SOCIOLOGY · STUDY GUIDE

Exam 2 Study Guide

This guide covers chapters 3 and 4. First you will pull culture into view: what it is made of, the rules that hold it together, why cultures differ and how they change. Then you will zoom from whole societies down to the moment two people meet and agree on what is going on. Read the "what to know" paragraphs, copy the tables by hand, and try each worked case with the steps covered before you read them. Each chapter ends with ten self-test items. The cram sheet at the end holds every term and name.

WHAT THIS GUIDE COVERS

- Chapter 3 · culture, material and nonmaterial culture, values and norms, ideal and real culture, folkways, mores, taboos and laws, symbols and the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, subcultures and countercultures, ethnocentrism and cultural relativism, the three paradigms on culture, innovation, diffusion and cultural lag.
- Chapter 4 · society and solidarity, Lenski's subsistence ladder, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, the social construction of reality, the Thomas theorem, self-fulfilling prophecy, status and role, role strain and role conflict, Goffman's dramaturgy, and social institutions read three ways.

CHAPTER 3

Culture

Read it in full: **Chapter 3 in the textbook**. Practice it in the lab: **Folkways, Mores & Taboos** and **How Culture Changes**.

What to know

To a sociologist, **culture** is a group's whole way of life: the beliefs, values, behaviors, language and material objects people share and pass on. By this definition everyone has culture, and no way of life is more "cultured" than another. Culture has two key features. It is **shared**, living in the group rather than in one person, and it is **learned**, not inherited in the genes. A baby adopted across the world grows up with the language and values of wherever it is raised.

Material culture is the physical stuff a society makes and uses: phones, chopsticks, rings, money. **Nonmaterial culture** is what you cannot touch: ideas, beliefs, values, norms, gestures and language. The two are welded together. A wedding ring is a band of metal until a shared belief about marriage gives it meaning. Material culture usually changes fast; nonmaterial culture usually lags behind.

