Henslin, Possamai and Possamai-Inesedy

sociology

A down-to-earth approach

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PEARSON

sociology

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To our fellow sociologists,
who do such creative research on social life and who communicate the sociological imagination to generations of students. With our sincere admiration and appreciation.

James Henslin
Adam Possamai
Alphia Possamai-Inesedy

sociology

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ALWAYS LEARNING

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Welcome to sociology! As academics and authors we have been introduced to sociology at different periods in our lives. We all love it for many reasons, so much so that we have become sociologists. We feel quite privileged to have a profession that comes from our passion. Although we don't expect you will all become sociologists, we hope that you not only enjoy this discipline but gain from the experience of 'seeing' sociologically. This book is aimed at anyone in their first year of study at university who is taking sociology as part of various courses such as Social Sciences, Arts, Social Work or Education. You may not necessarily major in sociology, but we hope that you will see that this discipline is a fascinating look into human behaviour. Many of us find that it holds the key to understanding social life, even our own lives.

If you like to watch people and try to figure out why they do what they do, you will like sociology. Sociology pries open the doors of society so you can see what goes on behind them. *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* stresses how profoundly our society and the groups to which we belong influence us. Social class, for example, sets us on a particular path in life. For some, the path leads to more education, more interesting jobs, higher income and better health, but for others it leads to dropping out of school, dead-end jobs, poverty, and even a higher risk of illness and disease. These paths are so significant that they affect our chances of making it to our first birthday, or getting into trouble with the police. They even influence our satisfaction in marriage, the number of children we will have, and whether or not we will read this book in the first place.

Although we, as authors, have our own unique history with sociology, we agree that when each of us took our first subjects in sociology in Australia, Belgium and the United States, we were 'hooked'. Seeing how marvellously our lives have been affected by these larger social influences has opened our eyes to a new world, one that has been fascinating to explore and study; it is our hope that you will have this experience too.

From how people become homeless to how they become prime ministers, from why people go to a beach to start a racist riot to why women are discriminated against in every society around the world – all are part of sociology. This breadth, in fact, is what makes sociology so intriguing. We can place the sociological lens on broad features of society, such as social class, gender, religion and race/ethnicity, and then immediately turn our focus on the small-scale level. If we look at two people interacting – whether quarrelling or kissing – we see how these broad features of society are being played out in their lives.

We're not born with instincts. Nor do we come into this world with preconceived notions of what life should be like. At birth we have no concepts of race/ethnicity, gender, age or social class. We have no idea, for example, that people 'should' act in certain ways because they are male or female. Yet we all learn such things as we grow up in our society. Uncovering the 'hows' and the 'whys' of this process is also part of what makes sociology so fascinating.

One of sociology's many pleasures is that as we study life in groups (which can be taken as a definition of sociology), whether those groups are in some far-off part of the world or in some nearby corner of our own society, we gain new insights into who we are and how we got that way. As we see how *their* customs affect *them*, the effects of our own society on us become more visible. This book, then, can be part of an intellectual adventure, for it can lead you to a new way of looking at your social world – and in the process, help you to better understand both Australian society and yourself.

The version of this book you are holding has been adapted for an Australian audience. This second Australian edition is a collaboration between ourselves, Adam Possamai and Alphia Possamai-Inesedy, with contributions from Tim Marjoribanks and Catriona Elder. We have also included Australian examples, data and sources, and made many references to popular culture profoundly inscribed in the argument of the text. While it has become

almost customary now to use popular culture to illustrate an academic perspective or theory, this book genuinely integrates popular culture into the argument itself, making its contents more approachable and more relevant to generation Y and Z (and X) students. We not only worked as a team of sociologists, but also as a couple discussing, for example, at the dinner table and in the car our different (and sometimes conflicting) approaches (which is why our generation Y kids are happy to see this book completed). We wish you the very best at university – and in your career afterward. It is our sincere desire that *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* will contribute to that success.

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Adam Possamai and Alphia Possamai-Inesedy
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*R*emember when you first got 'hooked' on sociology, how the windows of perception opened as you began to see life-in-society through the sociological perspective? For most of us, this was an eye-opening experience. This text is designed to open those windows onto social life, so students can see clearly the vital effects of group membership on their lives. Although few students will get into what Peter Berger calls 'the passion of sociology', we can at least provide them the opportunity. This book has been designed not only for students who will continue their study in sociology but also for students who will take other paths such as psychology, social work and education.

To study sociology is to embark on a fascinating process of discovery. We can compare sociology to a huge jigsaw puzzle. Only gradually do we see how the intricate pieces fit together. As we begin to see these interconnections, our perspective changes as we shift our eyes from the many small, disjointed pieces to the whole that is being formed. Of all the endeavours we could have entered, we chose sociology because of the ways in which it joins together the 'pieces' of society and the challenges it poses to 'ordinary' thinking. To share with students this process of awareness and discovery called the sociological perspective is our privilege.

As instructors of sociology, we have set ambitious goals for ourselves: to teach both social structure and social interaction, and to introduce students to the sociological literature – both the classic theorists and contemporary research. As we accomplish this, we would also like to enliven the classroom, encourage critical thinking and stimulate our students' sociological imagination. Although formidable, these goals *are* attainable, and this book is designed to help you reach them. Based on many years of frontline (classroom) experience, its subtitle, *A Down-to-Earth Approach*, was not proposed lightly. Our goal was to share the fascination of sociology with students, and thereby make your teaching more rewarding.

Over the years, we have found the introductory course especially enjoyable. It is singularly satisfying to see students' faces light up as they begin to see how separate pieces of their world fit together. It is a pleasure to watch them gain insight into how their social experiences give shape to even their innermost desires. This is precisely what this text is designed to do – to stimulate your students' sociological imagination so they can better perceive how the 'pieces' of society fit together – and what this means for their own lives.

Filled with examples from around the world and from popular culture, as well as from our own society, this text helps to make today's multicultural, global society come alive for students. From learning how the international elite carves up global markets to studying the intimacy of friendship and marriage, students can see how sociology is the key to explaining contemporary life – and their own place in it.

