

# Weekly Investigations

Some of you are doing an excellent job with your reading reflections and application analyses. Some of you are struggling with the format. Some of you are in between those two ends.

- To that end, I e-mailed each of you feedback on your first week's investigations.
- To help further, below I have walked through developing a reading reflection and application analysis, including one that meets the requirements, with a metacognitive walkthrough and reflection of my process and how it corresponds to the assignment directions.
- Please review the syllabus if you have any questions about assignment expectations and get in touch with me if you are still not sure what to do.

# READING REFLECTION

## 1. I started out with a template for an outline.

- This template will ensure I am including all the requirements for the assignment.
- Note that the application is not an application from the textbook, nor is it an application from a news article or advertisement or something I need to look up. It is a personal experience or observation or a social phenomenon I have observed or learned about outside of this class.

Here is the outline template I used:

**Concept:**

**Application:**

**Interesting/Important/Surprising/Learned**

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

**Discussion Question**

- 1)

**Struggle/Do not understand/Still have questions**

- 1)

## 2. Next I completed the outline.

- While I read the chapter I took notes for myself responding to the posted guiding questions and I filled out this outline.
- If there were more than the number of items listed that I wanted to include I would just expand my list past that number and then afterwards decide which I want to include in my reflection on the discussion board (or I could always post more than the required minimum).
- For this example, I am going to have fewer “what I learned” concepts and theories since I have already learned all of these sociological concepts. Yours will likely have more broad concepts and theories than this.
- If I have blank spots after reading the chapter, I could go through my notes or flip back through the chapter to see what I wanted to include.
- For the concept/application piece, as I am reading I let my mind wander. There were numerous times while I was reading that I thought, “That reminds me of ...” with either a personal experience or something I had heard about.
- I also noted page numbers so that I could include them in my reflection and so that I could go back and review the concepts/ideas/examples in order to write about it and explain it.

Here was my initial outline:

**Concept:** Dancing with the dead (pg. 42)

**Application:** Ebola issue and problematic burial customs

**Concept:** Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (pgs. 49-50)

**Application:** UNH anti-bias language guide, people who use “different” pronouns

**Concept:** cultural standards of beauty (pg. 44)

**Application:** skin color and beauty in the U.S., e.g. lighter skinned black Americans making it as models/actors/etc.

**Concept:** cultural lag and cultural change (pg. 61)

**Application:** mother of murder victim advocating for expanding who gets DNA data collected by government; her argument was that we take fingerprints, IDs, and other sources of identifiers, but law enforcement practices have not kept up with technology.

### **Interesting/Important/Surprising/Learned**

- 1) monkey tradition in China (pg 43)– surprising/learned
- 2) Gestures to indicate height in southern Mexico (pg 46) – interesting/learned
- 3) America’s core values & values as distorting lenses (pgs 55-58)– important
- 4) If I had not learned about it before, I might have written:  
“the difference between mores and folkways and how negative sanctions differ for these two types of norms (pg 51) – learned”
- 5) I was very surprised to not find any mention of cultural imperialism in the textbook chapter – surprised (*this is why I included the supplemental reading*)

**Struggle/Do not understand/Still have questions**

- 1) The relationship between structure and agency: is sociology empowering or disempowering?

**Discussion Question**

- 1) Culture shapes us, but to what extent do we shape it (beyond reproducing it). To what extent can we change culture?
- 2) The book laid out the dominant U.S. values. (pgs. 55-57). What do you think are the dominant values among Millennials? Or among college students? Or in New Hampshire, which certainly has its own culture(s)?

### 3. After that I narrowed down the outline to what I was going to write.

- I could include all of the above, but I am going to focus my writing and just include the required information. I need to narrow down my list to just the things I want to write about.
- To meet the requirements, I am going to choose one concept/application, three things that I learned or found surprising/important/interesting, one thing I did not understand, and one discussion question.
- In choosing a concept/application, I notice that one or two of my ideas may work for my application analysis. I may use one of those for that assignment instead.
- I will pick the ones I find most interesting and most want to share.
- As long as I meet the minimum requirements, you can play with the format/structure of your post.
- If you do not have any questions and understood everything, you can list something that is complex that you are still thinking through for this item. If you do have a question about something you read, this is a place to ask it so that another student or I can clarify. This also means that other students will benefit from additional clarity on the issue, so it will help their learning as well.

Here is my revised outline:

**Concept:** Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (pgs.49-50)

**Application:** UNH anti-bias language guide, people who use “different” pronouns

#### **Interesting/Important/Surprising/Learned**

- 1) monkey tradition in China (pg 43)– surprising/learned
- 2) Gestures to indicate height in southern Mexico (pg 46) – interesting/learned
- 3) America’s core values & values as distorting lenses (pgs 55-58)– important

#### **Discussion Question**

- 1) Culture shapes us, but to what extent do we shape it (beyond reproducing it). To what extent can we change culture?

