
I. Reading: Sociology: Understanding a Diverse Society, 2e.

Chapter 1: Developing a Sociological Perspective
This chapter introduces you to sociology and the sociological perspective. The learning objectives for this unit are to:

- Appreciate sociology as an empirical discipline.
- Grasp the sociological perspective and the process of debunking.
- Identify the key sociological concepts of social structure, social institutions, social change, and social interaction.
- Define social diversity in a global context.
- Appreciate the social and historical context of the development of modern sociology.
- Identify the basic insights of classical sociological theory, including the contributions of the giants of European sociology—Durkheim, Marx, and Weber.
- Identify the major contributions and characteristics of American sociology.
- Appreciate the role women and racial minorities have had in the history of sociology.
- Appreciate and apply the major theoretical frameworks of functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interaction theory.
- Become familiar with diverse theoretical perspectives, like feminist theory, exchange theory, rational choice theory, and postmodernism.

Chapter 2: Doing Sociological Research.
This chapter introduces you to sociological research. The learning objectives are to:

- Describe the sociological research process and its stages.
- Grasp the scientific method, deductive reasoning, and inductive reasoning.
- Learn how to develop a sociological research question.
- Learn how to create a research design.
- Learn how sociologists gather and analyze data, reach conclusions and report results.
- Identify and appreciate the advantages of the six major tools or methods sociologists use to gather data.
- Understand the uses and abuses of statistics in sociology, and the sociological processes of prediction and sampling.
- Appreciate the issues involved in political commitments, values, and sociological research.
- Appreciate the ethical considerations involved in sociological research and the guidelines sociologists follow.

Chapter 3: Culture.
This chapter explores culture. The learning objectives for this chapter are to:

- Define culture and grasp the shared characteristics of all cultures.
- Understand how language shapes culture and culture shapes language.
- Identify ways in which social inequalities are reflected in language.
Identify how implicit and explicit norms govern situations and how sanctions enforce norms.

Appreciate how a culture’s beliefs and values bind people together in society.

Identify the characteristics of subcultures and countercultures and their relation to the dominant culture.

Recognize ethnocentrism and its dangers.

Recognize global culture, and understand the distinction between popular and elite culture.

Identify the influence of mass media, including ways in which it promotes racism and sexism.

Use the major theoretical perspectives, including new cultural studies, in the study of cultures.

Identify the sources of cultural change.

II. VIDEOS/TELEVISIONED LESSONS:

VIDEO LESSON #1: From Social Interaction to Social Structure.

Synopsis: This lesson shows that the origin of social life is found in a single human interaction, and moves to a review of social relationships and various levels of social structure from groups to societies, demonstrating that sociology is uniquely suited to study these realities.

Focus Points: [These focus points are designed to help you get the most from the video segment of each lesson. Review them, then watch the video. You may want to write notes to reinforce what you have learned. This will help you with the worksheet and with other course assignments. You do not need to turn in the answers to these questions.]

1. Define sociology. Explain the meaning of social interaction.
2. How does interaction become a social relationship? How do relationships become social structures?
3. At what different levels do sociologists study social structures? How can sociology help us understand our own lives?

VIDEO LESSON #3: Sociological Thinking and Research.

Synopsis: This lesson describes how sociologists view the world, go beyond common sense, and employ the sociological imagination. It illustrates the scientific method as it applies to human social life, by following sociologists on one research project.

Focus Points:
1. How do common sense and casual observation differ from a social-scientific perspective?
2. Describe the research project featured on the video program as it progresses through each step in the scientific method.
3. How has the research on Times Square been used? What was the hypothesis of the research? What can we gain from studying sociology?

VIDEO LESSON #4: Culture.

Synopsis: This lesson explains that various cultural practices and beliefs occur within historical and environmental contexts. It portrays cultural diversity within the United States, showing that different subcultures and cultural expressions address human needs in different ways.
Focus Points:
1. What is culture? How is culture a response and an adaptation? Be able to recognize examples.
2. Two of the factors contributing to the preservation of a subculture are its physical isolation or separation from the dominant society and the maintenance of language or linguistic patterns. How have these factors played a role in the Cajun, Cherokee, and Mississippi Chinese subcultures.
3. Explain ethnocentrism. Describe and exemplify the cost of the white man’s ethnocentrism for the Comanche.

III. ASSIGNMENTS. The assignments for this unit are attached—worksheets 1 and 2, and application 1. To reinforce what you have read in the text and viewed on the video-segments, you should complete these assignments as soon as possible. To stay on schedule, I should receive the assignments by Wednesday, July 3rd.

