

Sociology

A Down-To-Earth Approach

Thirteenth Edition

James M. Henlin



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James M. Henslin

Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

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

Jim Hansen

Brief Contents

1	The Sociological Perspective	1	12	Race and Ethnicity	326
2	Culture	34	13	The Elderly	365
3	Socialization	63	14	The Economy	394
4	Social Structure and Social Interaction	96	15	Politics	427
5	How Sociologists Do Research	127	16	Marriage and Family	459
6	Societies to Social Networks	148	17	Education	493
7	Bureaucracy and Formal Organizations	174	18	Religion	520
8	Deviance and Social Control	196	19	Medicine and Health	555
9	Global Stratification	228	20	Population and Urbanization	587
10	Social Class in the United States	261	21	Collective Behavior and Social Movements	622
11	Sex and Gender	294	22	Social Change and the Environment	648

Contents

To the Student . . . from the Author	xix		
To the Instructor . . . from the Author	xx		
About the Author	xxxi		
1 The Sociological Perspective	1		
The Sociological Perspective	3		
Seeing the Broader Social Context	3		
The Global Context—and the Local	4		
Sociology and the Other Sciences	5		
The Natural Sciences	5		
The Social Sciences	5		
ANTHROPOLOGY 6 • ECONOMICS 6 • POLITICAL SCIENCE 6 • PSYCHOLOGY 6 • SOCIOLOGY 6			
The Goals of Science	7		
The Risks of Being a Sociologist	8		
Origins of Sociology	8		
Tradition versus Science	8		
Auguste Comte and Positivism	9		
Herbert Spencer and Social Darwinism	9		
Karl Marx and Class Conflict	10		
Emile Durkheim and Social Integration	11		
APPLYING DURKHEIM 12			
Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic	13		
RELIGION AND THE ORIGIN OF CAPITALISM 13			
Values in Sociological Research	13		
<i>Verstehen</i> and Social Facts	14		
Weber and <i>Verstehen</i>	14		
Durkheim and Social Facts	15		
How Social Facts and <i>Verstehen</i> Fit Together	15		
Sociology in North America	16		
Sexism at the Time: Women in Early Sociology	16		
Racism at the Time: W. E. B. Du Bois	18		
Jane Addams: Sociologist and Social Reformer	20		
Talcott Parsons and C. Wright Mills:			
Theory versus Reform	20		
The Continuing Tension: Basic, Applied, and Public Sociology	21		
BASIC SOCIOLOGY 21 • APPLIED SOCIOLOGY 21 • PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY 21 • SOCIAL REFORM IS RISKY 22			
Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology	23		
Symbolic Interactionism	24		
SYMBOLS IN EVERYDAY LIFE 24 • APPLYING SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM 24 •			
Functional Analysis	26		
ROBERT MERTON AND FUNCTIONALISM 26 • APPLYING FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS 26			
Conflict Theory	28		
KARL MARX AND CONFLICT THEORY 28 • CONFLICT THEORY TODAY 28 • FEMINISTS AND CONFLICT THEORY 28 • APPLYING CONFLICT THEORY 29			
Putting the Theoretical Perspectives Together	29		
Levels of Analysis: Macro and Micro	29		
Trends Shaping the Future of Sociology	30		
Sociology’s Tension: Research versus Reform	30		
THREE STAGES IN SOCIOLOGY 30 • DIVERSITY OF ORIENTATIONS 30			
Globalization	31		
APPLICATION OF GLOBALIZATION TO THIS TEXT 31			
Summary and Review 31			
Thinking Critically about Chapter 1 33			
2 Culture	34		
What Is Culture?	36		
Culture and Taken-for-Granted Orientations to Life	36		
Practicing Cultural Relativism	38		
ATTACK ON CULTURAL RELATIVISM 42			
Components of Symbolic Culture	42		
Gestures	42		
MISUNDERSTANDING AND OFFENSE 42 • UNIVERSAL GESTURES? 43			
Language	43		
LANGUAGE ALLOWS HUMAN EXPERIENCE TO BE CUMULATIVE 44 • LANGUAGE PROVIDES A SOCIAL OR SHARED PAST 44 • LANGUAGE PROVIDES A SOCIAL OR SHARED FUTURE 44 • LANGUAGE ALLOWS SHARED PERSPECTIVES 44 • LANGUAGE ALLOWS SHARED, GOAL-DIRECTED BEHAVIOR 45			
Language and Perception: The Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis	46		
Values, Norms, and Sanctions	46		
Folkways, Mores, and Taboos	48		
Many Cultural Worlds	49		
Subcultures	49		
Countercultures	52		
Values in U.S. Society	52		
An Overview of U.S. Values	52		
Value Clusters	53		
Value Contradictions	53		
An Emerging Value Cluster	54		
When Values Clash	55		
Values as Distorting Lenses	55		
“Ideal” versus “Real” Culture	55		
Cultural Universals	56		
Sociobiology and Human Behavior	57		
Technology in the Global Village	58		
The New Technology	58		
Cultural Lag and Cultural Change	58		
Technology and Cultural Leveling	60		
Summary and Review 61			
Thinking Critically about Chapter 2 62			

3 Socialization

Society Makes Us Human

Feral Children

Isolated Children

Institutionalized Children

THE ORPHANAGE EXPERIMENT IN THE UNITED STATES 67 •
THE ORPHANAGE EXPERIMENT IN ROMANIA 68 • TIMING
AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT 68