In short, this text is designed to make your teaching easier. There is simply no justification for students to have to wade through cumbersome approaches to sociology. We are firmly convinced that the introduction to sociology should be enjoyable, and that the introductory textbook can be an essential tool in sharing the discovery of sociology with students.

The organisation of this text

The text is laid out in five parts. Part 1 focuses on the sociological perspective, which is introduced in the first chapter. We then look at how we are socialised into a culture (Chapter 2), and compare macrosociology and microsociology (Chapter 3). After this, we look at how sociologists do research (Chapter 4). Placing research methods in the fourth chapter is not the usual sequence, but doing so allows students to first become immersed in the captivating findings of sociology – then, after their interest is awakened, they learn how

sociologists gather their data. This works very well, but if you prefer the more traditional order, simply teach this chapter as the second chapter. No content will be affected.

Part 2, which focuses on groups, networks and social control, adds to the students' understanding of how far-reaching society's influence is – how group membership penetrates even their thinking, attitudes and orientations to life. We first examine the different types of groups that have such profound influences on us and then look at the fascinating area of group dynamics (Chapter 5). We then examine the impact of bureaucracy and formal organisations (Chapter 6). After this, we focus on how groups 'keep us in line' and sanction those who violate their norms (Chapter 7).

In Part 3, we turn our focus to social inequality, examining how it pervades society and how it affects our own lives. We first explore the principle of stratification at a global level and also focus on stratification in Australian society (Chapter 8). After establishing this broader context of social stratification, we focus on inequalities of race and ethnicity (Chapter 9), then we examine gender, the most global of the inequalities, and age (Chapter 10).

Part 4 helps students to become more aware of how social institutions encompass their lives. We first look at the economy, the social institution that has become dominant in Australian society, and at politics, our second overarching social institution (Chapter 11). We then place the focus on education (Chapter 12) and religion (Chapter 13). After this, we look at the significance of marriage and family (Chapter 14) and, finally, that of medicine (Chapter 15). Throughout, we examine how these social institutions are changing, and how their changes, in turn, influence our orientations to life.

With its focus on broad social change, Part 5 provides an appropriate conclusion for the book. Here we examine why our world is changing so rapidly, as well as catch a glimpse of what is yet to come. We first examine trends in population and urbanisation, sweeping forces in our lives that ordinarily remain below our level of awareness (Chapter 16). Our focus on collective behaviour and social movements (Chapter 17) and technological change, risk and the environment (Chapter 18) takes us to the 'cutting edge' of the vital changes that engulf us all.

Themes and features

Six central themes run throughout this text: down-to-earth sociology, globalisation, cultural diversity, critical thinking, the new technology and the growing influence of the mass media on our lives. For five of these themes, we have written a series of feature boxes. These boxed features are one of our favourite components of the book. They are especially useful for introducing the controversial topics that make sociology such a lively activity.

Let's look at these six themes.

Down-to-earth sociology

As many years of teaching have shown us, all too often textbooks are written to appeal to the adopters of texts rather than to the students who must learn from them. Therefore, a central concern in writing this book has been to present sociology in a way that not only facilitates understanding but also shares its excitement. During the course of writing other texts, we often have been told that our explanations and writing style are 'down-to-earth', or accessible and inviting to students – so much so that we chose this phrase as the book's subtitle. To help students grasp the fascination of

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Down-to-Earth Sociology

How the tsunami can help us to understand population growth

On 26 december 2004, the world witnessed the worst tsunami in modern history. As the giant waves rolled over the shores of unsuspecting countries, they swept away people from all walks of life – from lowly sellers of fish to wealthy tourists visiting the beaches of Sri Lanka. Over the next several days, as the government reports came in, the media kept increasing the death toll. When those reports were tallied two months later, the total stood at 286 000 people.

In terms of lives lost, this was not the worst single disaster the world had seen. Several hundred thousand people had been killed in China's Tangshan earthquake in 1976. And then there was the 1945 firebombing of Dresden, Germany, by US and British forces, where the loss of lives came to between 35 000 and half a million (lower estimates by US sources and higher ones by German sources).

In terms of geography, however, this was the broadest. It involved more countries than any other disaster in modern history. And, unlike its predecessors, this tsunami occurred during an era of instantaneous, global reporting of events.

As news of the tsunami was transmitted around the globe, the world went into shock. The response was almost immediate and aid poured in – in unprecedented amounts. Governments gave over $3 billion. Citizens pitched in, too, from the Australian Little League and religious groups to the 'regulars' at the local pubs.

The tsunami disaster will be used to illustrate the incredible population growth that is taking place in the least industrialised nations. The intention is not to dismiss the tragedy of these deaths, for they were horrible – as were the maiming of so many, the sufferings of families, the lost livelihoods and the many children who were left without parents.

This photo was snapped at Koh Raya in Thailand, just as the tsunami wave of December 26, 2004, landed.

Let's consider Indonesia first. With 233 000 deaths, this country was hit the hardest. Indonesia had an annual growth rate of 1.6 per cent (its 'rate of natural increase', as demographers call it). With a population of 220 million, Indonesia was growing by 3 300 000 people each year (Haub 2004) (using the totals at the time of the tsunami. In 2012, Indonesia's population had already soared 240 million.). This increase, com to 9041 people each day, mea that it took Indonesia just und four weeks (26 days) to replace huge number of people it lost the tsunami.

The next greatest loss of live took place in Sri Lanka. With its lower rate of natural increase o 1.3 and its smaller population o 19 million, it took Sri Lanka a lit longer to replace the 31 000 pe it lost: 46 days.

India was the third hardest h With India's 1 billion people an 1.7 rate of natural increase, Ind is adding 17 million people to i population each year. This com to 46 575 people each day. At increase of 1940 people per ho India took just eight or nine ho replace the 16 000 people it lo the tsunami.

The next hardest hit was Tha It took Thailand four or five day replace the 5000 people that it

For the other countries, the losses were smaller: 298 Somalia, 82 in the Maldives; 68 in Malaysia; 61 in Myan 10 in Tanzania, 2 in Bangladesh and 1 in Kenya ('Tsunar deaths ...' 2005).

