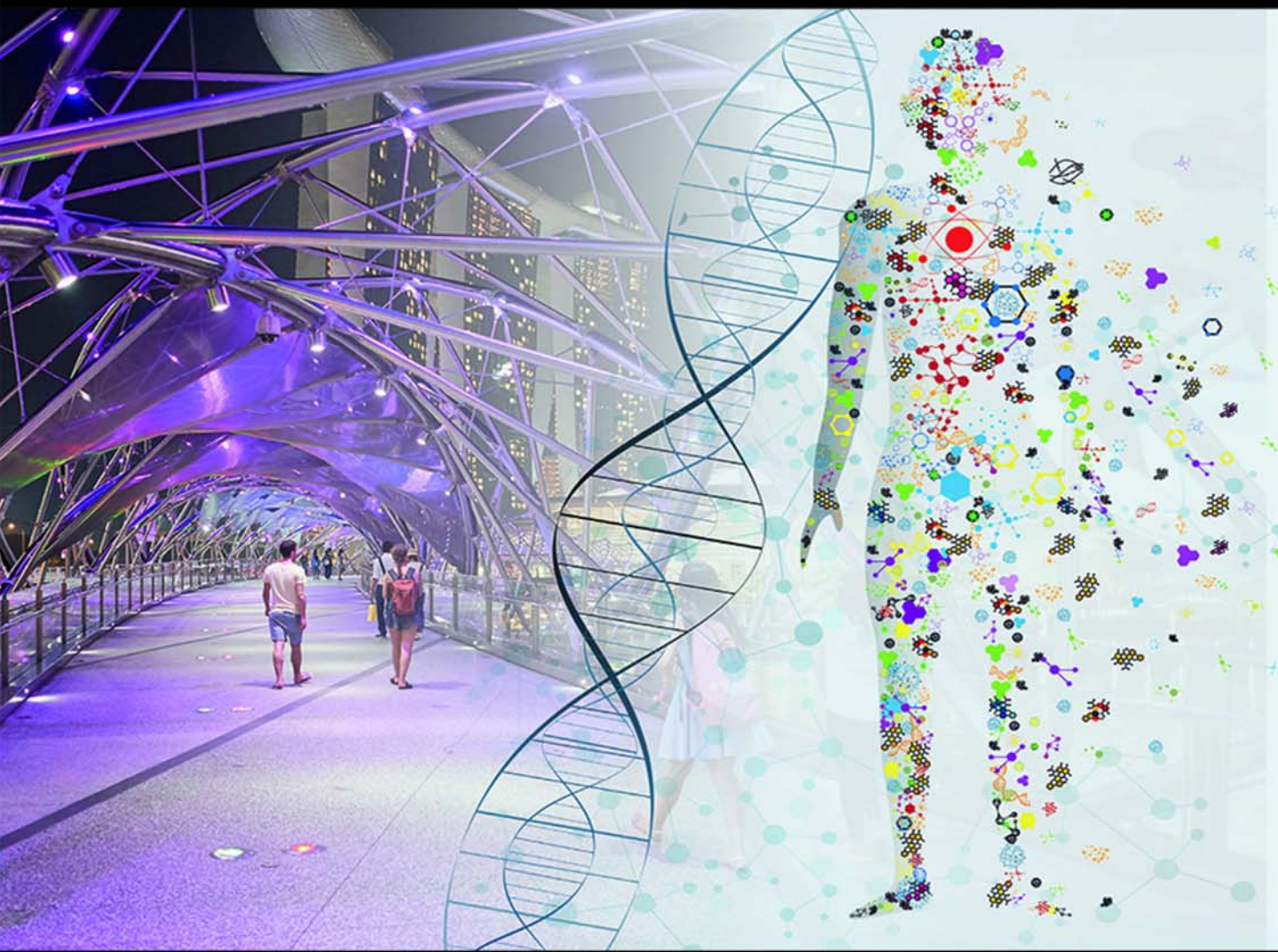


SECOND EDITION

SOCIOLOGY

A BIOSOCIAL INTRODUCTION



Rosemary L. Hopcroft

ROUTLEDGE



SOCIOLOGY

In an era of human genome research, environmental challenges, new reproductive technologies, and more, students can benefit from introductory sociology text that is biologically informed. This innovative text integrates mainstream sociological research in all areas of sociology with a scientifically informed model of an evolved, biological human actor. This text allows students to better understand their emotional, social, and institutional worlds. It also illustrates how biological understanding naturally enhances the sociological approach.