Deprived Animals

Socialization into the Self and Mind

Cooley and the Looking-Glass Self

Mead and Role Taking

Piaget and the Development of Reasoning

Global Aspects of the Self and Reasoning

Learning Personality, Morality, and Emotions

Freud and the Development of Personality

SOCIOLOGICAL EVALUATION 74

Kohlberg and the Development of Morality

KOHLBERG'S THEORY 74 • CRITICISMS OF
KOHLBERG 75 • RESEARCH WITH BABIES 75 • THE
CULTURAL RELATIVITY OF MORALITY 75

Socialization into Emotions

GLOBAL EMOTIONS 75 • EXPRESSING EMOTIONS:
"GENDER RULES" 75 • THE EXTENT OF "FEELING
RULES" 76 • WHAT WE FEEL 76 • RESEARCH NEEDED 76

Society within Us: The Self and Emotions as
Social Control

Socialization into Gender

Learning the Gender Map

Gender Messages in the Family

PARENTS 77 • TOYS AND PLAY 78
• SAME-SEX PARENTS 80

Gender Messages from Peers

Gender Messages in the Mass Media

TELEVISION, MOVIES, AND CARTOONS 81
• VIDEO GAMES 81 • ADVERTISING 81

Agents of Socialization

The Family

SOCIAL CLASS AND TYPE OF WORK 83
• SOCIAL CLASS AND PLAY 83

The Neighborhood

Religion

Day Care

The School

Peer Groups

The Workplace

Resocialization

Total Institutions

Socialization through the Life Course

Childhood (from birth to about age 12)

Adolescence (ages 13–17)

Transitional Adulthood (ages 18–29)

"BRING YOUR PARENTS TO WORK DAY." 92

The Middle Years (ages 30–65)

THE EARLY MIDDLE YEARS (AGES 30–49) 92
• THE LATER MIDDLE YEARS (AGES 50–65) 92

63	The Older Years (about age 65 on)	92
	THE TRANSITIONAL OLDER YEARS (AGES 65–74)	92 •
	THE LATER OLDER YEARS (AGE 75 OR SO ON)	93
65	Applying the Sociological Perspective to the	
65	Life Course	93
66		
67	Are We Prisoners of Socialization?	93
	Summary and Review	94
	Thinking Critically about Chapter 3	95
69		
70	4 Social Structure and Social Interaction	96
70	Levels of Sociological Analysis	98
70	Macrosociology and Microsociology	98
72	The Macrosociological Perspective: Social Structure	99
73	The Sociological Significance of Social Structure	99
73	Culture	101
73	Social Class	101
74	Social Status	101
	STATUS SETS 101 • ASCRIBED AND ACHIEVED	
	STATUSES 101 • STATUS SYMBOLS 102 • MASTER	
	STATUSES 102 • STATUS INCONSISTENCY 102	
	Roles	103
	Groups	103
	Social Institutions	104
	Comparing Functionalist and Conflict Perspectives	105
	THE FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE 105 • THE CONFLICT	
	PERSPECTIVE 106	
77	Changes in Social Structure	106
77	What Holds Society Together?	106
77	MECHANICAL AND ORGANIC SOLIDARITY 106	
77	• GEMEINSCHAFT AND GESELLSCHAFT 107	
	• HOW RELEVANT ARE THESE CONCEPTS TODAY? 107	
80	The Microsociological Perspective: Social Interaction in	
80	Everyday Life	109
80	Symbolic Interaction	109
	STEREOTYPES IN EVERYDAY LIFE 109 • PERSONAL	
	SPACE 113 • EYE CONTACT 114 • SMILING 114	
	• BODY LANGUAGE 114 • APPLIED BODY LANGUAGE 114	
83	Dramaturgy: The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life	114
83	STAGES 115 • ROLE PERFORMANCE, CONFLICT, AND	
	STRAIN 115 • SIGN-VEHICLES 115 • TEAMWORK 116	
	• BECOMING THE ROLES WE PLAY 118 • APPLYING	
	IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT 118	
84	Ethnomethodology: Uncovering Background	
84	Assumptions	119
85	The Social Construction of Reality	120
85	• GYNECOLOGICAL EXAMINATIONS 120	
88	The Need for both Macrosociology and Microsociology	122
88	Summary and Review	125
88	Thinking Critically about Chapter 4	126
90		
90	5 How Sociologists Do Research	127
91	What Is a Valid Sociological Topic?	129
91	Common Sense and the Need for Sociological Research	129
92	A Research Model	129
	1. Selecting a Topic	130
	2. Defining the Problem	130

