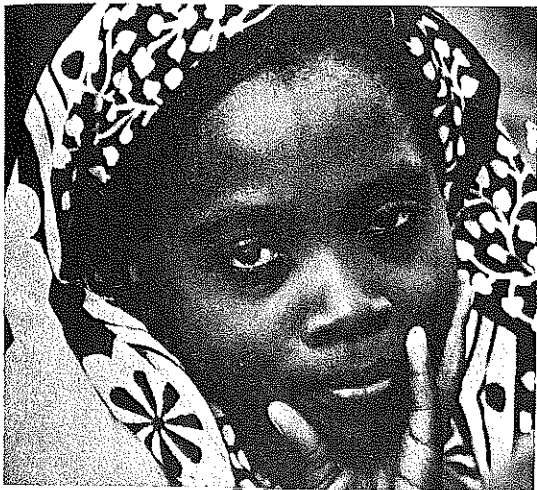
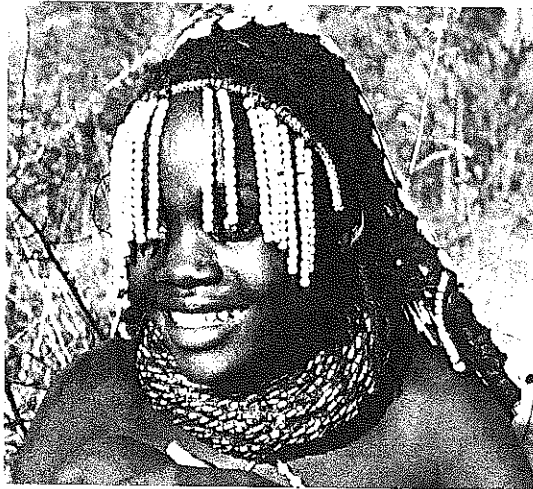


Selection **3**

SOCIOLOGY



Ingeborg Lippman/Magnum



Inell Jones

Skill Development

Stage 1: Preview

Before reading the next selection, preview to (1) establish a purpose, (2) size up how the material is organized, and (3) plan an attack. Read any introductory material, the first paragraph, the subheadings, the boldface and italicized print, the first sentence of some paragraphs, and the last paragraph. Think about the selection as a whole and then complete the following sentences. Use the questions that are provided to activate your schema.

Unity in diversity is a paradox. What does it seem to mean?

After reading this selection, I will need to know

Activate Schema

- Is it wrong for primitive tribal people to wear no clothes?*
- Does social status exist in primitive cultures?*
- Could you eat insects if doing so meant survival?*

Learning Strategy

How do the examples explain the different principles and the overall idea of cultural unity?

Word Knowledge

Review the ten vocabulary items that follow the selection. Seek an understanding of unfamiliar words.

Stage 2: Integrate Knowledge While Reading

Because each reader interacts with material in an individual manner, it would be artificial to require certain thinking strategies to be used in certain places. As you read the following selection, make a note in the margin of at least one instance when you used the following strategies.

1. Predict
2. Picture
3. Relate
4. Monitor
5. Fix up

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Donald Light and Suzanne Keller, from *Sociology*

What is more basic, more "natural" than love between a man and woman? Eskimo men offer their wives to guests and friends as a gesture of hospitality; both husband and wife feel extremely offended if the guest declines (Ruesch, 1951, pp. 87-88). The Banaro of New Guinea believe it would be disastrous for a woman to conceive her first child by her husband and not by one of her father's close friends, as is their custom.

The real father is a close friend of the bride's father. . . . Nevertheless the first born child inherits the name and possessions of the husband. An American would deem such a custom immoral, but the Banaro tribesmen would be equally shocked to discover that the first born child of an American couple is the offspring of the husband. (Haring, 1949, p. 33)

The Yanomamö of Northern Brazil, whom anthropologist Napoleon A. Chagnon (1968) named "the fierce people," encourage what we would consider extreme disrespect. Small boys are applauded for striking their mothers and fathers in the face. Yanomamö parents would laugh at our

From *Sociology*, 4th edition by Donald Light and Suzanne Keller. Copyright © 1985 by Alfred Knopf. Reprinted by permission of Alfred Knopf.

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efforts to curb aggression in children, much as they laughed at Chagnon's naïveté when he first came to live with them.