This grounding of sociology in a biosocial conception of the individual actor is coupled with a comparative approach, as human biology is universal and often reveals itself as variations on themes across human cultures. Tables, figures, and photos, and the author's concise and remarkably lively style make this a truly enjoyable book to read and teach.

Rosemary L. Hopcroft is Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She has published widely in the areas of comparative and historical sociology and evolution, biology, and society in journals that include the *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, and *Social Forces*. She is the author of *Evolution and Gender: Why It Matters for Contemporary Life*, which received the 2018 Award for Best Book by the Evolution, Biology, & Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association.

Hopcroft's introductory sociology textbook is one of the very few that takes seriously the necessity for developing genuinely scientific explanations of human social behavior and that strives to do so by forging explicit linkage with the basic principles of the evolutionary behavioral sciences. The effort is laudable, and it is in keeping with the longstanding, but as yet not fully realized, promise of a truly scientific sociology.

*Timothy Crippen, Professor Emeritus,
University of Mary Washington*

SOCIOLOGY

A BIOSOCIAL INTRODUCTION

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Rosemary L. Hopcroft

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preface for students and teachers

Integrating Biology into Sociology—Sociology for the Twenty-first Century

THIS TEXT INTEGRATES mainstream sociological research in all areas of sociology with a scientifically informed model of an evolved, biological human actor. The goal for students is to help them understand that all social phenomena are a product of the *interaction* of the nature of individuals with the social context and group-level phenomena—never one or the other, always *both*. The goal for instructors is to help them understand how the inclusion of biology strengthens and enhances the sociological approach. I show how this inclusion can be done effortlessly, with little change to sociological theories and the traditional sociological foci on group dynamics, roles, norms, and culture.

In this new edition of the textbook, I further discuss the complementarity of sociological with evolutionary approaches, showing how evolutionary approaches can give ultimate answers (answer the “why” questions) to the proximate explanations (answering the “how” questions) given by sociologists. I also discuss the initial dislike of any use of biology in sociology with an account of the sociobiology wars of the 1970s (see Chapter 2), and note how these controversies have been resolved, mostly in favor of greater inclusion of biology within sociology. In doing so, I detail how incorporating evolutionary biology and biology into sociology does not amount to “social Darwinism” or anything of the kind. I discuss the myriad problems with Herbert Spencer’s evolutionary theorizing at the group level and how it differs the contemporary theory from evolutionary biology, which largely rejects group selectionism and any idea of differential group “fitness.” Research from contemporary biology shows how all humans share the vast majority of evolved traits and genetic characteristics, with only small differences between individuals, both within and between groups.

I have taught introduction to sociology using this textbook for over seven years now, and in teaching I have found that certain orders of presentation of topics and material work better than others. The new edition of the text reflects this revised order of presentation. There is also the addition of points that should have been included in the first edition of the text that weren't (e.g., discussion of social structure in Chapter 1; discussion of new methods for analyzing the interaction of genes and environments and their effect on social behavior in Chapter 1), as well as expansion of topics that were only briefly covered in the first edition (e.g., the new Chapter 4 on subsistence technology and culture worldwide; extended discussion on wealth and income inequality see Chapter 10). I also include new sections on topical subjects such as implicit discrimination (Chapter 13); same-sex marriage (Chapter 9); and the growing popularity of legal alternatives to marriage (e.g., civil unions) in many European countries (Chapter 9). I also now include a number of "spotlight on research" text boxes, where a particular piece of recent sociological research on the topic of the chapter is discussed. These are designed to show how sociologists "do" sociology. Where appropriate, all statistics in this new edition of the text book have been revised and updated.

Original characteristics of the original text have been retained, namely, the linking of the discipline of sociology with the life sciences while maintaining the traditional sociological foci on the importance of group dynamics, roles, norms, class, institutions, and culture. All the standard tools of sociological analysis and the primary subject areas of sociology are covered in the text, with the primary difference being the addition of a chapter on human biology and evolved predispositions. This biosocial approach is linked to a comparative approach where possible, as it is important to see the flexibility of humans in different historical and material contexts. This aspect of the text owes a great debt to Gerhard Lenski's pioneering efforts in his text *Human Societies*. Human biology may be universal, but human social behavior differs substantially depending on the historical time period and cultural setting. Thus, information on a variety of different types of societies in different time periods is presented. A global perspective is utilized when appropriate.