3. Reviewing the Literature	130	Leadership	167
4. Formulating a Hypothesis	130	WHO BECOMES A LEADER? 167 • TYPES OF LEADERS 167	
5. Choosing a Research Method	130	• LEADERSHIP STYLES 168 • LEADERSHIP STYLES IN CHANGING SITUATIONS 168	
6. Collecting the Data	130	The Power of Peer Pressure: The Asch Experiment	169
7. Analyzing the Results	131	The Power of Authority: The Milgram Experiment	170
8. Sharing the Results	131	Global Consequences of Group Dynamics:	
Research Methods (Designs)	131	Groupthink	171
Surveys	133	PREVENTING GROUPTHINK 172	
SELECTING A SAMPLE 133 • ASKING NEUTRAL QUESTIONS 134 • QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEWS 134 • ESTABLISHING RAPPORT 136		Summary and Review 172	
Participant Observation (Fieldwork)	136	Thinking Critically about Chapter 6 173	
Case Studies	137		
Secondary Analysis	137	7 Bureaucracy and Formal Organizations	174
Analysis of Documents	137		
Experiments	139	The Rationalization of Society	176
Unobtrusive Measures	141	Why Did Society Make a Deep Shift in Human Relationships?	176
Deciding Which Method to Use	141	LIFE IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES 176 • THE SHIFT TO RATIONALITY AS SOCIETIES INDUSTRIALIZED 176	
Controversy in Sociological Research	141	Marx: Capitalism Broke Tradition	178
Gender in Sociological Research	143	Weber: Religion Broke Tradition	178
Ethics in Sociological Research	143	THE TWO VIEWS TODAY 178	
Protecting the Subjects: The Brajuha Research	144	Formal Organizations and Bureaucracies	179
Misleading the Subjects: The Humphreys Research	144	Formal Organizations	179
How Research and Theory Work Together	145	The Characteristics of Bureaucracies	179
The Real World: When the Ideal Meets the Real	145	“Ideal” versus “Real” Bureaucracy	181
Summary and Review 147		Goal Displacement and the Perpetuation of Bureaucracies	183
Thinking Critically about Chapter 5 147		Dysfunctions of Bureaucracies	184
		RED TAPE: A RULE IS A RULE 184 • LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN UNITS 184	
6 Societies to Social Networks	148	• BUREAUCRATIC INCOMPETENCE 184	
Societies and Their Transformation	150	Alienation of Workers	185
Hunting and Gathering Societies	150	CAUSES OF ALIENATION 185 • THE ALIENATED BUREAUCRAT 186 • RESISTING ALIENATION 186	
Pastoral and Horticultural Societies	152	Voluntary Associations	187
Agricultural Societies	152	Functions of Voluntary Associations	187
Industrial Societies	153	Motivations for Joining	188
Postindustrial (Information) Societies	154	The Inner Circle and the “Iron Law” of Oligarchy	188
Biotech Societies: Is a New Type of Society Emerging?	154	THE INNER CIRCLE 188 • THE IRON LAW OF OLIGARCHY 188	
Groups within Society	156	Working for the Corporation	189
Primary Groups	158	Humanizing the Work Setting	189
PRODUCING A MIRROR WITHIN 158		WORKER EMPOWERMENT 189 • CORPORATE CHILD CARE 190 • THE CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE 190 • WORKERS’ ATTEMPTS TO HUMANIZE WORK 190	
Secondary Groups	158	Fads in Corporate Culture	190
In-Groups and Out-Groups	158	Self-Fulfilling Stereotypes in the “Hidden” Corporate Culture	192
SHAPING PERCEPTION AND MORALITY 159		SELF-FULFILLING STEREOTYPES AND PROMOTIONS 192	
Reference Groups	159	Diversity in the Workplace	192
EVALUATING OURSELVES 160 • EXPOSURE TO CONTRADICTORY STANDARDS IN A SOCIALLY DIVERSE SOCIETY 160		Technology and the Maximum-Security Society	193
Social Networks	160	Summary and Review 195	
APPLIED NETWORK ANALYSIS 161 • THE SMALL WORLD PHENOMENON 161 • IS THE SMALL WORLD PHENOMENON AN ACADEMIC MYTH? 162 • BUILDING UNINTENTIONAL BARRIERS 162		Thinking Critically about Chapter 7 195	
Group Dynamics	162		
Effects of Group Size on Stability and Intimacy	163		
Effects of Group Size on Attitudes and Behavior	164		
LABORATORY FINDINGS AND THE REAL WORLD 165			