The variations among cultures are startling, yet all peoples have customs and beliefs about marriage, the bearing and raising of children, sex, and
 20 hospitality—to name just a few of the universals anthropologists have discovered in their cross-cultural explorations. But the *details* of cultures do indeed vary: in this country, not so many years ago, when a girl was serious about a boy and he about her, she wore his fraternity pin over her heart; in the Fiji Islands, girls put hibiscus flowers behind their ears when they are in
 25 love. The specific gestures are different but the impulse to symbolize feelings, to dress courtship in ceremonies, is the same. How do we explain this unity in diversity?

Cultural Universals

Cultural universals are all of the behavior patterns and institutions that have been found in all known cultures. Anthropologist George Peter Murdock
 30 identified over sixty cultural universals, including a system of social status, marriage, body adornments, dancing, myths, and legends, cooking, incest taboos, inheritance rules, puberty customs, and religious rituals (Murdock, 1945, p. 124).

The universals of culture may derive from the fact that all societies must
 35 perform the same essential functions if they are to survive—including organization, motivation, communication, protection, the socialization of new members, and the replacement of those who die. In meeting these prerequisites for group life, people inevitably design similar—though not identical—patterns for living. As Clyde Kluckhohn wrote, “All cultures
 40 constitute somewhat distinct answers to essentially the same questions posed by human biology and by the generalities of the human situation” (1962, p. 317).

The way in which a people articulate cultural universals depends in large part on their physical and social environment—that is, on the climate in
 45 which they live, the materials they have at hand, and the peoples with whom they establish contact. For example, the wheel has long been considered one of the humankind's greatest inventions, and anthropologists were baffled for a long time by the fact that the great civilizations of South America never discovered it. Then researchers uncovered a number of toys
 50 with wheels. Apparently the Aztecs and their neighbors did know about wheels; they simply didn't find them useful in their mountainous environment.

Adaptation, Relativity, and Ethnocentrism

Taken out of context, almost any custom will seem bizarre, perhaps cruel, or just plain ridiculous. To understand why the Yanomamö encourage
 55 aggressive behavior in their sons, for example, you have to try to see things through their eyes. The Yanomamö live in a state of chronic

warfare; they spend much of their time planning for and defending against raids with neighboring tribes. If Yanomamö parents did *not* encourage aggression in a boy, he would be ill equipped for life in their society.

60 Socializing boys to be aggressive is *adaptive* for the Yanomamö because it enhances their capacity for survival. "In general, culture is . . . adaptive because it often provides people with a means of adjusting to the physiological needs of their own bodies, to their physical-geographical environment and to their social environments as well" (Ember and Ember, 65 1973, p. 30).

In many tropical societies, there are strong taboos against a mother having sexual intercourse with a man until her child is at least two years old. As a Hausa woman explains,

70 A mother should not go to her husband while she has a child such is sucking . . . if she only sleeps with her husband and does not become pregnant, it will not hurt her child, it will not spoil her milk. But if another child enters in, her milk will make the first one ill. (Smith, in Whiting, 1969, p. 518)

Undoubtedly, people would smirk at a woman who nursed a two-year-old child in our society and abstained from having sex with her husband. Why 75 do Hausa women behave in a way that seems so overprotective and overindulgent to us? In tropical climates protein is scarce. If a mother were to nurse more than one child at a time, or if she were to wean a child before it reached the age of two, the youngster would be prone to 120 *kwashiorkor*, an often fatal disease resulting from protein deficiency. Thus, long postpartum sex taboos are adaptive. In a tropical environment a 80 postpartum sex taboo and a long period of breast-feeding solve a serious problem (Whiting, in Goodenough, 1969, pp. 511-24).

No custom is good or bad, right or wrong in itself; each one must be examined in light of the culture as a whole and evaluated in terms of how 85 it works in the context of the entire culture. Anthropologists and sociologists call this *cultural relativity*. Although this way of thinking about culture may seem self-evident today, it is a lesson that anthropologists and the missionaries who often preceded them to remote areas learned the 130 hard way, by observing the effects their best intentions had on peoples whose way of life was quite different from their own. In an article on the 90 pitfalls of trying to "uplift" peoples whose ways seem backward and inefficient, Don Adams quotes an old Oriental story:

95 Once upon a time there was a great flood, and involved in this flood were two creatures, a monkey and a fish. The monkey, being agile and experienced, was lucky enough to scramble up a tree and escape the raging waters. As he looked down from his safe perch, he saw the poor fish struggling against the swift current. With the very best intentions, he reached down and lifted the fish from the water. The result was inevitable. (1960, p. 22)

100 *Ethnocentrism* is the tendency to see one's own way of life, including behaviors, beliefs, values, and norms as the only right way of living. Robin

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Fox points out that "any human group is ever ready to consign another recognizably different human group to the other side of the boundary. It is not enough to possess culture to be fully human, you have to possess *our* culture" (1970, p. 31).