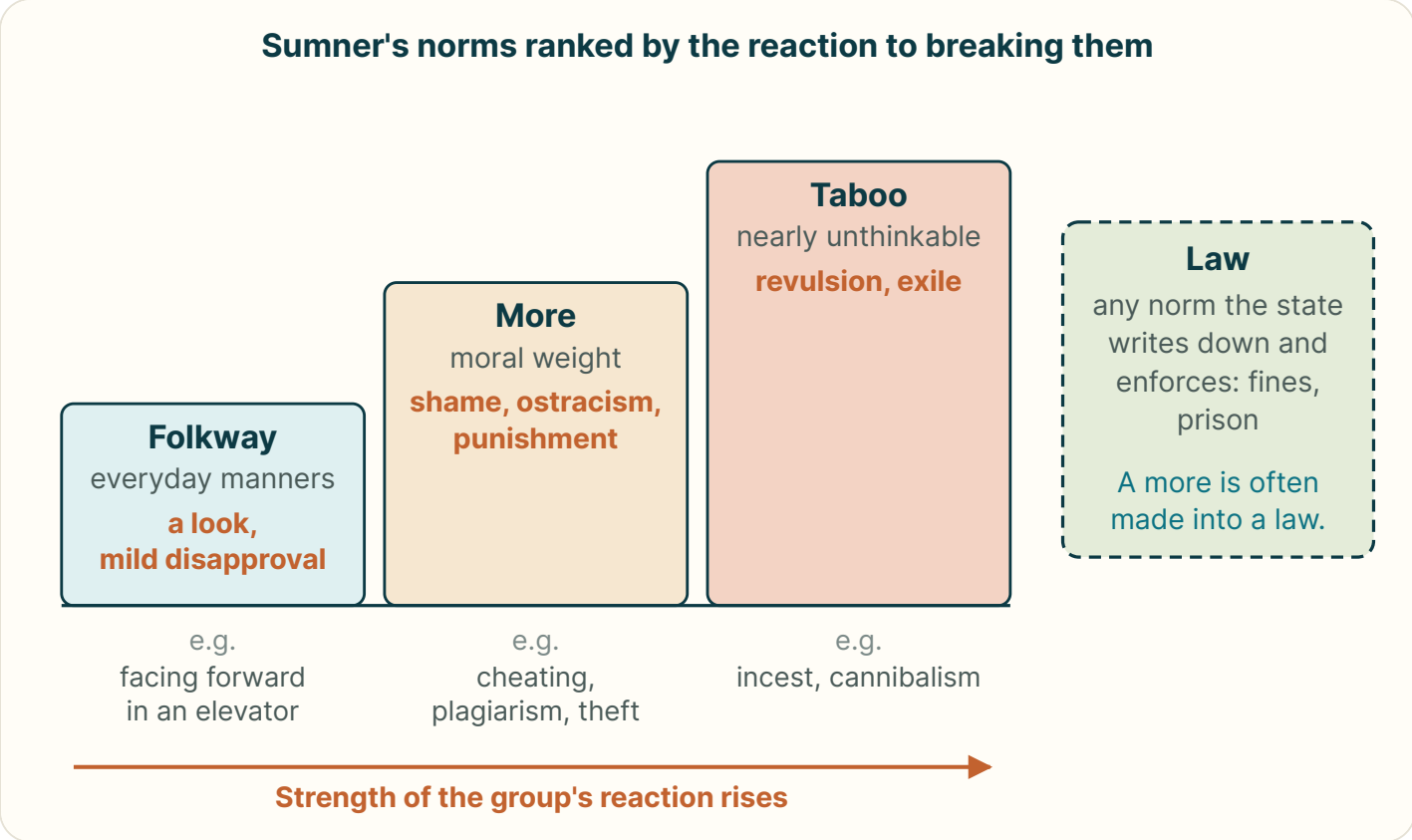
Values are broad standards of what is good, such as freedom, family or equality. Robin Williams listed core U.S. values such as achievement, individualism and progress. **Ideal culture** is what a group says it believes; **real culture** is what members actually do. **Norms** are the concrete rules that put values into action, enforced by **sanctions** (rewards and punishments). In 1906 William Graham Sumner ranked norms by the reaction to breaking them: **folkways** (mild, everyday manners), **mores** (moral weight; cheating, theft), and **taboos** (nearly unthinkable; incest, cannibalism). A norm the state writes down and enforces is a **law**.

A **symbol** is anything that carries a meaning a culture assigns to it, which is why one gesture can be praise in one place and an insult in another. **Language** is the master symbol system that stores and passes on a culture. The **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** (linguistic relativity) says language partly shapes thought. The strong version, that language traps thought, is now seen as overstated; the softer version, that language influences habitual perception, has real support.

A **subculture** shares the wider culture but keeps its own slang, dress and values (gamers, surfers, physicians); it varies from the mainstream without rebelling. A **counterculture** actively rejects mainstream values (the 1960s hippie movement). **Ethnocentrism**, another Sumner term, is judging another culture by your own standards and assuming yours is superior. **Cultural relativism** is understanding a culture on its own terms before judging it; it is a research stance, not "anything goes." **Culture shock** is the disorientation when familiar rules stop applying. A **cultural universal** is a trait, such as funerals or cooking, found in every known culture.

The paradigms read culture differently. **Functionalism** sees shared values as social glue (Durkheim's collective conscience) with manifest and latent functions. **Conflict theory** asks whose interests culture serves; Marx said the ruling ideas of an era are the ideas of the ruling class. **Symbolic interactionism** sees culture as meaning built and rebuilt in everyday interaction. Culture changes through **innovation**, which is either **discovery** (grasping what already existed,

such as germs causing disease) or **invention** (combining existing elements into something new, such as the printing press); through **diffusion**, the spread of traits between groups (Ralph Linton estimated most of any culture is borrowed); and through **cultural lag**, William Ogburn's name for the gap when nonmaterial culture trails material culture.