FEATURES OF THE TEXT

In the Textbook

Feature

Textboxes

Benefit

These offer examples and specific elaborations of concepts in the text.

Running Glossary Terms	Found in the margins near a term’s first use, these provide instant definitions of new ideas and concepts.
Maps	These connect data and information to geography and spatial orientation.
Tables and Figures	These carefully crafted portrayals of data reinforce the text’s commitment to a scientific approach to sociology.
Photographs and Illustrations	Chosen for visual interest, these illustrate points made in the book as well.
Chapter Conclusions	Essential for student comprehension and review, these are among the best of any text pedagogy.
References	Offered on a chapter-by-chapter basis to facilitate student research and further exploration.
“Spotlight on Research” Text box	These highlight some recent, relevant piece of sociological research and show how sociologists “do” sociology.

On the Web

PowerPoint slides for lectures are available. They include the tables and figures of the text and also extend key concepts. These are created by the author and can be requested by professors from the publisher.

In the Instructor’s Manual

Useful guides and tips for professors on teaching each chapter:

- Test Bank (Multiple Choice and True/False)
- Discussion/Essay Questions
- In-class activities and worksheets to assist learning
- Movie suggestions

ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

The organization of this text is slightly different from other introduction to sociology texts. The first chapter is an introduction to what sociology is all about—the scientific study of human society. The next chapters describe and explain *analytical concepts*

crucial to sociological analysis. These are organized from the more micro to more macro concepts as follows: biology, culture, and socialization, culture and its relationship to subsistence technology, social groups and networks, institutions, and demography. These are the basic concepts that are used repeatedly in the chapters that follow.

In the substantive chapters on various topics of sociological research, my goal has been to cover the basic descriptive facts of an area first and then briefly cover the major sociological explanations of these facts. To some extent, the sociological research reviewed consists of the “greatest hits” of sociology. These topics generally proceed from microsociological topics to macrosociological topics, with the exception of stratification. This topic is so central to sociology that it is placed earlier in the text than a strict micro to macro ordering would dictate.

If instructors want to retain a more standard order of chapters, the chapters can be taught in the following order:

Introduction to Sociology

1. Chapter 1: What Do Sociologists Do?

Foundations of Society

2. Chapter 2: Biology: One Human Nature
3. Chapter 3: Culture: Socialization, Norms, and Roles
4. Chapter 4: Culture and Subsistence Technology
5. Chapter 8: Microsociology
6. Chapter 5: Social Groups and Networks: Kin Groups, Classes, Organizations, Status Groups, Political Groups, and Social Networks
7. Chapter 15: Crime and Violence

Social Inequality

8. Chapter 10: Social Stratification
9. Chapter 11: Global Inequality
10. Chapter 12: Contemporary Gender Inequality
11. Chapter 13: Race and Ethnicity

Institutions

12. Chapter 6: Institutions: The Architecture of Society
13. Chapter 17: Economic Sociology
14. Chapter 9: Sociology of the Family
15. Chapter 14: Sociology of Religion
16. Chapter 16: Biosociology of Health

Social Change

17. Chapter 7: Demography
18. Chapter 18: Sociology of the Environment
19. Chapter 19: Political Sociology and Social Movements: Human Politics throughout History

Last, I thank the following people, who have made valuable comments on parts or all of the text: Saul Brenner, Yang Cao, Shelley Colvin, Jeff Davis, François Neilson, Elizabeth Stearns, Joseph Whitmeyer, Mark Whitmeyer, and Sophie Whitmeyer. All these people have helped me produce a better book than I would have produced by myself. Of course, any errors are mine alone.



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about the author



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INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY





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WHAT DO SOCIOLOGISTS DO?

