 1822.

Some countries that were never ruled from Europe were nonetheless strongly influenced by colonial relationships. China, for example, was compelled from the seventeenth century on to enter into trading agreements with European powers, which assumed government control over certain areas, including major seaports. Hong Kong was the last of these. Most nations in the Global South have become independent states only since World War II—often following bloody anticolonial struggles. Examples include India, which, shortly after achieving self-rule, split into India and Pakistan; a range of other Asian countries (such as Myanmar, Malaysia, and Singapore); and countries in Africa (such as Kenya, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, and Algeria).

Although they may include peoples living in traditional fashion, developing countries are very different from earlier forms of traditional society. Their political systems are modeled on systems first established in the societies of the West—that is to say, they are nation-states. Most of the population still live in rural areas, but many of these societies are experiencing a rapid process of city development. Although agriculture remains the main economic activity, crops are now often produced for sale in world markets rather than for local consumption. Developing countries are not merely societies that have “lagged

colonialism

The process whereby Western nations established their rule in parts of the world away from their home territories.

developing world

The less-developed societies, in which industrial production is either virtually nonexistent or only developed to a limited degree. The majority of the world's population lives in less developed countries.

emerging economies

Developing countries that, over the past two or three decades, have begun to develop a strong industrial base, such as Singapore and Hong Kong.

behind" the more industrialized areas. They have in large part been created by contact with Western industrialism, which has undermined the earlier, more traditional systems that were in place.

THE EMERGING ECONOMIES

Although the majority of countries in the Global South lag well behind societies of the West, some have now successfully embarked on a process of industrialization. Referred to as the **emerging economies**, they include Brazil, Mexico, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. Emerging economies are characterized by a great deal of industry and/or international trade. The rates of economic growth of the most successful emerging economies, such as those in East Asia, are several times those of the Western industrial economies.

The emerging economies of East Asia have shown the most sustained levels of economic prosperity. They are investing abroad as well as promoting growth at home. China is investing in mines and factories in Africa, elsewhere in East Asia, and in Latin America. South Korea's production of steel has increased by more than 30 percent in the last decade, and its shipbuilding and electronics industries are among the world's leaders (World Steel Association 2017). Singapore is becoming the major financial and commercial center of Southeast Asia. Taiwan is an important player in the manufacturing and electronics industries. All these changes have directly affected the United States, whose share of global steel production, for example, has dropped significantly since the 1970s. In fact, the "rise of the rest" (Zakaria 2008) is arguably the most important aspect of global economic change in the world today.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What does the concept of industrialization mean?
2. How has industrialization hurt traditional social systems?
3. Why are many African and South American societies classified as part of the Global South?

How Does Globalization Affect Contemporary Culture?

In Chapter 1 we noted that the chief focus of sociology historically has been the study of industrialized societies. As sociologists, can we thus safely ignore the Global South, leaving this as the domain of anthropology? We certainly cannot. The industrialized societies of the Global North and the developing societies of the Global South have developed in interconnection with one another and are today more closely related than ever before. Those of us living in industrialized societies depend on many raw materials and manufactured products coming from countries in the Global South to sustain our lives. Conversely, the economies of most states in the Global South depend on trading networks that bind them to industrialized countries. We can fully understand the industrialized order only against the backdrop of societies in the Global South—in which, in fact, by far the greater proportion of the world's population lives.

As the world rapidly moves toward a single, unified economy, businesses and people are moving about the globe in increasing numbers in search of new markets and economic



Recognize the effect of globalization on your life and the lives of people around the world. Think about the effect of a growing global culture.



Transnational corporations like Coca-Cola are one force contributing to the creation of a global culture.

opportunities. As a result, the cultural map of the world is changing: Networks of peoples span national borders and even continents, providing cultural connections between their birthplaces and their adoptive countries (Appadurai 1986). A handful of languages come to dominate, and in some cases replace, the thousands of different languages that were once spoken on the planet.