Again, this does not detract from the horrifying trag the 2004 tsunami. But by using this event as a compara backdrop, we can gain a better grasp of the unprecede population growth that is taking place in the least industrialised nations.

sociology, we continuously stress sociology's relevance to their lives. To reinforce this theme, we avoid unnecessary jargon and use concise explanations and clear and simple (but not reductive) language. We also use student-relevant examples to illustrate key concepts, and we base several of the chapters' opening vignettes on our own experiences in exploring social life and on the students' experience in their reading and views of popular culture and news media.

This first theme is highlighted by a series of boxed features that explore sociological processes that underlie everyday life. The topics that we review in these **Down-to-Earth Sociology** boxes are highly diverse as listed below.

- Enjoying a sociology quiz – Sociological findings versus common sense 10
- Sociological findings versus common sense – Answers to the sociology quiz 12
- Listening to an early feminist 20
- Careers in sociology: What sociologists do 26
- Capturing Saddam Hussein: A surprising example of applied sociology 28
- Her behaviour toward strangers, especially men, was almost that of a wild animal, manifesting much fear and hostility 55
- Heredity or environment? The case of Oskar and Jack, identical twins 57
- Boot camp as a total institution 69
- Role-playing games: Dungeons & Dragons as social structure 78
- Beauty may be only skin deep, but its effects go on forever: Stereotypes in everyday life 89
- Loading the dice: How not to do research 112
- The Hawthorne experiments 117
- Applied sociology: Marketing research as a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods 120
- The McDonaldisation of society 168
- Islands in the street: Urban gangs in the United States 200
- Can a plane ride change your race? 264
- Racism and beauty 267
- Exhibiting people 271
- Unpacking the invisible knapsack: Exploring cultural privilege 283
- Women in business: Manoeuvring the male culture 362
- Home schooling: The search for quality and values 379
- Computers for kids: Unanticipated results 381
- Mega and emergent churches: One size does not fit all 398
- Terrorism and the mind of God 400
- The new face of religion: Hyper-real religions 416
- What's for dinner? 440
- 'You want us to live together? What do you mean by that?' 448
- 'What are your chances of getting divorced?' 450
- 'Why doesn't she just leave?' The dilemma of abused women 453
- Sociology of the body 466
- 'Cry baby! Cry baby!': Childhood social experiences and adult physical health 471
- 'Where did you get that new liver?' The international black market in human body parts 474
- The patriarchal dominance of maternity care 478
- How the tsunami can help us to understand population growth 508
- Reclaiming Harlem: 'It feeds my soul' 523
- The Redfern riot 538
- Rumours and lurking danger: The internet and the uncertainty of life 540
- Mass hysteria 541
- 'Tricks of the trade' – Deception and persuasion in propaganda 550
- The coming Star Wars 572

Globalisation

The second theme, *globalisation*, explores the impact of global issues on our lives and on the lives of people around the world. As our global economy increasingly intertwines the fates of nations, it vitally affects our own chances in life. The globalisation of capitalism influences the kinds of skills and knowledge we need, the types of work available to us, the costs of the goods and services we consume, and even whether our country is at war. We have also featured global issues in the chapters on stratification and social institutions, and the final chapters on social change: population, urbanisation, social movements and the environment.

What occurs in Russia, Japan, Germany and China, as well as in much smaller nations such as Afghanistan and Iraq, has far-reaching consequences on our own lives. Consequently, in addition to the global focus that runs throughout the text, the next theme, cultural diversity, also has a strong global emphasis.

Cultural diversity in Australia and around the world

The third theme, *cultural diversity*, has two primary emphases. The first is cultural diversity around the world. Gaining an understanding of how social life is 'done' in other parts of the world often challenges our taken-for-granted assumptions of social life. At times, when we learn about other cultures, we gain an appreciation for the life of other peoples; at other times, we may be shocked or even disgusted at some aspect of another group's way of life (such as female circumcision) and come away with a renewed appreciation of our own customs.

To highlight this first subtheme a series of boxes called **Cultural Diversity Around the World** appear. Among the topics with this subtheme are:

- How our own social networks perpetuate social Inequality 145
- Racial identity in Australia: Mapping new ethnic terrain 262
- Unauthorised arrivals 284
- Covering up 306
- Contemporary religion and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in census data 412

The second subtheme focuses on cultural diversity in Australia. We examine groups that make up the fascinating array of people who comprise the Australian population.

To highlight cultural diversity in Australia and around the world, we have featured a series of boxes called **Cultural Diversity in Australia**. Examples of these are as follows:

- You are what you eat: An exploration in cultural relativity 46

Cultural Diversity in **Australia**

Racial identity in Australia: Mapping new ethnic terrain

Academic Lynn Dickens presented this story about her heritage at a conference recently:

Being a Eurasian Australian is a strange thing. Don't get me wrong, my mixed-race heritage has never been a source of inner-conflict, nor have I ever had an 'identity crisis' about having Anglo-Celtic and Peranakan parentage. Unfortunately, I can't say that everyone else is always so comfortable with my ethnicity.

When I was fifteen, I was at my local shopping centre when a strange man loomed into my path and demanded, 'What are you?' Stunned, I avoided his bemused gaze and kept walking. 'What did he mean?' was my initial reaction. Then I thought, with slow-mounting anger, what kind of question is that? I was not a thing – a 'what' could not encompass who I was. But even in my racially naive teenage brain, I realised that his question was about my not-quite-white appearance. It was not the first time that I had been confronted by a stranger about my racial heritage. The question 'Where are you from?' was a disturbingly common occurrence during my teenage years. Funnily enough, while my Asian friends were sometimes quizzed about their origins by acquaintances, they didn't seem to attract strangers on the street the way my sister and I did. (Dickens 2010, p. 34)