8	Deviance and Social Control	196
What Is Deviance?		198
THE RELATIVITY OF DEVIANCE 198 • A NEUTRAL TERM 198 • STIGMA 199		
How Norms Make Social Life Possible		199
Sanctions		200
Competing Explanations of Deviance: Sociobiology, Psychology, and Sociology		200
BIOSOCIAL EXPLANATIONS 201 • PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS 201 • SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS 201		
The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective		201
Differential Association Theory		202
THE THEORY 202 • FAMILIES 202 • FRIENDS, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND SUBCULTURES 202 • DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION IN THE CYBER AGE 203 • PRISON OR FREEDOM? 203		
Control Theory		203
THE THEORY 203 • APPLYING CONTROL THEORY 204		
Labeling Theory		204
REJECTING LABELS: HOW PEOPLE NEUTRALIZE DEVIANCE 204 • APPLYING NEUTRALIZATION 206 • EMBRACING LABELS: THE EXAMPLE OF OUTLAW BIKERS 206 • LABELS CAN BE POWERFUL 207 • HOW DO LABELS WORK? 208		
The Functionalist Perspective		208
Can Deviance Really Be Functional for Society?		208
Strain Theory: How Mainstream Values Produce Deviance		209
FOUR DEVIANT PATHS 210		
Illegitimate Opportunity Structures: Social Class and Crime		211
STREET CRIME 211 • WHITE-COLLAR CRIME 211 • GENDER AND CRIME 213		
The Conflict Perspective		214
Class, Crime, and the Criminal Justice System		214
The Criminal Justice System as an Instrument of Oppression		214
Reactions to Deviance		216
Street Crime and Prisons		216
The Decline in Violent Crime		216
Recidivism		218
The Death Penalty and Bias		219
GEOGRAPHY 220 • SOCIAL CLASS 220 • GENDER 220 • RACE-ETHNICITY 222		
The Trouble with Official Statistics		223
The Medicalization of Deviance: Mental Illness		224
NEITHER MENTAL NOR ILLNESS? 224 • THE HOMELESS MENTALLY ILL 225		
The Need for a More Humane Approach		226
Summary and Review 226		
Thinking Critically about Chapter 8 227		
9	Global Stratification	228
Systems of Social Stratification		230
Slavery		231
CAUSES OF SLAVERY 231 • CONDITIONS OF SLAVERY 231 • BONDED LABOR IN THE NEW WORLD 232 • SLAVERY IN THE NEW WORLD 232 • SLAVERY TODAY 232		
Caste		233
INDIA'S RELIGIOUS CASTES 233 • SOUTH AFRICA 234 • A U.S. RACIAL CASTE SYSTEM 235		
Estate		236
WOMEN IN THE ESTATE SYSTEM 236		
Class		236
Global Stratification and the Status of Females		237
The Global Superclass		237
What Determines Social Class?		238
Karl Marx: The Means of Production		238
Max Weber: Property, Power, and Prestige		239
Why Is Social Stratification Universal?		240
The Functionalist View: Motivating Qualified People		240
DAVIS AND MOORE'S EXPLANATION 240 • TUMIN'S CRITIQUE OF DAVIS AND MOORE 240		
The Conflict Perspective: Class Conflict and Scarce Resources		241
MOSCA'S ARGUMENT 241 • MARX'S ARGUMENT 242 • CURRENT APPLICATIONS OF CONFLICT THEORY 242		
Lenski's Synthesis		242
How Do Elites Maintain Stratification?		243
Soft Control versus Force		243
CONTROLLING PEOPLE'S IDEAS 243 • CONTROLLING INFORMATION 244 • STIFLING CRITICISM 244 • BIG BROTHER TECHNOLOGY 244		
Comparative Social Stratification		245
Social Stratification in Great Britain		245
Social Stratification in the Former Soviet Union		245
Global Stratification: Three Worlds		246
THE PROBLEM WITH TERMS 247		
The Most Industrialized Nations		247
The Industrializing Nations		250
The Least Industrialized Nations		251
Modifying the Model		251
How Did the World's Nations Become Stratified?		254
Colonialism		254
World System Theory		254
Culture of Poverty		256
Evaluating the Theories		256
Maintaining Global Stratification		257
Neocolonialism		257
RELEVANCE TODAY 257		
Multinational Corporations		257
BUYING POLITICAL STABILITY 258 • UNANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCES 258		
Technology and Global Domination		258
Strains in the Global System		259
Summary and Review 259		
Thinking Critically about Chapter 9 260		260

10 Social Class in the United States		
What Is Social Class?		
Property		
DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN WEALTH AND INCOME 263		
• DISTRIBUTION OF PROPERTY 264 • DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME 264		
Power		
THE DEMOCRATIC FACADE 266 • THE POWER ELITE 266		
Prestige		
OCCUPATIONS AND PRESTIGE 268 • DISPLAYING PRESTIGE 268		
Status Inconsistency		
Sociological Models of Social Class		
Updating Marx		
Updating Weber		
THE CAPITALIST CLASS 273 • THE UPPER-MIDDLE CLASS 273 • THE LOWER-MIDDLE CLASS 274 • THE WORKING CLASS 274 • THE WORKING POOR 274 • THE UNDERCLASS 275		
Consequences of Social Class		
Physical Health		
Mental Health		
Family Life		
CHOICE OF HUSBAND OR WIFE 277		
• DIVORCE 277 • CHILD REARING 277		
Education		
Religion		
Politics		
Crime and Criminal Justice		
Social Mobility		
Three Types of Social Mobility		
Women in Studies of Social Mobility		
The Pain of Social Mobility		
Poverty		
Drawing the Poverty Line		
Who Are the Poor?		
THE GEOGRAPHY OF POVERTY 284		
RACE-ETHNICITY 286 • EDUCATION 286		
• THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY 286 • OLD AGE 287		
Children of Poverty		
The Dynamics of Poverty versus the Culture of Poverty		
Why Are People Poor?		
Deferred Gratification		
Where Is Horatio Alger? The Social Functions of a Myth		
Peering into the Future: Will We Live in a Three-Tier Society?		
Summary and Review 292		
Thinking Critically about Chapter 10 293		
11 Sex and Gender		
Issues of Sex and Gender		
THE SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER 296		
Gender Differences in Behavior: Biology or Culture?		
The Dominant Position in Sociology		
Opening the Door to Biology		
261		
A MEDICAL ACCIDENT 298 • THE VIETNAM VETERANS STUDY 299 • MORE RESEARCH ON HUMANS 299		
Gender Inequality in Global Perspective		300
How Did Females Become a Minority Group?		301
HUMAN REPRODUCTION 301 • HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT 303		
• WHICH ONE? 303 • CONTINUING DOMINANCE 303		
Sex Typing of Work		303
Gender and the Prestige of Work		304
Other Areas of Global Discrimination		304
THE GLOBAL GAP IN EDUCATION 304 • THE GLOBAL GAP IN POLITICS 304 • THE GLOBAL GAP IN PAY 307		
• GLOBAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN 307		
Gender Inequality in the United States		308
Fighting Back: The Rise of Feminism		308
Gender Inequality in Everyday Life		311
DEVALUATION OF THINGS FEMININE 311		
Gender Inequality in Health Care		311
Gender Inequality in Education		313
THE PAST 313 • A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE 313 • GENDER TRACKING 314 • GRADUATE SCHOOL AND BEYOND 314		
Gender Inequality in the Workplace		316
The Pay Gap		316
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 316 • GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS 317 • THE “TESTOSTERONE BONUS” 317		
• REASONS FOR THE GENDER PAY GAP 319 • THE CEO POWER GAP 320		
Is the Glass Ceiling Cracking?		320
THE WOMEN WHO BREAK THROUGH 320		
• AND THE FUTURE? 320		
Sexual Harassment—and Worse		321
LABELS AND PERCEPTION 321 • NOT JUST A “MAN THING” 321 • SEXUAL ORIENTATION 321		
Gender and Violence		321
Violence against Women		321
FORCIBLE RAPE 321 • DATE (ACQUAINTANCE) RAPE 322 • MURDER 323 • VIOLENCE IN THE HOME 323 • FEMINISM AND GENDERED VIOLENCE 323 • SOLUTIONS 323		
The Changing Face of Politics		323
Glimpsing the Future—with Hope		324
Summary and Review 324		
Thinking Critically about Chapter 11 325		
12 Race and Ethnicity		326
Laying the Sociological Foundation		328
Race: Myth and Reality		328
THE REALITY OF HUMAN VARIETY 328 • THE MYTH OF PURE RACES 328 • THE MYTH OF A FIXED NUMBER OF RACES 328		
• THE MYTH OF RACIAL SUPERIORITY 328 • THE MYTH CONTINUES 331		
Ethnic Groups		331
Minority Groups and Dominant Groups		332
NOT SIZE, BUT DOMINANCE AND DISCRIMINATION 332		
• EMERGENCE OF MINORITY GROUPS 332		
Ethnic Work: Constructing Our Racial–Ethnic Identity		332
Prejudice and Discrimination		333
Learning Prejudice		333
DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION 333 • LEARNING PREJUDICE		