Norms ranked by reaction. Sumner sorted norms by how hard the group reacts when one is broken, not by how much any one person cares. A law is a norm the state has written down and backs with official sanctions.

LOCK THESE IN

- Culture is learned and shared; everyone has it.
- Material culture is objects; nonmaterial culture is ideas, values, norms and language.
- Values are the broad "why"; norms are the concrete rules, enforced by sanctions.
- Sumner: folkways (mild), mores (moral), taboos (unthinkable); laws are norms written and enforced by the state.
- Sapir-Whorf: language shapes perception; the strong "trap" version is overstated.
- Subculture varies from the mainstream; counterculture opposes it.
- Ethnocentrism judges by your own yardstick; cultural relativism understands first.
- Change: discovery and invention (innovation), diffusion, and Ogburn's cultural lag.

Key terms and comparisons: norms by strength

Norm	What it governs	Reaction to a violation	Example
Folkway	Everyday custom and manners	Mild: a look, light disapproval	Facing forward in an elevator
More	Morally significant behavior	Strong: shame, ostracism, punishment	Cheating, plagiarism, theft
Taboo	The nearly unthinkable	Revulsion, exile	Incest, cannibalism
Law	A norm formalized by the state	Official: fines, prison	Traffic codes, criminal statutes

Diversity and change

Concept	Core idea	Example
Subculture	Distinct group within the mainstream	Gamers, surfers, a profession
Counterculture	Values that reject the mainstream	1960s hippies, radical communes
Ethnocentrism	Judging others by your own standard	"Their customs are backward"
Cultural relativism	Understanding on its own terms first	Studying a ritual in context
Discovery	Grasping something that already existed	Germs cause disease
Invention	Combining elements into something new	The wheel, the printing press
Diffusion	Traits spreading between groups	Coffee, Arabic numerals
Cultural lag (Ogburn)	Nonmaterial culture trails material	Law catching up with gene editing

Worked cases

WORKED CASE 1 · SORT THE NORMS

Classify four fictional violations at a college: Jordan talks loudly in the library; Anika copies a classmate's paper; a student eats a classmate's pet for a prank video; Leo parks in a fire lane.

STEP 1 · LOUD TALKING

A glare or a "shh" is the whole sanction. This is a **folkway**.

STEP 2 · COPYING A PAPER

Plagiarism carries moral weight and brings shame and formal punishment. This is a **more**.

STEP 3 · EATING A PET

The reaction is revulsion; most people cannot imagine it. It is treated as a **taboo**.

STEP 4 · FIRE LANE PARKING

The state has written the rule down and enforces it with a fine. This is a **law**.

THE KEY

Sort by the strength and kind of reaction, not by how much you personally care about the rule.

WORKED CASE 2 · SUBCULTURE OR COUNTERCULTURE?

Two fictional groups: a competitive cycling club with its own slang and gear, and a commune that rejects money, private property and public schooling.

STEP 1 · ASK ABOUT THE MAINSTREAM

The cyclists still work, shop and vote like everyone else; their differences are added on top.

STEP 2 · NAME THE FIRST

That makes the cycling club a **subculture**: different, not opposed.

STEP 3 · ASK AGAIN

The commune rejects core mainstream values on purpose.

STEP 4 · NAME THE SECOND

That makes it a **counterculture**. Its ideas may later move toward the mainstream, as environmentalism once did.

WORKED CASE 3 · WHICH ENGINE OF CHANGE?

A fictional city: delivery drones spread quickly from a nearby country, yet the city has no rules yet for where drones may fly over homes.

STEP 1 · WHERE DID THE DRONES COME FROM?

They spread in from another society: **diffusion**.

STEP 2 · WERE THEY AN INNOVATION SOMEWHERE?

Yes. Combining existing parts into a new device is **invention**.

STEP 3 · WHAT ABOUT THE MISSING RULES?

The technology (material culture) has outrun the rules and norms (nonmaterial culture). That gap is **cultural lag**.