As with many **settler-colonial** and immigrant nations, Australia's population make-up is indeed complex. Australia once had a strong sense of itself as a 'white' nation. This status was seen to set the nation apart from what were seen as the 'inferior' Asian nations that surrounded it. This whiteness was understood as being produced by supporting predominantly British immigration and the creation of a non-Indigenous population who were seen as a superior people to the Indigenous peoples who occupied the continent. These beliefs were underpinned by both policy and social custom – the emphasis on British immigration, the exclusion of non-white people and efforts to keep the different groups within the nation separate. In this atmosphere, racial classification was an important way to signify national belonging or lack of it. For example, the federal government used racial classifications such as 'European race' or 'white aliens' to signify who could and could not enter the country,

only white identities in Australia has meant that ev today many individuals find it difficult to acknowle their mixed heritage. For example, Guy Ramsay (2 undertook a study of rural mixed-heritage individu found that the participants, who were all of Chines Indigenous heritage, tended to privilege one iden the other. In another study of Indigenous peoples' one participant felt this way about his mixed herita 'Sometimes you feel like, shit, I don't fit in anywhe sometimes you feel like you're sitting in the middle you're going, "Which way do you sit?" because the elements of both that you feel uncomfortable with et al. 2006).

Given the amazing inter-mixtures of different gr of people in Australia it is fascinating to consider h confidently government officials assigned a race to they came in contact with. Bureaucrats who worke in immigration either overseas or at various Austra borders would scan potential entrants' appearance categorise them in terms of race. Some officials wh in Aboriginal affairs used categories such as quadr octoroon, Negro, black, white, Indian, Filipino, Jap Chinese and Hindu to describe the heritage of the Indigenous peoples whose lives they administered (Beresford & Omaji 1998).

Today people are more able to choose their ow categories for racial identification. In the Australian one of the questions asks respondents to identify t ancestry. They can nominate two – in 2001 just und quarter of respondents nominated two ancestries. also questions that ask respondents whether they Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The numbers o

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Cultural Diversity **Around the World**

The child workers

Nine-year-old Alone Banda works in an abandoned quarry in Zambia. Using a bolt, he breaks rocks into powder. In a week, he makes enough powder to fill half a cement bag. Alone gets $3 for the half bag.

Three dollars doesn't sound like much, but without it he and his grandmother would starve to death.

It is still a slow death for Alone. Robbed of his childhood and breathing rock dust continuously, Alone is likely to come down with what his fellow quarry workers call a 'heavy chest', an early sign of silicosis.

As the mothers of children – some as young as seven – who work at the quarry say, 'If I feel pity for them, what are they going to eat?' (Wines 2006).

In Ghana, six-year-old Mark Kwadwo, who weighs only about 14 kilograms, works for a fisher named Takyi. For up to 14 hours a day, seven days a week, he paddles a boat and takes fish out of nets. Exhausted, he falls asleep at night in a little mud hut that he shares with five other boys.

Mark is still too young to dive, but he knows what is coming when he is older. His fear is that he will dive to free a tangled net – and never resurface.

If Mark doesn't paddle hard enough, or pull in the fish from a net fast enough, Takyi will hit him on the head with a paddle.

'I prefer to have older boys work for me,' says Takyi, 'but I can't afford them. That's why I go for these.'

'I prefer to have my boy home with me,' says the mother of Kwabena, whom she leased four years ago when Kwabena was seven, 'but I need the money to survive.' The fisher has paid as promised. Kwabena's mother has received $66 for

Child labour is a common phenomenon in many nations around the world. Here, a young boy worker in Delhi, India works in a textile factory. It is important to remember that, in the context of inequalities associated with globalisation, people in wealthy nations such as Australia benefit from the labour of children in the world's poorer nations.

the four years' work (LaF 2006).

Around the world, ch forced to work. Like Ma work in the fishing indus like Alone, some work in Others work in construc other children work as n pesticide sprayers, stree and household servants weave carpet in India, ra camels in the Middle Ea over the world, children prostitutes.

The underlying cause children working is pove severe that the few dolla children bring in can mal difference between life a In Ghana, where Mark wo the fishing boat, two out of three people live on les a day (LaFraniere 2006).

At the same time, globalisation means that these challenges of individual nations. When people in w nations such as Australia consider where their food, goods, clothing and other items of everyday existe from, it soon becomes apparent that our lives are i linked with the lives of individuals such as Alone, M Kwabena and millions of other child workers aroun world.

Looking at cultural diversity – whether it be in Australia or in other regions of the world – can challenge our own orientations to life. Seeing the vast differences in social life throughout the world highlights the arbitrariness of our own customs. These contrasts provide a stimulating context that can help students to develop their sociological imagination. They also help students to see connections among key sociological concepts such as culture, socialisation, norms, race/ethnicity, gender, religion and social class. As your students' sociological imagination grows, they can attain a new perspective on their own experiences – and a better understanding of the social structure of the Australian society.

Critical thinking

The fourth theme, *critical thinking*, focuses on controversial social issues and engages students in examining the various sides of those issues. In these sections, titled **Thinking Critically**, we present objective portrayals of positions on social issues. We do not take a side – although we occasionally play the 'devil's advocate' in the questions that close these topics. These critical thinking sections are based on controversial social issues that either affect the student's own life or focus on topics that have intrinsic interest for students, and can enliven your classroom by stimulating a vibrant exchange of ideas. These sections can also be used as the basis for in-class debates and as topics for small discussion groups. Small discussion groups can enliven a class and be an effective way to present sociological ideas. Among the issues addressed are:

Sociology and the new technology

The fifth theme, *sociology and the new technology*, explores an aspect of social life that has come to be central in our lives. We welcome these new technological tools, for they help

us to be more efficient at performing our daily tasks, from making a living to communicating with others – whether those people are nearby or on the other side of the globe. The significance of the new technology, however, extends far beyond the tools and the ease and efficiency they bring to our lives. The new technology is better envisioned as a social revolution that will leave few aspects of our lives untouched. It even penetrates our being, shapes our thinking, and leads to changed ways of viewing life.