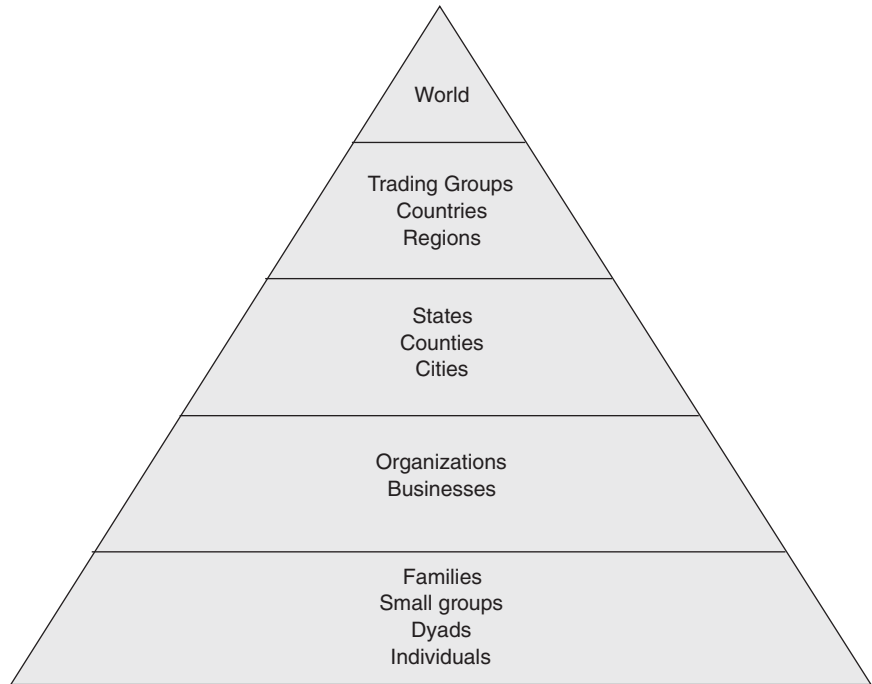


THE CHAIR OF THE SOCIOLOGY department was talking with another member of the faculty about what he said when people asked him what sociologists study: “Whatever they want!” he said. As an independent-minded 21-year-old at the time, that response helped me decide to go into the field of sociology. However, his statement is not entirely true. You do have the freedom to focus on a great many different subjects in sociology, but there are boundaries. You can’t study chemistry or physics, for example. What you do study is groups of people—people in friendship groups, families, organizations, and societies. But wait, you might say. Lots of people study people in groups. Novelists and writers do. Journalists do. Historians do. Ordinary people do in everyday life. Does this mean that everyone is a sociologist? The famous economist Joseph Schumpeter once joked that this was the case. He said that he was planning to write a “sociological novel” in his old age, and that he had even once done fieldwork for the book: He rode the subway back to work! “This, he reported, had been a very interesting experience, and what was more, when he came to writing his sociological novel he was going to do it again” (Samuelson, 1951, p. 98).

In a way, it is true that everyone is a sociologist in that everyone is interested in social groups (their own in particular). So what makes professional sociologists different? Do they really just ride the subway (or some equivalent)? The answer is this: *Sociologists study people in groups using the scientific method.* Society is made up of many groups. The smallest group is the dyad—two people. The dyad is one level of analysis for sociologists. A **level of analysis** is the primary unit the researcher is studying. Sociologists studying dyads and larger groups often collect information about individuals, so the lowest level of analysis for sociologists is the individual. At the next highest level of analysis after dyads, we have groups of more than two people, which include friendship groups and families. Then we

Level of analysis The primary unit the researcher is studying (e.g., individual, dyad, family, state, and country).