Values and Norms

105 The Tangu, who live in a remote part of New Guinea, play a game called *taketak*, which in many ways resembles bowling. The game is played with a top that has been fashioned from a dried fruit and with two groups of coconut stakes that are driven into the ground (more or less like bowling pins). The players divide into two teams. Members of the first team take turns throwing the top into the batch of stakes; every stake the top hits is removed. Then the second team steps to the line and tosses the top into their batch of stakes. The object of the game, surprisingly, is not to knock over as many stakes as possible. Rather, the game continues until both teams have removed the *same* number of stakes. Winning is completely irrelevant (Burrige, 1957, pp. 88-89).

In a sense games are practice for "real life"; they reflect the values of the culture in which they are played. *Values* are the criteria people use in assessing their daily lives, arranging their priorities, measuring their pleasures and pains, choosing between alternative courses of action. The Tangu value equivalence: the idea of one individual or group winning and another losing bothers them, for they believe winning generates ill-will. In fact, when Europeans brought soccer to the Tangu, they altered the rules so that the object of the game was for two teams to score the same number of goals. Sometimes their soccer games went on for days! American games, in contrast, are highly competitive; there are *always* winners and losers. Many rule books include provisions for overtime and "sudden death" to prevent ties, which leave Americans dissatisfied. World Series, Superbowls, championships in basketball and hockey, Olympic Gold Medals are front page news in this country. In the words of the late football coach Vince Lombardi, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing."

Norms, the rules that guide behavior in everyday situations, are derived from values, but norms and values can conflict, as we indicated in Chapter 3. You may recall a news item that appeared in American newspapers in December 1972, describing the discovery of survivors of a plane crash 12,000 feet in the Andes. The crash had occurred on October 13; sixteen of the passengers (a rugby team and their supporters) managed to survive for sixty-nine days in near-zero temperatures. The story made headlines because, to stay alive, the survivors had eaten parts of their dead companions. Officials, speaking for the group, stressed how valiantly the survivors had tried to save the lives of the injured people and how they had held religious services regularly. The survivors' explanations are quite interesting, for they reveal how important it is to people to justify their actions, to resolve conflicts in norms and values (here, the positive value of

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145 survival vs. the taboo against cannibalism). Some of the survivors compared their action to a heart transplant, using parts of a dead person's body to save another person's life. Others equated their act with the sacrament of communion. In the words of one religious survivor, "If we would have died, it would have been suicide, which is condemned by the Roman Catholic faith" (Read, 1974) /1708

■ Skill Development: Study-Reading

Stage 2: Review your marginal notes to see if you are using all five thinking strategies as you read. Which did you use most?

Stage 3. Stop and self-test. Recall what the selection was about. Use the recall diagram to record the main point and the significant supporting details.

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■ Comprehension Questions

After reading the selection, answer the following questions with *a*, *b*, *c*, or *d*.

1. The best statement of the main idea of this selection is
 - a. the variety of practices and customs in society show few threads of cultural unity.
 - b. the unusual variations in societies gain acceptability because of the cultural universals in all known societies.
 - c. a variety of cultural universals provides adaptive choices for specific societies.
 - d. cultural universals are found in all known societies even though the details of the cultures may vary widely.