This theme is introduced early on, where technology is defined and presented as a major aspect of culture. The impact of technology is then discussed throughout the text. Examples include how technology is used to control workers in order to produce the 'maximum security' workplace (Chapter 6), the implications of technology for maintaining global stratification (Chapter 8), and how technology is changing education (Chapter 12), religion (Chapter 13) and medicine (Chapter 15). Chapter (18), 'Technological change, risk and the environment,' concludes the book with a focus on this theme.

A series of feature boxes called **Sociology and the New Technology** highlight this theme. In these boxes, we explore how technology is changing society and affecting our lives.

The mass media and social life

In the sixth theme, we stress how the *mass media* affect our behaviour and permeate our thinking. We consider how the media penetrate our consciousness to such a degree that they even influence how we perceive our own bodies. As your students consider this theme, they may begin to see the mass media in a different light, which should further stimulate their sociological imagination.

A series of boxed features called **Mass Media in Social Life** make this theme prominent for students.

Sociology and the New Technology

Avatar fantasy life: The blurring lines of reality

Dissatisfied with your current life? Would you like to become someone else? Maybe someone rich? You can. Join a world populated with virtual people and live out your fantasy.

Second Life and other internet sites that offer an alternative virtual reality have exploded in popularity. Of the 8 million 'residents' of *Second Life*, 450 000 spend 20–40 hours a week in their alternative life (Alter 2007).

To start your second life, you select your avatar, a kind of digital hand puppet, to be your persona in this virtual world. Your avatar comes in just a basic form, although you can control its movements just fine. But that bare body certainly won't do. You will want to clothe it. For this, you have your choice of outfits for every occasion. Although you buy them from other avatars in virtual stores, you have to spend real dollars. You might want some hair, too. For that, too, you'll have your choice of designers. And again, you'll spend real dollars. And you might want to have a sex organ. There is even a specialty store for that.

All equipped the way you want to be?

Then it is time to meet other avatars, the virtual personas of real-life people. As you interact with them in this virtual world, you will be able to share stories, talk about your desires in life, and have drinks in virtual bars. You can also buy property and open businesses.

Avatars flirt, too. Some even date and marry.

For most people, this second life is just an interesting game. They come and go, as if playing *Tomb*

designed furniture. He pours his favourite drink and from his penthouse watches the sun setting over the ocean (Alter 2007).

Dutch met his wife, Tenaj, on *Second Life.* As courtsh go, theirs went well. Their wedding was announced, of course, and about twenty avatar friends attended. They gave the newlyweds real congratulations, in a virtual sor way.

Dutch and Tenaj have two dogs and pay the mortgag together. They love cuddling and intimate talks. Their lo life is quite good, as avatars can have virtual sex.

But Sue is not pleased that Ric spends so much time in virtual world. Sue feels neglected. She also doesn't apprec Tenaj. Sue, you see, is also Ric's wife, but in real life.

The whole thing has become more than a little irritati 'I'll try to talk to him or bring him a drink, and he'll be having sex with a cartoon,' she says.

The real life counterpart of Tenaj, the avatar, is Janet, who lives in Canada. Ric and Janet have never met – no do they plan to meet. They haven't even talked on the phone as Ric and Janet – j a lot of sweet talking in th virtual world as Dutch and Tenaj.

For gamers, the virtual always overlaps the real to some extent, but for some the virtual overwhelms the real. A couple from South Korea even let their 3-mon old daughter starve to dea while they nurtured a virtua daughter online (Frayer 20

For your consideration

Mass Media in Social Life

Gattaca

They used to say that a child conceived of love had a greater chance of happiness. They don't say that anymore. I will never understand what possessed my mother to put her faith in God's hands rather than in the local geneticist. Ten fingers, ten toes, that is all that used to matter. Not now. Now, only seconds old, the exact time and cause of my death was already known.

These are the words of Vincent Freeman, the main character of the film *Gattaca* (1997), played by Ethan Hawke. The genetic test that was administered to him just after his birth found that his life expectancy was 30 years of age with a high probability of many disorders, but, most markedly, a 99 per cent probability of a heart disorder. Due to these 'inferior genes' Vincent found himself excluded from a variety of institutions in life, including a preschool, where the insurance of the preschool would not cover him

Ethan Hawke in Gattaca.

in case anything were to happen As an adult Vincent found himse belonging to a genetic underclas deemed by society to be useful only for menial jobs. Although it appears he came from a middle-class family, this was no longer an important indicator of status in society. His position in society, because his mother trusted natu rather than science, was not deemed by his socioeconomic background or by gender, ethnic or religion. Rather, it was his gen profile.

This fictional film raises important issues to consider – who in the end benefits from the developments of the Human Genome Project? Will the knowledge generated by this technology be liberating or oppressive? What are the potential social implications for this technology? Are there any drawbacks and, if so, what can be done about them?

Source: Willis 2009.

Visual presentations of sociology

CHAPTER **9** Race and ethnicity

Australia

Chapter-opening vignettes

These accounts feature down-to-earth illustrations of a major aspect of each chapter's content. Some of these are based on our own experiences, others are taken from popular culture and the media.

'In the section where the bureaucrat is required to fill in the reason for your removal you find it simply says "being Aboriginal".'

You are a young child brought up in a poor but respectable family. Your mother is Indigenous and so is your father, but one of your grandfathers was non-Indigenous. You live on the outskirts of a large country town and your family is used to visits from the government to check on how the household is functioning. However, on this day the social worker is accompanied by the local policeman. Without much explanation from the officials it becomes clear that the intention is to remove you from your family.

Your mother protests loudly and eloquently but to no avail, and the policeman shuffles you out to the waiting car. The last sight you have of your mother is her distraught face as she follows the car for as long as she can before it speeds up and she collapses in grief.

In town you are kept in the local police lock-up, not because you have committed a crime but because there is nowhere else to put you and it is a common practice to place Indigenous people in jail cells for these purposes. The next day you are put on a train to Sydney, where you will spend the next few years in an institution far away from your family, who you will not see for decades.

In the institution you meet other children who have been removed from their families. You stick together as much as you can. The treatment in the institution is mixed – some of the staff try and provide a bit of tenderness, but overall the treatment is neutral and regimented. There are some staff members whose behaviour towards the children is cruel – sometimes it is verbal abuse, some children suffer physical or sexual abuse. You and many other inmates cope with this change by withdrawing into yourself. You just follow the rules (and there are plenty of them). Life is about obeying rules, keeping in lines, marching to and fro and performing tasks at the set time in the correct way.