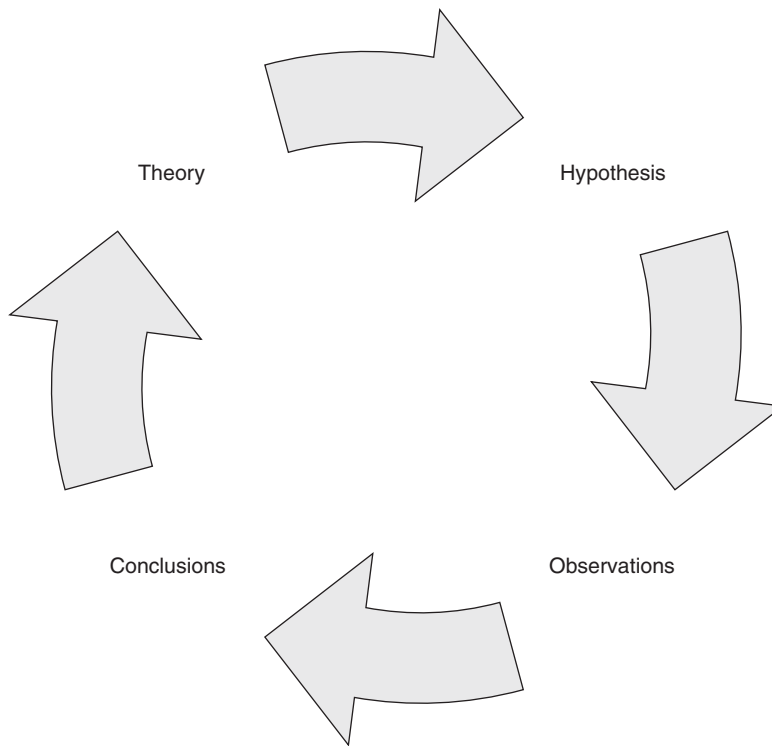
FIGURE 1.1 Levels of analysis in sociological research.



have groups of people in businesses and organizations, geographically based groups such as counties and states, and, finally, at the highest level of analysis we have countries and then the entire world. You can imagine this as a pyramid of groups with the smallest at the bottom and the whole world at the top (Figure 1.1). This is the subject matter of sociology. Sociologists study all these groups, and they do so using the scientific method.

THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD AND SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

So what is the scientific method? You probably have learned about the scientific method in other science courses. The scientific method consists of following the steps in the wheel of science (Figure 1.2). The wheel shows the steps of developing a theory about a particular phenomenon, drawing a hypothesis from the theory, testing it (observation), and then drawing conclusions relevant for your theory. You can actually start at any point on the wheel, but the important point is that no matter where you start, you complete one full circle of the wheel. You could begin with an observation. For instance, you could observe that people in one country seemed happier than people in another country. Then you could develop a theory about why that might be so, draw a

FIGURE 1.2 Wheel of science.

hypothesis from it, and test it. Based on the results of the test, you would draw conclusions about the theory. Is it supported? Is it falsified? Or you could begin with a theory of why people tend to be happy, draw a hypothesis from it, test it, and then draw conclusions. For example, one early sociological theorist, Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), wanted to explain why suicide rates varied from country to country. He theorized that more individualistic (egoistic) societies would have more suicide than less individualistic societies. He thought that people in more individualistic societies would be less socially integrated (have fewer connections to other people) than people in less individualistic societies and, therefore, they would be less happy and more likely to kill themselves. From this he hypothesized that because Protestantism promoted individualism more than did Catholicism, then predominantly Protestant countries would be less socially integrated and therefore have higher suicide rates than predominantly Catholic countries. He then tested this hypothesis by collecting information about suicide rates in Protestant and Catholic countries. He found that, indeed, Protestant countries did have higher suicide rates than Catholic countries, and then he generalized these results as support for his theory of suicide.

The Role of Theory

Theory is at the top of the wheel of science because theory is central to all science, including social science. Unlike scholars in disciplines such as history and journalism, sociologists seek to explain the social world by developing general explanations, or theories, of particular social phenomena. Whereas a historian might seek to describe a revolution, a sociologist not only wants to describe a revolution (or revolutions), but also wants to explain why, when, and how revolutions occur.

Since theory is so important, we had better define it more explicitly.

Theories Explanations of particular social phenomena. They are made up of a series of propositions.

Proposition A proposition gives the relationship between two factors or characteristics that vary from case to case of whatever is being studied.

Theories are explanations of particular social phenomena. They are made up of a series of propositions. A **proposition** gives the relationship between two factors or characteristics that vary from case to case of whatever we are studying. Propositions can be general or specific. The specific propositions are derived from the more general propositions, and they must be testable.

Durkheim's theory, as a set of propositions, looks like this:

1. In any country, the suicide rate varies with the degree of individualism (egoism). As individualism increases, so does the suicide rate.
2. The degree of individualism varies with the incidence of Protestantism. That is, as the incidence of Protestantism increases, the degree of individualism increases.
3. Given propositions 1 and 2, the suicide rate in a country varies with the incidence of Protestantism. The higher the incidence of Protestantism, the higher the suicide rate.