It is increasingly impossible for cultures to exist as islands. Few, if any, places on earth are so remote as to escape radio, television, air travel (and the throngs of tourists this technology brings), or the computer. A generation ago, there were still tribes whose ways of life were completely untouched by the rest of the world. Today, these peoples use machetes and other tools made in the United States or Japan, wear T-shirts and shorts manufactured in garment factories in the Dominican Republic or Guatemala, and take medicine manufactured in Germany or Switzerland to combat diseases contracted through contact with outsiders. These people also have their stories broadcast to people around the world through satellite television and the Internet. Within a generation, or two at the most, all of the world's once-isolated cultures will be touched and transformed by global culture, despite their persistent efforts to preserve their age-old ways of life.

The forces that produce a global culture are discussed throughout this book:

- Television, which brings U.S. culture (through networks such as MTV and shows such as *The Big Bang Theory*) into homes throughout the world daily
- The emergence of a unified global economy, with businesses whose factories, management structures, and markets often span continents and countries
- "Global citizens," such as managers of large corporations, who may spend as much time crisscrossing the globe as they do at home, identifying with a global, cosmopolitan culture rather than with their own nation's culture
- A host of international organizations, including UN agencies, regional trade and mutual defense associations, multinational banks and other global financial institutions, international labor and health organizations, and global tariff and trade agreements, that are creating a global political, legal, and military framework
- Electronic communications (via cell phone, Skype, fax, email, text message, Facebook, Twitter, and other communications on the Internet), which make instantaneous communication with almost any part of the planet an integral part of daily life in the business world

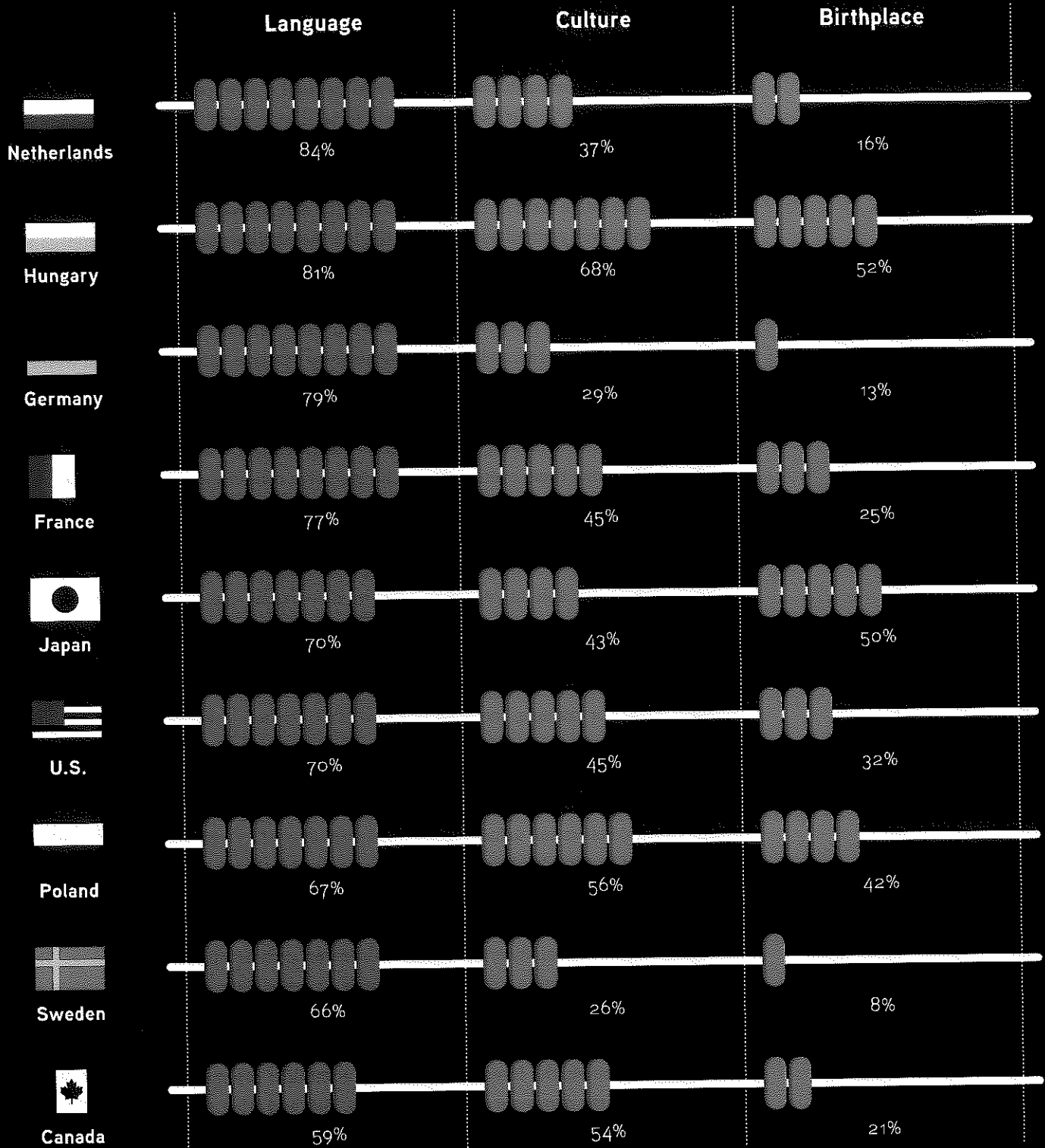
The world has become a single social system as a result of the growing interdependence, both social and economic, that now affects virtually everyone. But it would be a mistake to think of this increasing interdependence, or globalization, of the world's societies simply as the growth of world unity. The globalizing of social relations should be understood primarily as the reordering of time and distance in social life. Our lives, in other words, are increasingly and quickly influenced by events happening far away from our everyday activities.