Attending school is a break, but the lessons learned often involve being taught about the inferiority of your own culture and the limitations of your future life. The classroom is overcrowded and resources are scarce. Other lessons for girls focus on housekeeping – baking, sewing, laundry and hygiene. In time you realise the lessons are not delivered so that you can manage your own household when you are older, but to give you the skills to be a domestic servant in a white woman's home.

You are just getting through your life day by day. If you could see into the future you might see a life of incarceration, alcoholism or drug abuse and continual relationship breakdown. You might also see a person who, against the odds, gets her life together and starts to piece together the story of her past and reconnect with her Indigenous heritage. As part of this process you might, many, many years later, find the record that documents your removal from your family. In the section where the bureaucrat is required to fill in the reason for your removal you find it simply says 'Being Aboriginal'.

Sociology and the other sciences

Just as humans today have an intense desire to unravel the mysteries around them, people in ancient times also attempted to understand their world. Their explanations were not based on observations alone, however, but were also mixed with magic and superstition.

To satisfy their basic curiosities about the world around them, humans gradually developed **science**: systematic methods to study the social and natural worlds and the knowledge obtained by those methods. Sociology, the study of society and human behaviour, is one of these sciences.

A useful way of comparing these sciences – and of gaining a better understanding of sociology's place – is to divide them into the natural and the social sciences.

The natural sciences

The **natural sciences** are the intellectual and academic disciplines that are designed to explain and predict the events in our natural environment. The natural sciences are divided into specialised fields of research according to subject matter, such as biology, geology, chemistry and physics. These are further subdivided into even more highly specialised areas. Biology is divided into botany and zoology, geology into mineralogy and geomorphology, chemistry into its organic and inorganic branches and physics into biophysics and quantum mechanics. Each area of investigation examines a particular 'slice' of nature.

The social sciences

People have not limited themselves to investigating nature. In the pursuit of a more adequate understanding of life, they have also developed fields of science that focus on the social world. The **social sciences** examine human relationships. Just as the natural sciences attempt to objectively understand the world of nature, the social sciences attempt to objectively understand the social world. Just as the world of nature contains ordered (or lawful) relationships that are not obvious but must be discovered through controlled observations, so the ordered relationships of the human or social world are not obvious and must be revealed by means of repeated observations.

Like the natural sciences, the social sciences are divided into specialised fields based on their subject matter. These divisions are anthropology, economics, political science, psychology and sociology. The social sciences fields are further subdivided into specialities. Thus, anthropology is divided into cultural and physical anthropology, economics has macro (large-scale) and micro (small-scale) specialties, political science has theoretical and applied branches, psychology may be clinical or experimental and sociology has quantitative and qualitative branches. Since our focus is sociology, let's contrast sociology with each of the other social sciences.

Anthropology

Anthropology, which traditionally focuses on tribal peoples, is closely related to sociology. The chief concern of anthropologists is to understand culture – a people's total way of life. Culture includes a group's:

1 artefacts, such as its tools, art and weapons
2 structure – that is, the patterns that determine how its members interact with one another (such as positions of leadership)
3 ideas and values, especially how a group's belief system affects its members' lives
4 forms of communication, especially language.

Postgraduate students working on their doctorate in anthropology usually spend a period of time living with a tribal group. In their reports, they emphasise the group's family (kin) relationships. As there are no 'undiscovered' groups left in the world,

science the application of systematic methods to obtain knowledge and the knowledge obtained by those methods

natural sciences the intellectual and academic disciplines designed to explain and predict events in our natural environment

social sciences the intellectual and academic disciplines designed to understand the social world objectively by means of controlled and repeated observations

Margin notes

Margin notes of key-term glossary definitions provide a quick reference tool.

An important consequence of culture within us is **ethnocentrism**, a tendency to use our own group's ways of doing things as a yardstick for judging others. All of us learn that the ways of our own group are good, right, proper and even superior to other ways of life. As sociologist William Sumner (1906), who developed this concept, said, 'One's own group is the centre of everything and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it.' Ethnocentrism has both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, it creates in-group loyalties. On the negative side, ethnocentrism can lead to discrimination against people whose ways differ from ours (as seen in the Harry Potter stories when ethnocentric characters speak in bad terms of Muggles, and vice versa).

The many ways in which culture affects our lives fascinate sociologists. In this chapter, we'll examine how profoundly culture influences everything we are and do and how socialisation allows us to integrate this culture within ourselves. This will serve as a basis from which you can start to analyse your own assumptions about reality. A warning at this point: You might develop a changed perspective on social life and your role in it. If so, life will never look the same!

ethnocentrism the use of one's own culture as a yardstick for judging the ways of other individuals or societies, generally leading to a negative evaluation of their values, norms and behaviours

cultural relativism not judging a culture but trying to understand it on its own terms

Practising cultural relativism

To counter our tendency to use our own culture as the standard by which we judge other cultures, we can practise **cultural relativism**; that is, we can try to understand a culture on its own terms. This means looking at how the elements of a culture fit together without judging those elements as superior or inferior to our own way of life.

With our own culture embedded so deeply within us, however, practising cultural relativism can challenge our orientations to life. For example, most Australian citizens appear to have strong feelings against raising bulls for the purpose of stabbing them to death in front of crowds that shout 'Olé!' According to cultural relativism, however, bullfighting must be viewed from the perspective of the culture in which it takes place – *its* history, *its* folklore, *its* ideas of bravery and *its* ideas of sex roles.

You may still regard bullfighting as wrong, of course, if your culture, which is deeply ingrained in you, has no history of bullfighting. We all possess culturally specific ideas about cruelty to animals, ideas that have evolved slowly and match other elements of our culture.