The final, testable specific proposition or hypothesis (3) is deduced from the more general propositions (1 and 2). That is, if propositions 1 and 2 are true, then proposition 3 must be true. In all cases, the most specific proposition becomes the hypothesis. This hypothesis can be tested by collecting the appropriate data—in this case, data on Protestantism and suicide for a number of regions or countries.

Durkheim tested his theory by collecting data on suicide rates in Protestant and Catholic regions (Durkheim, 1897/1997). He found evidence to support his hypothesis that Protestant regions had higher suicide rates than Catholic regions. However, it turns out that Durkheim conveniently overlooked some regions in which the Catholic suicide rate was higher than the Protestant suicide rate. Last, there was the glaring exception of England—a Protestant nation that had a low suicide rate. Durkheim tried

to explain away England by pointing to the fact that the Anglican church was something like the Catholic church. Unfortunately, many English people were not Anglicans at all but, rather, belonged to other (non-Anglican) Protestant denominations. So in hindsight, we can see that Durkheim's theory of suicide was not entirely correct. This in turn has led to revisions of the original theory. Other studies, for example, show that it is not so much the type of religion but religious commitment that helps prevent suicide, and that, in general, the modernization and development of a country promotes suicide (Stack, 1983). Note that it took nearly 100 years to fully revise Durkheim's findings—a testimony to how slow the production of scientific knowledge can be.

Theories and Beliefs

The most important thing about theory is that it can generate a testable hypothesis that can be supported or falsified with data. If a statement cannot generate a testable hypothesis and therefore cannot be tested, it is not a theory; it is a belief. For example, the statement “there is a god” is not a theory; it is a belief. So is the statement “there is no god.” No data can prove that god does or does not exist, so the statements “there is a god” and “there is no god” are beliefs, not theories. If you cannot falsify a theory, it is not a true theory.

Sociological Theories at Different Levels of Analysis

Because of the wide variety of social groups, sociological theories come at all levels of analysis corresponding to the layers of the pyramid in Figure 1.1. Some theories are about individuals in small groups, and we call them *social psychological* theories. There are other theories about families, organizations, and countries. Some sociologists formalize their theories into mathematical models. These theories differ, and there is disagreement on their merits by many sociologists. However, all these theories, if they are any good at all, have the following characteristics:

1. They all generate testable hypotheses.
2. Theories at different levels of analysis are compatible with each other. That is, propositions of a theory at one level of analysis (e.g., society) do not contradict propositions of a theory at a lower level of analysis (e.g., the small group).

Methods

Sociologists must collect data to test their hypotheses. This is the observation part of the wheel of science. We observe the social world to see if our predictions are supported or not supported. Observation can take place in many ways. The gold standard for testing hypotheses is the *experimental method*. With experiments, you randomly assign cases to the experimental and control groups. The experimental group undergoes the experimental manipulation, whereas the control group does not. The experimental manipulation is a change in the factor you believe to be the important causal factor. In Durkheim's theory of suicide, this factor was the country's religion. The two groups are compared, and any difference in the group outcomes is attributed to experimental manipulation. For ethical reasons, there is a limit to how much you can experimentally manipulate individuals. If you are studying large groups of people, then it is impossible to do an experiment. For example, with Durkheim's theory of suicide, it would have been impossible to randomly assign countries to experimental and control groups and then manipulate the predominant religious affiliation of each country. For this reason, experimental methods are generally confined to social psychology or microsociological research. (**Microsociological research** is research that has individuals and small groups as the units of analysis.) All experimental research using human subjects must be approved by a review board of the university or institution whose charge it is to thoroughly vet research designs to ensure that participants will not be harmed in any way by their participation in the research.

Microsociological research Research that has individuals and small groups as the units of analysis.

For sociologists studying larger groups, other methods they can use include *field research*, or ethnographic research, in which a researcher visits the group under study and physically observes what goes on in the group. Field research was particularly popular in the early years of sociology, as the preceding joke from Schumpeter suggests. It continues to be the primary methodology used in the discipline of anthropology. In contemporary sociology, sociologists often study large societies that are too big to observe directly. To study such mass societies, other methods besides field research must be used. These methods include *survey research*, in which a researcher surveys a group to find answers to a variety of questions and then analyzes the results with statistical methods. Opinion polls and customer satisfaction surveys are types of survey research. *Analysis of existing data* from government records (or other existing records) is another way sociologists can