#### **Struggle/Do not understand/Still have questions**

- 1) The relationship between structure and agency: is sociology empowering or disempowering?

#### 4. Next, I wrote the text for of my reading reflection.

- I copied and pasted my outline so that if I messed something up I would still have my original outline to refer back to.
- Then I flushed out each bulleted point with what I wanted to say in complete sentences.
- I referred back to the book to detail the concept and my other examples; however, I put it into my own words.
- During this time I also corrected any page number mistakes I had made. For the concept and application,
- I followed the directions to make sure I did everything I was supposed to: I 1) explained the concept, 2) provided the example, and 3) explained the connection between the two.
- I don't have to elaborate or connect the other five items I chose as important to real life or explain why I thought they were important, but I can if I choose to do so. However, I should at least write a complete sentence about each item I chose, explaining what it is.

Here is what my write-up:

**Concept:** Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (pg. 49)

The concept I chose is the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (49), which is about the power of language. This theory notes the power of language to impact our beliefs. O

**Application:** One way that people are working to ensure our language does not create biases against groups or discriminate against people is by using “politically correct” language. The University of New Hampshire has an anti-bias guide (URL: <http://www.unh.edu/inclusive/bias-free-language-guide> - I will include this as a hyperlink when I post it online) that speaks to some of the language we use in our society that is hurtful to others or produces a mindset that a certain group of people is bad.

#### **Interesting/Important/Surprising/Learned**

1) monkey tradition in China (pg 43)– surprising/learned

I was surprised to learn about the ceremonial monkey eating ritual in China (43), which was a culture shock for me.

2) Gestures to indicate height in southern Mexico (pgs. 45-46) – interesting/learned

I thought the story about the man referring to the child's height using hand gestures for a plant was humorous.

3) America's core values & values as distorting lenses (pgs 55-58)– important

I also thought the author identifying America's core values was important, and the author's point about how our culture is a “distorting lens,” biasing the way we see the world.

#### **Discussion Question**

1) Culture shapes us, but to what extent do we shape it (beyond reproducing it). To what

extent can we change culture?

It is apparent from this chapter that culture shapes us. My discussion question is, to what extent can we change culture?

**Struggle/Do not understand/Still have questions**

1) The relationship between structure and agency: is sociology empowering or disempowering?

This question relates to a larger issue that I still think about, which is the relation between structure (in this case culture) and agency (the power we hold).

**5. Finally I produced a final version of my reading reflection to post on Blackboard.**

- I gave my reflection a meaningful title. My title reflects the concept that I wrote about and my discussion question.
- I revised my writing: I deleted my outline notes and connected my thoughts into paragraphs. I had to add a transition sentence between my concept/example and my 5 items from the chapter.
- I bolded my discussion question so it stood out.
- I added a hyperlink (I would do this directly on Blackboard and not on Word if I were actually posting this).
- I proofread for grammar, spelling, and flow issues.
- I read what I wrote out loud to ensure it made sense and was appropriate.

**The Power of Language, The Power of Culture**

The concept I chose is the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (49). This theory is about the power of language. It notes that language has the power to impact our beliefs. One way that people are working to ensure our language does not create biases against groups or discriminate against people is by using ‘politically correct’ language. The University of New Hampshire has [an anti-bias guide](#) that speaks to some of the language we use in our society that is hurtful to others or produces a mindset that a certain group of people is bad. This guide exists because of recognition of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis.

I learned many things while reading the chapter. I was surprised to learn about the ceremonial monkey eating ritual in China (43), which was a culture shock for me. I thought the story about the man referring to the child’s height using hand gestures for a plant was humorous (45-46). I also thought the author identifying America’s core values was important, along with the author’s point about how our culture is a “distorting lens” biasing the way we see the world (55-58, 57). It is apparent from this chapter that culture shapes us. My discussion question is: **to what extent can we change culture?** This question relates to a larger issue that I still think about, which is the relation between structure (in this case culture) and agency (the power we hold).

*Does this meet the requirements? I looked back over it one more time to make sure I will be able to get a 100% on the assignment. I ended up making a few minor changes as I went through this list.*

- I have at least one paragraph about the concept and my related personal example.
  - It has at least 5 meaningful sentences (this is what the syllabus says is required for a paragraph).
  - It has correct spelling and grammar, conforms to the rules of standard English, and is understandable.
  - I identified and explained the concept.
  - I provided an example.
  - I explained how the concept and example were connected.
- I have at least one paragraph listing my 5 items from the chapter.
  - It has at least 5 meaningful sentences.
  - It has correct spelling and grammar, conforms to the rules of standard English, and is understandable.