None of us can be entirely successful at practising cultural relativism. Look at the Cultural Diversity box on the next page. You will probably evaluate these 'strange' foods through the lens of your own culture. Applying cultural relativism, however, is an attempt to refocus that lens so we can appreciate other ways of life rather than simply asserting 'our way is right'. As you view the photos below, try to appreciate the cultural differences in standards of beauty.

Standards of beauty vary so greatly from one culture to another that what one group finds attractive, another may not. Yet, in its ethnocentrism, each group thinks that its standards are the best – that the appearance reflects what beauty 'really' is. As indicated by these photos, around the world men and women make themselves appealing to others, they try to make their appearance reflect those standards.

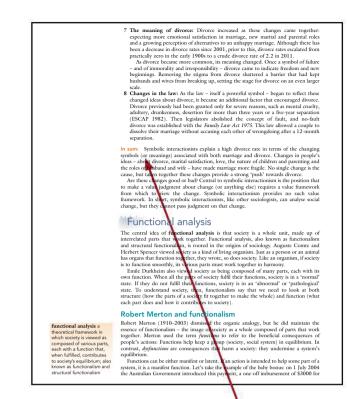China   Masai   Thailand   Papua New Guinea   Australia

Photo collages

Because sociology lends itself so well to photographic illustrations, this text also includes photo collages. In Chapter 2, students can catch a glimpse of the fascinating variety that goes into the cultural relativity of beauty (p. 45). The collage in Chapter 5 (p. 141) illustrates categories, aggregates, and primary and secondary groups, concepts that students sometimes wrestle to distinguish. The photo collage in Chapter 10 (p. 304) shows students how differently gender is portrayed in different cultures.

Chapter summary and review

Each chapter closes with critical thinking and discussion questions. Each question focuses on a major feature of the chapter, asking students to reflect on and consider some issue. Many of the questions ask the students to apply sociological findings and principles to their own lives.

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7 **The meaning of divorce:** Divorce increased as these changes came together: expecting more emotional satisfaction in marriage, new marital and parental roles and a growing perception of alternatives to an unhappy marriage. Although there has been a decrease in divorce rates since 2001, prior to this, divorce rates escalated from practically zero in the early 1900s to a crude divorce rate of 2.2 in 2011.

As divorce became more common, its meaning changed. Once a symbol of failure – and of immorality and irresponsibility – divorce came to indicate freedom and new beginnings. Removing the stigma from divorce shattered a barrier that had kept husbands and wives from breaking up, setting the stage for divorce on an even larger scale.

8 **Changes in the law:** As the law – itself a powerful symbol – began to reflect these changed ideas about divorce, it became an additional factor that encouraged divorce. Divorce previously had been granted only for severe reasons, such as mental cruelty, adultery, drunkenness, desertion for more than three years or a five-year separation (ESCAP 1982). Then legislators abolished the concept of fault, and no-fault divorce was established with the *Family Law Act 1975*. This law allowed a couple to dissolve their marriage without accusing each other of wrongdoing after a 12-month separation.

In sum: Symbolic interactionists explain a high divorce rate in terms of the changing symbols (or meanings) associated with both marriage and divorce. Changes in people's ideas – about divorce, marital satisfaction, love, the nature of children and parenting and the roles of husband and wife – have made marriage more fragile. No single change is the cause, but taken together these changes provide a strong 'push' towards divorce.

Are these changes good or bad? Central to symbolic interactionism is the position that to make a value judgment about change (or anything else) requires a value framework from which to review the change. Symbolic interactionism provides no such value framework. In short, symbolic interactionists, like other sociologists, can analyse social change, but they cannot pass judgment on that change.

Functional analysis

The central idea of **functional analysis** is that society is a whole unit, made up of interrelated parts that work together. Functional analysis, also known as functionalism and structural functionalism, is rooted in the origins of sociology. Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer viewed society as a kind of living organism. Just as a person or an animal has organs that function together, they wrote, so does society. Like an organism, if society is to function smoothly, its various parts must work together in harmony.

Emile Durkheim also viewed society as being composed of many parts, each with its own function. When all the parts of society fulfil their functions, society is in a 'normal' state. If they do not fulfil their functions, society is in an 'abnormal' or 'pathological' state. To understand society, then, functionalists say that we need to look at both structure (how the parts of a society fit together to make the whole) and function (what each part does and how it contributes to society).

Robert Merton and functionalism

functional analysis a theoretical framework in which society is viewed as composed of various parts, each with a function that, when fulfilled, contributes to society's equilibrium; also known as *functionalism* and *structural functionalism*

Robert Merton (1910–2003) dismissed the organic analogy, but he did maintain the essence of functionalism – the image of society as a whole composed of parts that work together. Merton used the term *functions* to refer to the beneficial consequences of people's actions: Functions help keep a group (society, social system) in equilibrium. In contrast, *dysfunctions* are consequences that harm a society's ability to survive: they undermine a system's equilibrium.

Functions can be either manifest or latent. If an action is intended to help some part of a system, it is a manifest function. Let's take the example of the baby bonus: on 1 July 2004 the Australian Government introduced this payment, a one-off imbursement of $3000 for

Summary paragraphs

Summary paragraphs throughout each chapter provide a synopsis of a topic before the text moves onto a new concept.

CHAPTER

2   Summary and review

Culture

What is culture?
All human groups possess *culture* – language, beliefs, values, norms and material objects that are passed from one generation to the next. *Material culture* consists of objects (art, buildings, clothing, weapons, tools). *Non-material* (or *symbolic*) *culture* is a group's ways of thinking and their patterns of behaviour; p. 44.

What are cultural relativism and ethnocentrism?
People are naturally *ethnocentric*; that is, they use their own culture as a yardstick for judging the ways of others. In contrast, those who embrace *cultural relativism* try to understand other cultures on those cultures' own terms; pp. 45–46.

Components of symbolic culture

What are the components of non-material culture?
The central component is *symbols* – anything to which people attach meaning and that they use to communicate with others. Universally, the symbols of non-material culture are *gestures, language, values, norms, sanctions, folkways* and *mores*; p. 47.