CHECK

The gadget arrives before the rulebook, as with the car before speed limits and seat belts.

TRAPS PEOPLE FALL INTO

- **Saying some people "have no culture."** Everyone has culture; it is a whole way of life, not opera.
- **Calling culture inherited.** It is learned. Genes do not carry a language or values.
- **Mixing up values and norms.** Values are broad standards of good; norms are the specific rules.
- **Ranking by personal feeling.** Folkways, mores and taboos are ranked by the strength of the group's reaction.
- **Calling every subculture a counterculture.** A subculture coexists with the mainstream; only a counterculture opposes it.
- **Reading relativism as approval of everything.** It is a research stance: understand before judging.
- **Swapping discovery and invention.** Discovery grasps what already existed; invention combines elements into something new.
- **Reversing cultural lag.** Nonmaterial culture lags; material culture runs ahead.

Chapter 3 self-test · ten items

1. A friend says only people who go to museums "have culture." A sociologist would reply that:

A. Culture is a fixed trait that each family passes by birth
B. Culture means the fine arts a society chooses to fund
C. Culture is a whole learned way of life that everyone has
D. Culture belongs mainly to people with formal schooling

C. Culture is a whole learned way of life that everyone has Sociologists define culture as a group's whole shared, learned way of life.

2. Which item is nonmaterial culture?

A. A gold wedding band sold in a jewelry shop
B. A pair of chopsticks set beside a bowl
C. A smartphone with a cracked glass screen
D. The belief that a ring stands for commitment

D. The belief that a ring stands for commitment Beliefs, values and norms are nonmaterial. Objects are material culture.

3. "Honesty" is to "do not cheat on the exam" as:

A. A value is to a norm
B. A norm is to a value
C. A symbol is to a law
D. A folkway is to a taboo

A. A value is to a norm A value is the broad standard; the norm is the concrete rule that puts it into action.

4. Which violation would most likely bring revulsion and exile rather than a fine?

A. Breaking a parking law
B. Breaking a strong taboo
C. Breaking a minor folkway
D. Breaking a dress code

B. Breaking a strong taboo Taboos are the strongest norms, so deep that the thought of breaking them provokes disgust.

5. The idea that the language you speak partly shapes how you perceive the world is the:

A. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
B. Cultural lag thesis
C. Looking-glass self
D. Self-fulfilling prophecy

A. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis Also called linguistic relativity. Its softer version has real support.

6. A group of skateboarders has its own slang, heroes and dress but works and votes like everyone else. It is a:

A. Total culture
B. Subculture
C. Counterculture
D. Taboo group

B. Subculture It varies from the mainstream without opposing it.

7. A traveler calls a local dish "disgusting" and says her own food is simply normal. This shows:

A. Cultural relativism
B. Culture lag
C. Ethnocentrism
D. Cultural diffusion

C. Ethnocentrism Judging another culture by your own standards and assuming yours is superior is ethnocentrism.

8. Who would most likely say the ruling ideas of an era serve the ruling class?

A. A positivist following Comte
B. An interactionist following Mead
C. A functionalist following Durkheim
D. A conflict theorist following Marx

D. A conflict theorist following Marx Conflict theory asks whose interests a culture serves.

9. Learning that tiny unseen germs are what cause illness is a case of:

A. Diffusion
B. Cultural lag
C. Invention
D. Discovery

D. Discovery Discovery grasps something that already existed. Invention combines existing elements into something new.

10. Gene editing tools spread faster than laws and ethics can catch up. Ogburn would call this:

A. Cultural relativism
B. Cultural lag
C. Ethnocentrism
D. Counterculture

B. Cultural lag Nonmaterial culture (law, ethics) trails material culture (technology).

CHAPTER 4

Society and Social Interaction

Read it in full: **Chapter 4 in the textbook**. Practice it in the lab: **Seven Types of Society** and **Front Stage, Back Stage**.