- I shared three things from the chapter that I learned, found interested, thought were important, or found surprising.
- I shared one discussion question about something I read that intrigued me.
- I shared one thing I still have questions about, did not understand or found confusing, or struggled with.
- I included a quote, so I cited it. Because it was the Henslin textbook I did not need to clarify the source, but I did need to include a page number.

# Application Analysis

## 1. First I need to brainstorm and find the piece of media I will use.

- For the first handful of weeks, the medium is specified. This week, for culture, I need to find an advertisement. There are suggestions on how to find advertisements on Blackboard.

There are two main ways to decide on my concept and media selection.

A: I can choose my concept first, especially if I have a type of advertisement in mind, and then search for my advertisement.

Here I took a concept that I had brainstormed but did not end up using from my reading reflection.

**Concept:** cultural standards of beauty (pg. 44)

**Application:** skin color and beauty in the U.S., e.g. lighter skinned black Americans making it as models/actors/etc. and darker-skinned black Americans not being included.

I searched google images using the keywords advertisement and models. This is what Blackboard suggested I do to find an advertisement. I looked through and found a couple examples on the first page of what I was looking for. If I had not found it, I would have added another keyword or tried different keywords (maybe I could have added multiracial).



This is a Victoria Secret models photo.

I need to make sure I know where this photo came from so I can properly cite it later.  
[http://wallpaperswide.com/victoria\\_secret\\_models-wallpapers.html](http://wallpaperswide.com/victoria_secret_models-wallpapers.html)

B: The other way to approach this assignment is to look through the medium at various advertisements. I will think about whether they relate to culture until I find one that I think does a good job.

I went to the webpage listed on Blackboard for historical advertisements.

Many of them had a connection to culture. I chose this advertisement, which on the website I can see enlarged in high quality. It is from 1942. A few of my thoughts when I saw this was 1) I notice she is wearing red, white, and blue and the poster in the background says “by a share in America” and they are calling her hairdo “Americana.” They are trying to inspire me to feel like buying this shampoo from this private company is a patriotic act. This also makes sense in the context of 1942 being during World War II. I notice that they have a statistic – that it reveals up to 33% more lustre – which reminds me of the power of science and rationalism – quantitative facts that are supposedly objective – in our society. I notice there is a lot of text; perhaps people had longer attention-spans overall back then as well without as much digital stimulation as we have today. I also notice that it speaks to both beauty and simplicity and ease – the idea that a housewife who may be overwhelmed with all she has to do can buy something that will make her hair (but maybe also her life) “easier to manage.”

**New Beauty Shampoo Leaves Hair More Glamorous  
Silkie, Smoother, Easier To Manage**

**BUY  
A SHARE IN AMERICA**

**Avoid That Dull, Flat Hair  
Left by Soaps and Soap Shampoos!**

**Thrilling Improvement in Special Drene Shampoo! Wonderful hair conditions  
now in it makes amazing difference... leaves hair lovelier, easier to arrange!**

**Special Drene Shampoo!**

**SPECIAL DRENE SHAMPOO  
WITH HAIR CONDITIONER ADDED**

Again, I recorded the URL so I can properly cite the advertisement.  
[http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/adaccess\\_BH0318/](http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/adaccess_BH0318/)

## 2. Next I will write a draft of my application analysis.

- I need a correctly formatted citation.
- I need at least one paragraph summarizing the media item I selected.
- I need at least one paragraph explaining the sociological concept it demonstrates **AND** connecting it to the sociological concept.

### *Citation:*

I think the easiest way to do this is to copy an example of another citation. Images are difficult because they all have different information that I can find out or not find out about them. First, I will see what information I have that I need to list, using the list from Blackboard. I am going to use the Victoria's Secret advertisement. If I were actually doing research that I wanted to publish on this advertisement, I would need to find its original source. However, I am only sharing it internally on Blackboard and am using it to discuss a sociological concept, so I am not too worried about copyright or fair use issues, or identifying the original photographer if they are not listed.

1. Photographer/Artist's last name, first name, middle initial.  
Include the role after the name, i.e. photographer. (UNKNOWN)
2. "Image Title" "Victoria's Secret Models wallpaper"
3. Format, i.e. photograph photograph
4. Publisher, i.e. Associated Press (from the credit or source field) Victoria's Secret.
5. Copyright date (if not date use "n.d.") 2015.
6. Source or database name, i.e. AP Images WallpapersWide.com
7. Accessed date February 5, 2015.
8. DOI – Digital Object Identifier (or URL if from a web page)  
[http://wallpaperswide.com/victoria\\_secret\\_models-wallpapers.html](http://wallpaperswide.com/victoria_secret_models-wallpapers.html)

Here was a provided example:

Obama Poster. Fairey, Shepard. Stencil. Associated Press and Shepard Fairey. n.d. The Telegraph. Retrieved November 25 2014  
(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/uknews/3684926/The-shortlist-for-the-Brit-Insurance-Designs-of-the-Year-2009-competition.html?image=3>.)