Worksheet 1 (sociological perspective and research): 30 points
Worksheet 2 (culture): 30 points
Application 1 (culture): 75 points

If you mail the assignments, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE), so that I can return the assignments with timely feedback. If you email the assignments, please properly label the worksheet and question numbers (preferably with at least a word or phrase that will identify the question you are answering). Be sure to email to my home address: jabushak@aracnet.com. If you drop off assignments and want to pick them up in the Student Pickup Box at the Front Desk of the Social Sciences Building, please pick up the assignments within a week. Make sure your name is on all assignments. See syllabus for details. Contact me if you have any questions.
WORKSHEET 1: Chapters 1 (questions 1-3) and 2 (4-10)

1. Use your sociological imagination on a social issue you have some experience or familiarity with. Using an example of a personal trouble that has affected your own life or people you know (like unemployment, domestic violence, homelessness, divorce, substance abuse, teen pregnancy), illustrate how the sociological imagination works by explaining how people cope with the problem on a personal level (as a “personal trouble”) and by demonstrating the connection between that personal trouble and a “public issue.” Explain how the issue is shaped by social structure.

2. Using an example of a popularly held social myth related to that social issue, explain how sociological research might go about “debunking” this conception.
3. Read the section of Chapter 1 on the sociological perspectives. Think about the issue you explored in question 1. Below, explain briefly how you think each of the three major sociological perspectives would go about studying and explaining that issue. How would they define the problem? On what level would they study the issue? What social factors would they consider?

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Conflict Theory: _____________________________________________________________
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Symbolic Interaction Theory: ___________________________________________________
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4. Write a research question a sociologist might ask about your social issue:
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5. Write a sociological hypothesis based on that research question, indicating a relationship between an independent and a dependent variable:
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6. Indicate how you would operationally define (measure) the variables in the above hypothesis:

The independent variable (the “cause”):
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The dependent variable (the “effect”):
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7. Of the 6 major research methods used by sociologists, which of these methods do you think is best suited to test your hypothesis in the example above, and why? ___________________
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8. Explain probability and what it allows sociologists to predict: _________________________
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9. Why is it important to insure that a sample is representative of the population being studied?
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10. If you were conducting research about the issue above, how would you insure that your research would be objective and accurate? ______________________________
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Worksheet 2 (Chapter 3: Culture)  
30 points. Due: July 3rd.

1. What is cultural relativism and why is it an important perspective for a sociologist to adopt? Does adopting cultural relativism mean taking a value-free or totally non-judgmental approach to all aspects of a culture? Explain.

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2. Describe ethnomethodology and explain why it is an important research technique.

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3. Explain the difference between a subculture and a counterculture. Give an example of each.

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4. What is ethnocentrism, and why is it problematic?

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5. Explain the statement that “news is actually manufactured in a complex social process.” Give a recent example of how news is manufactured and describe the social process involved in it.

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6. Do the media create popular values or reflect them? Explain your position, using examples.

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7. What is cultural hegemony, and how does it create a homogeneous mass culture? Do you think there is cultural hegemony in the US? Explain.

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8. Explain the significance of cultural capital. Describe your own cultural capital. In what ways does your cultural capital advance your interests and in what ways does it hold you back?

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Application 1: Culture. 75 possible points. Due: July 3rd.

Describing a Culture as “An Outsider Within”

Write a 1-1/2 to 2 page (it would be helpful if this is typed) description of the culture of a group you are part of, or of an aspect of a culture or cultural movement you identify with and that influences you. In other words, describe as an “outsider” a culture or cultural aspect of which you are an “insider,” or “an outsider within.”

To assist you in your description, use the concepts discussed in Chapter 3 and in this week’s video program. You might also find some inspiration and ideas from Doing Sociological Research: Streetwise (p. 69), or Sociology in Practice: Touring with the Grateful Dead (p. 74). Ask yourself questions like the following: What are the material and non-material elements of this culture? What are the important norms, beliefs, and values of the group or of the people who share this culture? How is this culture manifested on the material level? What language do members of this culture need to learn? Is this culture a subculture? A counterculture? How is it related to the dominant “American” culture? What is it like to be part of this cultural group or movement? How do other groups in society treat your group?

Usually when we do this exercise in a regular class, students share their descriptions with a partner who can learn from the description and ask questions about aspects of the culture that you (as an “insider”) may take for granted. If you are having trouble writing a detailed description, and if you have the opportunity, give your description to another student in this course or to a friend, and have them respond and ask you questions. You can then use this conversation to complete your description.

This assignment will be scored on the basis of the detail and quality of your description and your appropriate use of the key concepts related to culture.