Does the Internet Promote a Global Culture?

Many believe that the rapid worldwide growth of the Internet is hastening the spread of a global culture—one resembling the cultures of Europe and North America. Although the Internet is a truly global space, several languages prevail among Internet users. For example,

National Identity

Views on what constitutes national identity—or what it means to be an “American” or “Canadian,” for example—differ widely across countries. The percentages below represent the proportion of the population in a country who believe speaking the language, sharing national customs and traditions, and having been born in the country are very important for being a true national.



26 percent of Internet users speak English as their main language, compared with 20 percent who speak Chinese and 8 percent who speak Spanish. In fact, ten languages alone account for more than three-quarters (77 percent) of all Internet users (Internet World Stats 2017b). Given the dominance of the English language and Western values on the Internet, belief in such values as equality between men and women, the right to speak freely, democratic participation in government, and the pursuit of pleasure through consumption may be readily diffused throughout the world over the Internet. Moreover, Internet technology itself would seem to foster such values: Global communication, seemingly unlimited (and uncensored) information, and instant gratification are all characteristics of the new technology.

Yet it may be premature to conclude that the Internet will sweep aside traditional cultures. Cyberspace is becoming increasingly global, and evidence shows that the Internet is, in many ways, compatible with traditional cultural values, perhaps even a means of strengthening them. This is especially likely to be true in countries that seek to control the Internet, censoring or blocking unwanted content and punishing those whose posts violate traditional values. One example is Saudi Arabia, a monarchy that officially enforces a highly conservative form of traditional Islam. The Saudi government not only routinely filters or blocks web content but also uses the Internet to disseminate official propaganda. Content deemed “harmful,” “anti-Islamic,” or “offensive” is blocked, including any criticism of the royal family, and messaging apps like Telegram and WhatsApp are restricted. To sell its iPhone in the country, Apple had to remove the device’s built-in FaceTime app. Social media is heavily monitored, and cyberdissidents—for example, those who defend women’s or minority rights or criticize traditional religious beliefs—are likely to receive steep fines and severe punishment. In 2016, a Saudi individual was sentenced to ten years in prison and 2,000 lashes for “spreading atheism” on Twitter (Freedom House 2016).