FROM ASSOCIATING WITH OTHERS 335 • THE FAR-REACHING NATURE OF PREJUDICE 336		CHANGING PERCEPTIONS AS YOU AGE 372 • FOUR FACTORS IN OUR DECISION 372	
• INTERNALIZING DOMINANT NORMS 336		Changing Perceptions of the Elderly	373
Individual and Institutional Discrimination	338	SHIFTING MEANINGS 373	
HOME MORTGAGES 338 • HEALTH CARE 338		The Influence of the Mass Media	375
Theories of Prejudice	339	The Functionalist Perspective	376
Psychological Perspectives	339	Disengagement Theory	376
FRUSTRATION AND SCAPEGOATS 339 • THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY 340		EVALUATION OF THE THEORY 376	
Sociological Perspectives	340	Activity Theory	377
FUNCTIONALISM 340 • CONFLICT THEORY 341		EVALUATION OF THE THEORY 377	
• SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM 342 • HOW LABELS CREATE PREJUDICE 342 • LABELS AND SELF-FULFILLING STEREOTYPES 342		Continuity Theory	377
EVALUATION OF THE THEORY 377		EVALUATION OF THE THEORY 377	
Global Patterns of Intergroup Relations	343	The Conflict Perspective	378
Genocide	343	Fighting for Resources: Social Security Legislation	378
Population Transfer	344	Intergenerational Competition and Conflict	380
Internal Colonialism	345	Fighting Back	382
Segregation	345	THE GRAY PANTHERS 382 • THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS 383	
Assimilation	345	Recurring Problems	383
Multiculturalism (Pluralism)	346	Gender and Living Arrangements of the Elderly	383
Racial–Ethnic Relations in the United States	346	Nursing Homes	383
European Americans	346	UNDERSTAFFING, DEHUMANIZATION, AND DEATH 384	
Latinos (Hispanics)	348	Elder Abuse	386
UMBRELLA TERM 348 • COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN 348		The Elderly Poor	386
• UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS 349 • RESIDENCE 351		RACE–ETHNICITY AND POVERTY 386 • GENDER AND POVERTY 386	
• SPANISH 351 • ECONOMIC WELL-BEING 351		The Sociology of Death and Dying	387
• POLITICS 351		Industrialization and the New Technology	387
African Americans	352	Death as a Process	387
RISING EXPECTATIONS AND CIVIL STRIFE 353		Hospices	388
• CONTINUED GAINS 354 • CURRENT LOSSES 354 • RACE OR SOCIAL CLASS? A SOCIOLOGICAL DEBATE 354		Suicide and Age	389
• RACISM AS AN EVERYDAY BURDEN 355		Adjusting to Death: The Importance of “Closure”	389
Asian Americans	355	Looking toward the Future	390
A BACKGROUND OF DISCRIMINATION 356 • DIVERSITY 356		New Views of Aging	390
• REASONS FOR FINANCIAL SUCCESS 356 • POLITICS 357		CREATIVE AGING 390	
Native Americans	357	The Impact of Technology	391
DIVERSITY OF GROUPS 357 • FROM TREATIES TO GENOCIDE AND POPULATION TRANSFER 358 • THE INVISIBLE MINORITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION 358 • THE CASINOS 359 • DETERMINING IDENTITY AND GOALS 359		Summary and Review 392	
Thinking Critically about Chapter 13 393		Thinking Critically about Chapter 13 393	
Looking toward the Future	359	14 The Economy	394
The Immigration Controversy	360	The Transformation of Economic Systems	396
The Affirmative Action Controversy	360	Preindustrial Societies: The Birth of Inequality	396
Less Racism	362	Industrial Societies: The Birth of the Machine	396
Toward a True Multicultural Society	362	Postindustrial Societies: The Birth of the Information Age	397
Summary and Review 363		Biotech Societies: The Merger of Biology and Economics	397
Thinking Critically about Chapter 12 364		Implications for Your Life	397
13 The Elderly	365	The Transformation of the Medium of Exchange	398
Aging in Global Perspective	367	Earliest Mediums of Exchange	399
The Social Construction of Aging	367	Medium of Exchange in Agricultural Societies	399
Industrialization and the Graying of the Globe	368	Medium of Exchange in Industrial Societies	399
The Graying of America	369	Medium of Exchange in Postindustrial Societies	401
RACE–ETHNICITY AND AGING 370 • THE LIFE SPAN 371		World Economic Systems	401
The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective	372	Capitalism	401
When Are You “Old”?	372	WHAT CAPITALISM IS 401 • WHAT STATE CAPITALISM IS 401 • THE DEVELOPMENT OF STATE CAPITALISM 402	