How do values, norms, sanctions, folkways and mores reflect culture?
All groups have *values* – standards by which they define what is desirable or undesirable – and *norms* – rules or expectations about behaviour. Groups use *positive sanctions* to show approval of those who follow their norms, and *negative sanctions* to show disapproval of those who do not. Norms that are not strictly enforced are called *folkways*, while *mores* are norms to which groups demand conformity because they reflect core values; p. 47.

Many cultural worlds

How do subcultures and countercultures differ?
A *subculture* is a group whose values and related behaviours distinguish its members from the general culture. A *counterculture* holds some values that stand in opposition to those of the dominant culture; pp. 48–49.

Values in Australian society

What are the key values in Australian society?
A key value in Australia is *egalitarianism* or *mateship*. Everyone is seen as having a 'fair-go', but if someone goes too high, they need to be brought down, through what is called the *tall poppy syndrome*. When this value is not followed, people tend to see this as un-Australian; pp. 49–54.

What is human nature?

How much of our human characteristics come from 'nature' (heredity) and how much from 'nurture' (the social and cultural environment)?
Observations of isolated and feral children help to answer this question. Language and intimate social interaction – aspects of 'nurture' – are essential to the development of what we consider to be human characteristics; pp. 54–56.

Socialisation into the self and mind

How do we acquire a self?
Humans are born with the capacity to develop a self, but the self must be socially constructed; that is, its contents depend on social interaction. According to Charles Horton Cooley's concept of the looking-glass self, our self develops as we internalise others' reactions to us. George Herbert Mead identified the ability to take the role of the other as essential to the development of the self. Mead concluded that even the mind is a social product; pp. 56–58.

Learning personality, morality and emotions

How do sociologists evaluate Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality development?
Freud viewed personality development as the result of our *id* (inborn, self-centred desires) clashing with the demands of society. The *ego* develops to balance the id and the *superego*, the conscience. Sociologists, in contrast, do not examine inborn or subconscious motivations, but instead look at how social factors – social class, gender, religion, education and so on – underlie personality development; pp. 58–60.

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Acknowledgments

The years that have gone into writing this text are a culmination of the many more years that preceded its writing – from our first year at university to that equally demanding endeavour known as classroom teaching. No text, of course, comes solely from its authors. Although we are responsible for the final words on the printed page, we have received excellent feedback from sociology academics. We are especially grateful to the following academics for their invaluable feedback and advice:

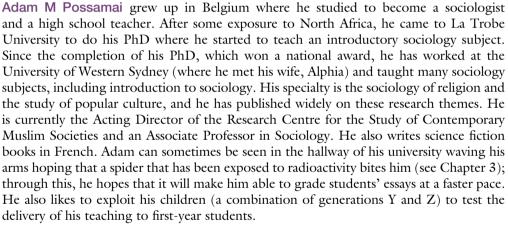|	
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Adam Possamai and Alphia Possamai-Inesedy
University of Western Sydney, Australia

Alphia L Possamai-Inesedy was born in Pennsylvania, graduated from high school there but also spent a year of high school in Canada. She began her undergraduate studies in her home state, but she completed her double major in sociology and psychology in Sydney, Australia. Both her honours degree and PhD were within the discipline of sociology, and more specifically the sub-disciplines of sociology of religion, and sociology of medicine and health care. Her PhD enabled her to study women's experiences during pregnancy and childbirth over a three-year period. Alphia's primary interests in sociology are the sociology of medicine and health care, religion and social research methods. She has published in sociology journals including *Journal of Sociology*, *Health Sociology Review* and the *Australian Religion Studies Review*. Since undertaking her doctorate, Alphia has taught at the University of Western Sydney. Although she teaches across all levels within the undergraduate program, she is especially excited about lecturing and teaching first-year students and introducing them to the sociological imagination. Alphia is currently immersed in research on pregnancy practices, concentrating on prenatal screening and testing.

Alphia contributed Chapter 1 *The Sociological Perspective*; Chapter 4 *How Sociologists Do Research*; Chapter 8 *Class and Social Stratification*; Chapter 10 *Sex, Gender and Ageing*; Chapter 15 *Health Care and Bio-Medicine*; and Chapter 18 *Technological Change, Risk and the Environment* of this book.

Adam M Possamai grew up in Belgium where he studied to become a sociologist and a high school teacher. After some exposure to North Africa, he came to La Trobe University to do his PhD where he started to teach an introductory sociology subject. Since the completion of his PhD, which won a national award, he has worked at the University of Western Sydney (where he met his wife, Alphia) and taught many sociology subjects, including introduction to sociology. His specialty is the sociology of religion and the study of popular culture, and he has published widely on these research themes. He is currently the Acting Director of the Research Centre for the Study of Contemporary Muslim Societies and an Associate Professor in Sociology. He also writes science fiction books in French. Adam can sometimes be seen in the hallway of his university waving his arms hoping that a spider that has been exposed to radioactivity bites him (see Chapter 3); through this, he hopes that it will make him able to grade students' essays at a faster pace. He also likes to exploit his children (a combination of generations Y and Z) to test the delivery of his teaching to first-year students.

Adam contributed Chapter 2 *Culture and Socialisation*; Chapter 3 *Social Structure and Social Interaction*; Chapter 5 *Societies to Social Networks, On- and Offline*; Chapter 7 *Control, Power and Deviance*; Chapter 12 *Education*; Chapter 13 *Religion*; Chapter 16 *Population and Urbanisation* and Chapter 17 *Collective Behaviour and Social Movements* of this book.

Catriona Elder was educated in Melbourne and undertook her first university degrees there. After a short time in the workforce she decided academic life was for her and she returned to university to complete an MA and a PhD. Her work for these degrees focused on issues of gender, race and nation. She was interested to research the role of popular culture (films, books, television) in forming attitudes to difference – especially racial difference. Some of these ideas have been explored in her books *Being Australian: Narrative of National Identity* (Allen & Unwin) and *Dreams and Nightmares of a White Australia* (Peter Lang).

Catriona has always had university placements that have involved a mix of research and teaching. She specialises in first-year or junior teaching. Asked what it is that makes her do this type of teaching, she noted that she gets lots of feedback from students telling