Now I will copy this formatting using my example.

Victoria's Secret Models wallpaper. Photograph. 2015. Victoria's Secret. WallpapersWide.com. Retrieved February 5, 2015  
([http://wallpaperswide.com/victoria\\_secret\\_models-wallpapers.html](http://wallpaperswide.com/victoria_secret_models-wallpapers.html)).

Because this is a picture rather than a news story, I am also going to put a small version of it into my actual Blackboard post.

### *Summary of the advertisement:*

This is an advertisement of models for the lingerie company Victoria's Secret. There are eight models posing in their underwear. They are all extremely skinny and all have

make-up, styled long hair, long legs, and a good deal of cleavage. None have a very aggressive stance. They are all looking out at the person seeing the advertisement and are not looking at or interacting with each other. Two of the eight models appear to be persons of color, with the rest being white. The models who are not white are still pretty light-skinned, almost like a deeply tanned white person. There is also a lot of light shining on them that makes their features lighter.

*Explanation of sociological concept:*

Culture distorts our perceptions of beauty. According to Henslin, different cultures have different standards of beauty. People present themselves in different ways in order to make themselves beautiful within their cultural context (44).

*Connection between advertisement and concept:*

There are many ways this picture reflects American ideals of beauty. The one I am going to focus on is color. In the U.S., whiteness is valued. Not the pale whiteness of the Victorian era where the wealthy did not have to work outdoors, but the tanned whiteness where the wealthy have the leisure to spend time outdoors. Whiteness also has an impact on people of color. In experiments, young black girls when given a choice between a white doll and a black doll often choose the white doll. Racism results in an internalized sense of superiority for white people and inferiority for people of color. When black people make it big in politics, acting, modeling, etc., they are usually lighter skinned black people. I have black friends who have talked about how this discrimination even exists within their own family – how a darker skinned family member will be told she is ugly because of her skin color. This advertisement reflects and reinforces the idea that beautiful women are light-skinned, regardless of whether they are black or white.

## 2. I will put it together and edit it.

- First I compiled what I wrote together.
- I added a meaningful title.
- I fixed any spelling and grammar issues and made sure it flowed and was understandable.
- I made sure I had a properly formatted citation.
- I made sure I had at least one paragraph of at least five meaningful sentences describing the advertisement.
- I made sure I had at least one paragraph of at least five meaningful sentences that both explained the concept AND connected the concept and the advertisement together.

### Skin Color & Lingerie Models

Victoria's Secret Models wallpaper. Photograph. 2015. Victoria's Secret. WallpapersWide.com. Retrieved February 5, 2015 ([http://wallpaperswide.com/victoria\\_secret\\_models-wallpapers.html](http://wallpaperswide.com/victoria_secret_models-wallpapers.html)).



This is an advertisement of models for the lingerie company Victoria's Secret. There are eight models posing in their underwear. They are all extremely skinny and all have make-up, styled long hair, long legs, and a good deal of cleavage. None have a very aggressive stance. They are all looking out at the person seeing the advertisement and are not looking at or interacting with each other. Two of the eight models appear to be persons of color, with the rest being white. The non-white models are still pretty light-skinned, almost like a deeply tanned white person. There is also a lot of light shining on them that makes their features lighter.

Culture distorts our perceptions of beauty. According to Henslin, different cultures have different standards of beauty. People present themselves in different ways in order to make themselves beautiful within their cultural context (44). There are many ways this picture reflects American ideals of beauty. The one I am going to focus on is color. In the U.S., whiteness is valued. Not the pale whiteness of the Victorian era where the wealthy did not have to work outdoors, but the tanned whiteness where the wealthy have the leisure to spend time outdoors. Whiteness also has an impact on people of color.

When black people make it big in politics, acting, modeling, etc., they are usually lighter skinned black people. In experiments, young black girls when given a choice between a white doll and a black doll often choose the white doll. Racism results in an internalized sense of superiority for white people and inferiority for people of color. Being lighter-skinned makes one closer to passing as white. I have black friends who have talked about how this discrimination even exists within their own family – how a darker skinned family member will be told she is ugly because she is too dark or has features that are considered too stereotypically “African.” This advertisement reflects and reinforces the idea that beautiful women are light-skinned, regardless of whether their race is black or white.