What to know

A **society** is a group of people who share a territory and a culture and interact over time. Durkheim explained how it holds together with **social solidarity**. Small traditional societies have **mechanical solidarity**, a likeness of belief and work. Large specialized societies have **organic solidarity**, in which people are bound because they differ and depend on each other's labor. Ferdinand Tönnies named a similar shift: **Gemeinschaft**, the close, personal community of the village, gives way to **Gesellschaft**, the loose, impersonal, contract based society of the city.

Gerhard Lenski argued that **subsistence technology**, how a society gets food and energy, best predicts its size, division of labor, surplus and inequality. **Hunter-gatherer** societies are small, nomadic, kin based and strikingly equal, with no stored surplus. **Pastoral** societies herd animals and stay nomadic or semi-nomadic; **horticultural** societies tend garden plots and settle in villages. Both make a surplus, and durable inequality appears. **Agricultural** societies (plow, irrigation, animal power) bring cities, writing, armies and steep feudal hierarchy. **Industrial**

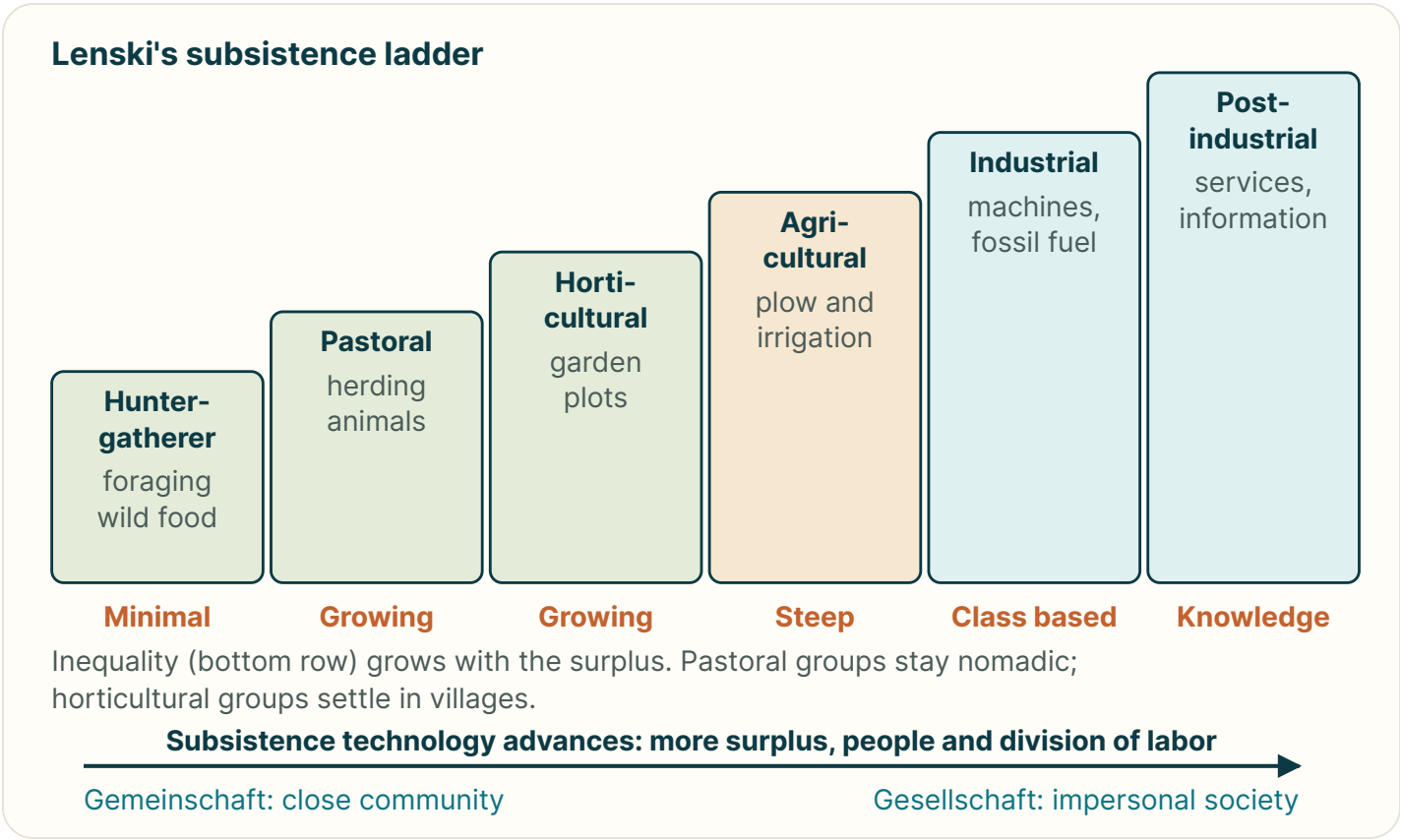
societies run machines on fossil fuel and bring factories, wage labor, bureaucracy and class. **Postindustrial** societies (Daniel Bell) center on services and information.

Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) shows how much of "reality" is agreed upon: an act repeated becomes a habit (**habitualization**), shared habits harden into rules and roles (**institutionalization**), and newcomers learn it as "the way things are." Money has value only because millions of people act as though it does. The **Thomas theorem** (W. I. and D. S. Thomas, 1928): "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." Merton's **self-fulfilling prophecy** is a false belief that causes its own confirmation, like a rumor that empties a healthy bank.

A **status** is any recognized social position (daughter, cashier, patient). Your whole bundle is your **status set**; one that colors all the rest is a **master status**. An **ascribed status** is assigned at birth or involuntarily (age, family of birth); an **achieved status** is earned or chosen (welder, graduate, spouse, felon). A **role** is the behavior expected of a status, and Merton called the roles attached to one status a **role set**. **Role strain** is tension within one role (a professor who must be a warm mentor and a hard grader). **Role conflict** is tension between roles of two statuses (a parent whose work shift and child's recital collide). **Role exit** (Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh) is leaving a role central to identity.

Erving Goffman's **dramaturgy**, from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), treats life as theater. We perform for audiences and practice **impression management**. The **front stage** is where the audience watches and we give the polished performance; the **back stage** is where we drop the act. A **personal front** (appearance and manner) and a **setting** (props such as a white coat) make the show convincing. **Teams** stage one impression together, and **face-work** repairs a slip. Goffman also showed how a stigmatized master status can eclipse every other status.

A **social institution** is an enduring pattern of roles, norms and organizations that meets a basic need: **family**, **education**, **religion**, the **economy** and **government**, with medicine, law, the military and the mass media alongside them. Institutions outlast the people who pass through them. Functionalists see each as an organ serving the whole, with manifest and latent functions. Conflict theorists see arenas where powerful groups guard advantage. Interactionists ask what "a real family" or "a good student" means to the people living it.



The subsistence ladder. Each step is a way of getting food and energy. As the technology advances, surplus grows, and with it population, the division of labor and the degree of inequality.

LOCK THESE IN

- Society: people sharing a territory and culture who interact over time.
- Mechanical solidarity is likeness; organic solidarity is interdependence. Gemeinschaft is community; Gesellschaft is impersonal society.
- Lenski: subsistence technology drives size, surplus, division of labor and inequality.
- Order: hunter-gatherer, pastoral and horticultural, agricultural, industrial, postindustrial.
- Thomas theorem: situations defined as real are real in their consequences.
- Self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton): a false belief that makes itself come true.
- Ascribed is assigned; achieved is earned. Role strain is within one role; role conflict is between statuses.
- Goffman: front stage, back stage, impression management, face-work.