Yet at the same time, even under such repressive conditions, the Internet provides a space for self-expression and discussion, albeit within limits. Saudis are some of the most active social media users in the world and are the largest adopters of Twitter in the Arab world. Women, for example, who represent more than half of all Internet users in Saudi Arabia, are able to engage in Internet discussions that would be forbidden in public, such as those about women’s health issues.

The Internet has sometimes been described as an echo chamber, in which people seek out like-minded others whose postings reinforce their own beliefs (Manjoo 2008; Sunstein 2012). For example, one study of a Jewish ultraorthodox religious group found that the Internet helped to strengthen the community, providing a forum for communication and for sharing ideas (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005). In this sense, the Internet may be splitting society into what can be thought of as digitally linked tribes with their own unique cultural beliefs and values—sometimes even in conflict with the dominant culture. Examples from youth subcultures in recent years would include hippies, punks, skinheads, goths, gamers, rappers, and hipsters. Such subcultures sometimes emerge when ethnic minority youth seek to create a unique cultural identity within the dominant culture, often through music, dress, hairstyle, and bodily adornment, such as tattoos and piercings. They are often hybrids of existing cultures: For example, dancehall, like reggae, which originated as part of a youth culture in Jamaica’s poor neighborhoods, today has spread to the United States, Europe, and anywhere there has been a large Caribbean migration (Niaah 2010).

Finally, of course, the Internet can be used to build a community around ideas that directly threaten the dominant culture. Al Qaeda, ISIS, and other radical Islamist jihadists

rely on the Internet to spread their ideas, attract new recruits, and organize acts of violence. Suicide bombers routinely make videos celebrating their imminent deaths, videos that are posted on jihadist websites (and occasionally even on YouTube) to reach a wider audience of current and potential believers. Extremist groups from all faiths (Christian, Jewish, Muslim) have found the Internet to be a useful tool (Juergensmeyer 2009).

Globalization and Local Cultures

The influence of a growing global culture has provoked numerous reactions at the local level. Many local cultures remain strong or are experiencing rejuvenation, partly as a response to the diffusion of global culture. Such a response grows out of the concern that a global culture, dominated by North American and European cultural values, will corrupt the local culture. For example, the Taliban, an Islamic movement that controlled most of Afghanistan until 2001, historically has sought to impose traditional, tribal values throughout the country. Through its governmental Ministry for Ordering What Is Right and Forbidding What Is Wrong, the Taliban banned music, closed movie theaters, prohibited the consumption of alcohol, and required men to grow full beards. Women were ordered to cover their entire bodies with *burkas*, tentlike garments with a woven screen over the eyes; they were forbidden to work outside their homes or even to be seen in public with men who were not their spouses or relations. Violations of these rules resulted in severe punishment, sometimes death. The rise of the Taliban, and, more recently, of ISIS, can be understood at least partly as a rejection of the spread of Western culture—what Osama bin Laden referred to as “Westoxification” (Juergensmeyer 2003).

The resurgence of local cultures is sometimes seen throughout the world in the rise of **nationalism**, a sense of identification with one’s country that is expressed through a common set of strongly held beliefs. Nationalism can be strongly political, involving attempts to assert the power of a nation based on a shared ethnic or racial identity over people of a different ethnicity or race. The world of the twenty-first century may well witness responses to globalization that celebrate ethnocentric nationalist beliefs, promoting intolerance and hatred rather than celebrating diversity.

New nationalisms, cultural identities, and religious practices are constantly being forged throughout the world. When you socialize with students from the same cultural background or celebrate traditional holidays with your friends and family, you are sustaining your culture. The very technology that helps foster globalization also supports local cultures: The Internet enables you to communicate with others who share your cultural identity, even when they are dispersed around the world.