Socialism	403	Contrast with Democratic Systems in Europe	438
WHAT SOCIALISM IS 403 • SOCIALISM IN PRACTICE 403		Voting Patterns	438
• DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM 404		SOCIAL INTEGRATION 441 • ALIENATION 441	
Ideologies of Capitalism and Socialism	404	• APATHY 441 • THE GENDER AND RACIAL-ETHNIC	
Criticisms of Capitalism and Socialism	404	GAPS IN VOTING 441	
The Convergence of Capitalism and Socialism	405	Lobbyists and Special-Interest Groups	441
CHANGES IN SOCIALIST COUNTRIES 405 • CHANGES IN		LOBBYING BY SPECIAL-INTEREST GROUPS 442	
CAPITALISM 406 • POSSIBLE TRANSMERGENCE 407		• THE MONEY 442	
The Functionalist Perspective on the Globalization of		Who Rules the United States?	443
Capitalism	407	The Functionalist Perspective: Pluralism	443
The New Global Division of Labor	407	The Conflict Perspective: The Power Elite	444
Capitalism in a Global Economy	408	Which View Is Right?	444
CORPORATE CAPITALISM 408 • SEPARATION OF		War and Terrorism: Implementing Political	
OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT 408		Objectives	446
Functions and Dysfunctions on a Global Scale	410	Is War Universal?	446
The Conflict Perspective on the Globalization of Capitalism	410	How Common Is War?	446
Making Capitalism Flourish: Profits and Self-Interests	410	Why Countries Go to War	447
CORPORATE-POLITICAL CONNECTIONS 410 • CORPORATE		The War Machine and the Profits of War	447
POWER AND CONSPIRACIES 413 • MULTIPLYING POWER:		Costs of War	447
INTERLOCKING DIRECTORSHIPS 413		A Special Cost of War: Dehumanization	449
The Global Superclass	413	SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF DEHUMANIZATION 449	
Shifting Dominance and Power	414	Terrorism	451
Global Investing	414	Targeted Killings	454
Work in U.S. Society	417	Sowing the Seeds of Future Violence	455
The Transition to Postindustrial Society	417	SELLING WAR TECHNOLOGY 455 • ALIGNMENTS	
Women and Work	417	AND DISALIGNMENTS 455	
THE QUIET REVOLUTION 417 • FEMALE-MALE WORK STYLES	418	A New World Order?	456
The Underground Economy	419	Trends toward Unity	456
Stagnant Paychecks	421	Inevitable Changes	456
Patterns of Work and Leisure	421	Summary and Review 457	
WORK AND LEISURE AND THE TRANSFORMATION		Thinking Critically about Chapter 15 458	
OF ECONOMIES 422 • TRENDS IN			
LEISURE 422 • TELECOMMUTING 422 • THE MOBILE SHIFT	423		
Global Capitalism and Our Future	423	16 Marriage and Family	459
The New Economic System and the Old Divisions		Marriage and Family in Global Perspective	461
of Wealth	424	What Is a Family?	461
Summary and Review 425		What Is Marriage?	462
Thinking Critically about Chapter 14 426		Common Cultural Themes	462
		MATE SELECTION 462 • DESCENT 462 • INHERITANCE 463	
15 Politics	427	• AUTHORITY 463	
Micropolitics and Macropolitics	429	Marriage and Family in Theoretical Perspective	463
Power, Authority, and Violence	429	The Functionalist Perspective: Functions	
Authority and Legitimate Violence	430	and Dysfunctions	464
THE COLLAPSE OF AUTHORITY 430		WHY THE FAMILY IS UNIVERSAL 465 • FUNCTIONS OF THE	
Traditional Authority	431	INCEST TABOO 465 • ISOLATION AND EMOTIONAL	
Rational-Legal Authority	431	OVERLOAD 465	
Charismatic Authority	432	The Conflict Perspective: Struggles between	
THE THREAT POSED BY CHARISMATIC LEADERS 432		Husbands and Wives	465
Authority as Ideal Type	432	The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective: Gender,	
The Transfer of Authority	433	Housework, and Child Care	466
Types of Government	433	CHANGES IN TRADITIONAL GENDER ORIENTATIONS 466	
Monarchies: The Rise of the State	433	• PAID WORK AND HOUSEWORK 466 • MORE CHILD	
Democracies: Citizenship as a Revolutionary Idea	434	CARE 467 • TOTAL HOURS 467 • A GENDER DIVISION	
Dictatorships and Oligarchies: The Seizure of Power	436	OF LABOR 467	
The U.S. Political System	436	The Family Life Cycle	467
Political Parties and Elections	436	Love and Courtship in Global Perspective	467
SLICES FROM THE CENTER 437 • THIRD PARTIES 437		Marriage	469
		THE SOCIAL CHANNELS OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE 469	