Key terms and comparisons: the subsistence ladder

Society	Subsistence	Scale	Organization	Inequality
Hunter-gatherer	Foraging wild plants and game	Small mobile bands	Kinship; nomadic; sharing	Minimal
Pastoral	Herding animals	Larger, semi-nomadic	Trade of surplus; chiefs emerge	Growing
Horticultural	Small plot cultivation	Settled villages	Property; hereditary status	Growing
Agricultural	Plow, irrigation, animal labor	Cities and states	Feudal hierarchy	Steep
Industrial	Machines and fossil fuel	Mass urban society	Factories, wage labor, bureaucracy	Class based
Postindustrial	Services, knowledge, data	Global, networked	Information and services	Knowledge based

Status, role and stage

Term	Meaning	Example
Ascribed status	Assigned, not chosen	Teenager; someone's younger brother
Achieved status	Earned or chosen	Registered welder; marathon finisher
Master status	One status that colors all the rest	A celebrity's fame; a criminal record
Role strain	Tension within one role	Nurse who comforts yet enforces painful care
Role conflict	Tension between two statuses	Game and final exam on the same day
Front stage	Audience present; polished act	Server smiling at the table
Back stage	No audience; act dropped	Server venting in the kitchen

Worked cases

WORKED CASE 1 · PLACE THE SOCIETY

Read three fictional sketches and name each society type.

STEP 1 · A BAND OF 30 PEOPLE MOVING WITH THE SEASONS, SHARING ALL FOOD

No stored surplus, kinship ties and near equality: a **hunter-gatherer** society.

STEP 2 · VILLAGERS TENDING GARDEN PLOTS, WITH A HEREDITARY HEADMAN

Small plot cultivation in a settled village, with inequality appearing: **horticultural**.

STEP 3 · MOST ADULTS WORK IN CALL CENTERS, SOFTWARE AND HEALTH CARE

Services and information dominate: **postindustrial**.

APPLY LENSKI

As subsistence technology advances, surplus grows, and with it population, division of labor and, usually, inequality.

WORKED CASE 2 · THE THOMAS THEOREM AT WORK

A fictional rumor says a healthy credit union in town is about to fail.

STEP 1 · THE DEFINITION

Members define the situation as "this credit union is failing," though it is solvent.

STEP 2 · THE ACTION

They rush to withdraw their savings.

STEP 3 · THE CONSEQUENCE

The withdrawals drain the reserves and the credit union really does fail.

STEP 4 · NAME IT

The belief was false when spoken and true once acted on: a **self-fulfilling prophecy** (Merton), driven by the Thomas theorem.

WORKED CASE 3 · STRAIN OR CONFLICT?

Mei, a fictional nursing student, also coaches her sister's soccer team. Label two problems.

STEP 1 · PROBLEM ONE

Her clinical rotation and the team's playoff game fall at the same hour. Two different statuses demand her at once: **role conflict**.

STEP 2 · PROBLEM TWO

As coach she must encourage every child yet bench weak players to win. The tension sits inside one role: **role strain**.

STEP 3 · ASCRIBED OR ACHIEVED?

"Sister" is ascribed; "nursing student" and "coach" are achieved.

TIP

Ask how many statuses are involved. One status: strain. Two or more: conflict.

TRAPS PEOPLE FALL INTO

- **Swapping mechanical and organic solidarity.** Mechanical is likeness in small societies; organic is interdependence in complex ones.
- **Thinking pastoral societies settle in villages.** Horticultural societies settle; pastoral societies follow their herds.
- **Reading the Thomas theorem as "believing makes it true."** It says acting on a definition produces real consequences.
- **Calling every prophecy self-fulfilling.** It must start false and become true because people act on it.
- **Swapping role strain and role conflict.** Strain is inside one role; conflict is between roles of different statuses.
- **Treating status as prestige.** In sociology a status is any social position.
- **Calling an institution a building.** An institution is an enduring pattern of roles and norms, like "education," not one school.
- **Forgetting the back stage is still social.** It is where people rehearse and relax, out of the audience's view.