- _____ 2. The author believes that the primary cultural universal addressed in the Eskimo custom of offering wives to guests is
- bearing and raising of children.
 - social status.
 - hospitality.
 - incest taboos.
- _____ 3. The custom of striking practiced by the Yanomamö serves the adaptive function of
- developing fierce warriors.
 - binding parent and child closer together.
 - developing physical respect for parents.
 - encouraging early independence from parental care.
- _____ 4. *Cultural universals* might be defined as
- each culture in the universe.
 - similar basic living patterns.
 - the ability for cultures to live together in harmony.
 - the differences among cultures.
- _____ 5. The author implies that universals of culture exist because of
- a social desire to be more alike.
 - the differences in cultural behavior patterns.
 - the competition among societies.
 - the needs of survival in group life.
- _____ 6. The author suggests that the wheel was not a part of the ancient Aztec civilization because the Aztecs
- did not need wheels.
 - were not intelligent enough to invent wheels.
 - were baffled by inventions.
 - did not have the materials for development.
- _____ 7. The underlying reason for the postpartum sexual taboo of the Hausa is
- sexual.
 - nutritional.
 - moral.
 - religious.
- _____ 8. The term *cultural relativity* explains why a custom can be considered
- right or wrong regardless of culture.
 - right or wrong according to the number of people practicing it.
 - right in one culture and wrong in another.
 - wrong if in conflict with cultural universals.
- _____ 9. The author relates Don Adams' oriental story to show that missionaries working in other cultures
- should be sent back home.
 - can do more harm than good.
 - purposefully harm the culture to seek selfish ends.
 - usually do not have a genuine concern for the people.

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- _____ 10. The tendency of ethnocentrism would lead an American to view the Eskimo practice of wife sharing as
- right.
 - wrong.
 - right for Eskimos but wrong for Americans.
 - a custom about which an outsider should have no opinion.

Answer the following questions with *T* (true) or *F* (false).

- _____ 11. An American's acceptance of the Banaro tribal custom of fathering the firstborn is an example of an understanding by cultural relativity.
- _____ 12. The author feels that the need to symbolize feelings in courtship is a cultural universal.
- _____ 13. The author feels that culture is not affected by climate.
- _____ 14. The author states that all societies must have a form of organization if they are to survive.
- _____ 15. The author implies that the rugby team which crashed in the Andes could have survived without eating human flesh.

■ Vocabulary

According to the way the italicized word was used in the selection, indicate *a*, *b*, *c*, or *d* for the word or phrase that gives the best definition.

- | | |
|---|--|
| _____ 1. "efforts to <i>curb</i> aggression" (16) | _____ 2. "at Chagnon's <i>naveté</i> " (17) |
| a. stabilize | a. lack of knowledge |
| b. release | b. gentle manner |
| c. promote | c. jolly nature |
| d. restrain | d. clumsiness |
| _____ 3. "body <i>adornments</i> " (31) | _____ 4. " <i>articulate</i> cultural universals" (43) |
| a. ailments | a. remember |
| b. treatments | b. design |
| c. scars | c. express clearly |
| d. decorations | d. substitute |
| _____ 5. "will seem <i>bizarre</i> " (53) | _____ 6. " <i>smirk</i> at a woman" (73) |
| a. phony | a. refuse to tolerate |
| b. unjust | b. smile conceitedly |
| c. grotesque | c. lash out |
| d. unnecessary | d. acknowledge approvingly |
| _____ 7. " <i>abstained</i> from having sex" (74) | _____ 8. "long <i>postpartum</i> sex taboos" (80) |
| a. matured | a. after childbirth |
| b. regained | b. awaited |
| c. refrained | c. subcultural |
| d. reluctantly returned | d. complicated |

SUMMARY

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- 9. “being *agile* and experienced” (94)
- a. eager
 - b. nimble
 - c. young
 - d. knowledgeable
- 10. “ready to *consign*” (101)
- a. assign
 - b. remove
 - c. reorganize
 - d. overlook

■ Written Response

Use information from the text to support the following statement:

The Amazon native who shops in bare feet and head feathers at Kmart does not fit into American society.

Response Approach: Define the cultural concepts listed in the text and relate them to the lack of acceptance in the situation described.

(Use your own paper for this response.)

SUMMARY

Reading involves anticipation, syntheses, and memory; it is an active rather than a passive process and requires that thinking occur before, during, and after the act. All study systems include a previewing stage to ask questions and establish a purpose for reading, a reading stage to answer questions and integrate knowledge, and a final stage of self-testing and ongoing review to improve recall.

Previewing is a method of assessing your needs before starting to read by deciding what the material is about, what needs to be done, and how to go about doing it. Activate your schema before reading; the more you are able to activate, the more meaningful the reading will become.

The second stage of reading involves thinking while reading. The thinking strategies are to predict, to picture, to relate, to monitor, and to fix up. Good readers operate on a metacognitive level, which means they control and direct these thinking strategies as they read.

Recalling what you have read immediately after reading is the last stage. It forces the reader to select the most important points, relate the supporting information, and repeat what has been learned. Good readers recall for self-testing.