Although sociologists do not yet fully understand these processes, they often conclude that despite the powerful forces of globalization operating in the world today, local cultures remain strong and, indeed, flourish. Yet local cultural and social movements can thrive and flourish only if they are allowed to do so. Given the rapid social changes in recent decades, it is still too soon to tell whether and how globalization will transform our world—whether it will result in the homogenization of the world’s diverse cultures, the flourishing of many individual cultures, or both.

nationalism

A set of beliefs and symbols expressing identification with a national community.

CONCEPT CHECKS

1. What are three examples of forces that produce a global culture?
2. How can the Internet be used to perpetuate traditional cultural values?
3. What is nationalism?

CHAPTER 2

The Big Picture

Culture and Society

Thinking Sociologically

1. Mention at least two cultural traits that you would claim are universals; mention two others you would claim are culturally specific traits. Locate and use case study materials from different societies you are familiar with to show the differences between universal and specific cultural traits. Are the cultural universals you have discussed derivatives of human instincts? Explain your answer fully.
2. What does it mean to be ethnocentric? How is ethnocentrism dangerous in conducting social research? How is ethnocentrism problematic among nonresearchers in their everyday lives?
3. Think about a favorite article of clothing of yours. What values does it convey, and what messages about you or your subculture does it communicate to others?

Learning Objectives

What Is Culture?

p. 43

Know what culture consists of, and recognize how it differs from society.

How Does Human Culture Develop?

p. 49

Begin to understand how both biological and cultural factors influence our behavior. Learn the ideas of sociobiology and how others have tried to refute these ideas by emphasizing cultural differences.

What Happened to Premodern Societies?

p. 58

Learn how societies have changed over time

How Has Industrialization Shaped Modern Society?

p. 60

Recognize the factors that transformed premodern societies, particularly how industrialization and colonialism influenced global development. Know the differences among industrialized societies, emerging economies, and developing societies, and how these differences developed.

How Does Globalization Affect Contemporary Culture?

p. 63

Recognize the effect of globalization on your life and the lives of people around the world. Think about the effect of a growing global culture

Terms to Know

Concept Checks

cultural appropriation

culture • values • norms • language • linguistic
relativity hypothesis • material culture •
signifier • society

1. Describe two examples of nonmaterial culture and two examples of material culture.
2. What is the linguistic relativity hypothesis?
3. What role does culture play in society?

sociobiology • instinct • biological determinism •
subcultures • countercultures • assimilation •
multiculturalism • ethnocentrism • cultural
relativism • cultural universals • marriage

1. Explain the "nature/nurture" debate.
2. Why do sociologists disagree with the claim that biology is destiny?
3. Give examples of subcultures that are typical of American society.
4. What is the difference between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism?
5. What are two examples of cultural universals?

pastoral societies • agrarian societies

1. Compare the two main types of premodern societies.
2. Contrast pastoral and agrarian societies.

industrialization • industrialized societies •
nation-state • colonialism • developing world •
emerging economies

1. What does the concept of industrialization mean?
2. How has industrialization hurt traditional social systems?
3. Why are many African and South American societies classified as part of the Global South?

nationalism

1. What are three examples of forces that produce a global culture?
2. How can the Internet be used to perpetuate traditional cultural values?
3. What is nationalism?

3

Socialization, the Life Course, and Aging

Graying of the World

p. 93

Transgender student Coy Mathis and her parents sued their school district to guarantee Coy the right to use the girls' bathroom. Although social institutions such as schools often encourage conformity to norms of behavior, they can change over time.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

How are children socialized?

Learn about socialization (including gender socialization), and know the most important agents of socialization.

What are the five major stages of the life course?

Learn the various stages of the life course, and see the similarities and differences among different cultures and historical periods.

How do people age?

Understand that aging is a combination of biological, psychological, and social processes. Consider key theories of aging, particularly those that focus on how society shapes the social roles of older people and that emphasize aspects of age stratification.

What are the challenges of aging in the U.S.?

Evaluate the experience of growing old in the contemporary United States. Identify the physical, emotional, and financial challenges older adults face.