Chapter 4 self-test · ten items

1. According to Lenski, what best predicts a society's size, surplus and inequality?

A. Its dominant religious faith
B. Its form of central government
C. Its subsistence technology
D. Its typical family structure

C. Its subsistence technology How a society gets food and energy shapes nearly everything else.

2. Why are hunter-gatherer societies usually so equal?

A. They store little surplus, so there is little to hoard
B. Their leaders divide all goods by a written rule
C. Their members are forbidden by law from owning things
D. Their land is so rich that no one ever goes without

A. They store little surplus, so there is little to hoard With no lasting surplus, there is little to accumulate or inherit.

3. A modern city whose people depend on each other's specialized jobs shows:

A. Gemeinschaft
B. Anomie
C. Mechanical solidarity
D. Organic solidarity

D. Organic solidarity Organic solidarity binds people through interdependence among different roles.

4. Which statement best captures the Thomas theorem?

A. A society's technology decides how real its customs are
B. A situation acted on as real has real consequences
C. A belief becomes factually true if enough people hold it
D. A person's self comes from how others are thought to judge it

B. A situation acted on as real has real consequences It is about consequences of acting on a definition, not about making beliefs true.

5. Which of these positions is achieved rather than assigned?

A. Being nineteen years old
B. Licensed electrician
C. Citizen by birth
D. Oldest of three sisters

B. Licensed electrician An achieved status is earned through effort or choice.

6. A professor must be both a supportive mentor and a strict grader for the same students. This is:

A. Master status
B. Role conflict
C. Role strain
D. Role exit

C. Role strain The tension sits inside one role.

7. A student-athlete has a championship game and a final exam at the same hour. This is:

A. Role strain
B. Status set
C. Role set
D. Role conflict

D. Role conflict Two different statuses, athlete and student, demand her at once.

8. In Goffman's terms, a server venting in the kitchen is on the:

A. Back stage
B. Main stage
C. Front stage
D. Team stage

A. Back stage The back stage is out of the audience's view, where the act is dropped.

9. Which is a latent function of schooling?

A. Teaching students to read and to write well
B. Granting diplomas to those who finish courses
C. Passing on skills that jobs will later require
D. Giving young people a place to meet future partners

D. Giving young people a place to meet future partners A latent function is unintended but real. Teaching is manifest.

10. Gemeinschaft, in Tönnies's terms, describes:

A. Close, personal, face to face community life
B. A state that rules through written statutes
C. A global network built on digital information
D. Loose, impersonal, contract based city life

A. Close, personal, face to face community life Gemeinschaft is the village community; Gesellschaft is the impersonal society of the city.

Cram sheet

Everything from chapters 3 and 4 in one place. Cover the right column and see if you can rebuild each row.

Culture

Term	Meaning	Remember
Culture	Learned, shared way of life	Everyone has it
Material and nonmaterial	Objects versus ideas	Material changes faster
Values; norms	Broad good; concrete rules	Sanctions enforce norms
Ideal and real culture	What we say; what we do	The gap is a topic of study
Folkways, mores, taboos	Mild, moral, unthinkable	Sumner, 1906; laws are formalized norms
Sapir-Whorf	Language shapes thought	Strong version overstated
Subculture; counterculture	Varies from; opposes	Hippies were a counterculture
Ethnocentrism; relativism	Judge by own yardstick; understand first	Both terms tied to Sumner and anthropology
Innovation	Discovery and invention	Germs; printing press
Diffusion; cultural lag	Borrowing; nonmaterial trails material	Linton; Ogburn

Society and interaction

Term	Meaning	Remember
Lenski	Subsistence technology drives society	Surplus brings inequality
Durkheim	Mechanical (likeness); organic (interdependence)	Small versus complex societies
Tönnies	Gemeinschaft; Gesellschaft	Village community; city society
Bell	Postindustrial society	Services and information
Berger and Luckmann (1966)	Social construction of reality	Habitualization, institutionalization
Thomas theorem (1928)	Defined as real, real in consequences	Definition of the situation
Merton	Self-fulfilling prophecy; role set	Bank run
Goffman (1959)	Dramaturgy, impression management	Front and back stage; stigma
Institutions	Family, education, religion, economy, government	Plus medicine, law, military, media

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