Childbirth	470	Education in Global Perspective	498
IDEAL FAMILY SIZE 470 • MARITAL SATISFACTION 471		Education in the Most Industrialized Nations: Japan	498
Child Rearing	472	Education in the Industrializing Nations: Russia	499
MARRIED COUPLES AND SINGLE MOTHERS 472 • SINGLE FATHERS 473 • DAY CARE 474 • NANNIES 474 • UBER AS A PARENT SUBSTITUTE 474 • SOCIAL CLASS 474		Education in the Least Industrialized Nations: Egypt	500
Family Transitions	475	The Functionalist Perspective: Providing Social Benefits	501
TRANSITIONAL ADULTHOOD AND THE NOT-SO-EMPTY NEST 475 • WIDOWHOOD 475		Teaching Knowledge and Skills	501
Diversity in U.S. Families	476	Cultural Transmission of Values	502
African American Families	476	Social Integration	502
Latino Families	477	INTEGRATING IMMIGRANTS 502 • STABILIZING SOCIETY: MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO 502 • INTEGRATING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES 502	
Asian American Families	478	Gatekeeping (Social Placement)	503
Native American Families	478	Replacing Family Functions	503
One-Parent Families	479	Other Functions	503
Couples without Children	479	A SURPRISING LATENT FUNCTION 505	
Blended Families	479	The Conflict Perspective: Perpetuating Social Inequality	505
Gay and Lesbian Families	480	The Hidden Curriculum: Reproducing the Social Class Structure	505
ADOPTION BY GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES 480		Tilting the Tests: Discrimination by IQ	506
Trends in U.S. Families	481	Stacking the Deck: Unequal Funding	507
The Changing Timetable of Family Life: Marriage and Childbirth	481	The Correspondence Principle	508
Cohabitation	481	The Bottom Line: Family Background	508
COHABITATION AND MARRIAGE: THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE 482 • COHABITATION AND HEALTH 482 • DOES COHABITATION MAKE MARRIAGE STRONGER? 482		REPRODUCING THE SOCIAL CLASS STRUCTURE 508 • REPRODUCING THE RACIAL-ETHNIC STRUCTURE 508	
The “Sandwich Generation” and Elder Care	483	The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective:	
Divorce and Remarriage	483	Teacher Expectations	509
Ways of Measuring Divorce	483	The Rist Research	509
Divorce and Mixed Racial–Ethnic Marriages	485	The Rosenthal–Jacobson Experiment	510
Children of Divorce	486	How Do Teacher Expectations Work?	511
NEGATIVE EFFECTS 486 • WHAT HELPS CHILDREN ADJUST TO DIVORCE? 486 • PERPETUATING DIVORCE 487		Self-Expectations	511
Grandchildren of Divorce: Ripples to the Future	487	Problems in U.S. Education—and Their Solutions	512
Fathers’ Contact with Children after Divorce	487	Mediocrity	513
The Ex-Spouses	487	THE RISING TIDE OF MEDIOCRITY 513 • THE SATs 513 • GRADE INFLATION, SOCIAL PROMOTION, AND FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY 514	
Remarriage	488	Raising Standards	514
Two Sides of Family Life	488	RAISING STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS 514 • A WARNING ABOUT HIGHER STANDARDS 514	
The Dark Side of Family Life: Battering, Child Abuse, Marital Rape, and Incest	488	Cheating	515
SPOUSE BATTERING 488 • CHILD ABUSE 488 • MARITAL AND INTIMACY RAPE 489 • INCEST 489		THE SOLUTION TO CHEATING 515	
The Bright Side of Family Life: Successful Marriages	490	Violence	516
SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGES 490		Technology and Education	517
Symbolic Interactionism and the Misuse of Statistics	490	Summary and Review 518	
The Future of Marriage and Family	491	Thinking Critically about Chapter 17 519	
Summary and Review 491			
Thinking Critically about Chapter 16 492			
17 Education	493	18 Religion	520
The Development of Modern Education	495	What Is Religion?	522
Education in Earlier Societies	495	The Functionalist Perspective	523
Industrialization and Universal Education	495	Functions of Religion	523
HODGE-PODGE EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DISUNITY 495 • INDUSTRIALIZATION AND MANDATORY EDUCATION 496 • THE EXPANSION OF EDUCATION 496		MEANING AND PURPOSE 523 • EMOTIONAL COMFORT 523 • SOCIAL SOLIDARITY 523 • GUIDELINES FOR EVERYDAY LIFE 523 • SOCIAL CONTROL 525 • ADAPTATION 525 • SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT 525 • SOCIAL CHANGE 525	
		Functional Equivalents of Religion	525

Dysfunctions of Religion	526	The Conflict Perspective	559
RELIGION AS JUSTIFICATION FOR PERSECUTION	526	Global Stratification and Health Care	559
• WAR AND TERRORISM	526	Establishing a Monopoly on U.S. Health Care	560
The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective	528	THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF MEDICINE	561 • THE
Religious Symbols	528	MONOPOLY OF MEDICINE	562
Rituals	529	Historical Patterns of Health	563
Beliefs	529	Physical Health	563
Religious Experience	529	LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH	563 • WERE AMERICANS
Community	529	HEALTHIER IN THE PAST?	564
UNITY	529 • EXCLUSION	Mental Health	564
532		Issues in Health Care	564
The Conflict Perspective	532	Medical Care: A Right or a Commodity?	565
Opium of the People	532	Skyrocketing Costs	565
Legitimizing Social Inequalities	532	Social Inequality	565
Religion and the Spirit of Capitalism	533	Reducing Inequalities: Health Care Reform	566
The World's Major Religions	534	Malpractice Lawsuits and Defensive Medicine	566
Judaism	534	Medical Incompetence	567
Christianity	536	DEATH BY DOCTORS	567 • USING A CHECKLIST
Islam	536	• FEDERAL CENTER FOR PATIENT SAFETY	568
Hinduism	538	Depersonalization: The Medical Cash Machine	568
Buddhism	539	Conflict of Interest	569
Confucianism	539	Medical Fraud	569
Types of Religious Groups	540	Sexism and Racism in Medicine	570
Cult	541	The Medicalization of Society	570
Sect	542	THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES	570
Church	542	Medically Assisted Suicide	570
Ecclesia	543	Reducing the Costs of Medical Care	571
Variations in Patterns	543	HEALTH MAINTENANCE ORGANIZATIONS	571
When Religion and Culture Conflict	543	• DIAGNOSIS-RELATED GROUPS	572 • PAY-AS-YOU-
Religion in the United States	544	GO CLINICS	572 • GROUP CARE
Characteristics of Members	544	CARE	572 • RETAIL HEALTH CLINICS
SOCIAL CLASS AND RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION	544	572 • TELEMEDICINE	572 • DUMPING
• RACE-ETHNICITY	545	MEDICAL CARE	573
Characteristics of Religious Groups	545	Threats to Health	574
DIVERSITY	545 • PLURALISM AND FREEDOM	HIV/AIDS	574
• COMPETITION AND RECRUITMENT	546	ORIGIN	575 • THE TRANSMISSION OF HIV/AIDS
• COMMITMENT	546 • TOLERATION	• GENDER, CIRCUMCISION, AND RACE-ETHNICITY	575
• FUNDAMENTALIST REVIVAL	547	• THE STIGMA OF AIDS	576 • IS THERE A CURE
• THE ELECTRONIC CHURCH	547	FOR AIDS?	576
Secularization of Religion and Culture	549	Weight: Too Much and Too Little	577
THE SECULARIZATION OF RELIGION	549	Alcohol and Nicotine	577
• THE SECULARIZATION OF CULTURE	550	ALCOHOL	577 • NICOTINE
550		Disabling Environments	580
The Future of Religion	551	Medical Experiments: Callous and Harmful	580
Summary and Review	552	THE TUSKEGEE SYPHILIS EXPERIMENT	580 • THE
Thinking Critically about Chapter 18	554	GUATEMALAN EXPERIMENT	580 • THE COLD WAR
		EXPERIMENTS	580 • PLAYING GOD
		581	
19 Medicine and Health	555	Chicken Bones and the Globalization of Disease	581
Sociology and the Study of Medicine and Health	557	RUBBING CHICKEN BONES TOGETHER	582
The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective	557	Treatment or Prevention?	582
The Role of Culture in Defining Health and Illness	557	The Future of Medicine	582
The Components of Health	558	Alternative Medicine	583
The Functionalist Perspective	558	Technology	584
The Sick Role	558	DIGITAL MEDICINE	584
ELEMENTS OF THE SICK ROLE	558 • AMBIGUITY	Summary and Review	585
IN THE SICK ROLE	558 • GATEKEEPERS TO THE SICK	Thinking Critically about Chapter 19	586
ROLE	559 • GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE SICK ROLE		
559			

20 Population and Urbanization

Population in Global Perspective	
A Planet with No Space for Enjoying Life?	
The New Malthusians	
The Anti-Malthusians	
Who Is Correct?	
Why Are People Starving?	
Population Growth	
Why the Least Industrialized Nations Have So Many Children	
Consequences of Rapid Population Growth	
Population Pyramids as a Tool for Understanding	
The Three Demographic Variables	
FERTILITY 598 • MORTALITY 599 • MIGRATION 599	
Problems in Forecasting Population Growth	
Urbanization	
The Development of Cities	
Urbanization	
THE APPEAL OF CITIES 605 • FORCED URBANIZATION 608 • METROPOLISES 608 • MEGALOPOLISES 608 • MEGACITIES 608 • MEGAREGIONS 608	
U.S. Urban Patterns	
FROM COUNTRY TO CITY 608 • FROM CITY TO CITY 609 • BETWEEN CITIES 610 • WITHIN THE CITY 610 • FROM CITY TO SUBURB AND BACK 610 • SMALLER CENTERS 610	
Models of Urban Growth	
The Concentric Zone Model	
The Sector Model	
The Multiple-Nuclei Model	
The Peripheral Model	
Critique of the Models	
City Life	
Alienation in the City	
Community in the City	
Who Lives in the City?	
THE COSMOPOLITES 616 • THE SINGLES 616 • THE ETHNIC VILLAGERS 616 • THE DEPRIVED 617 • THE TRAPPED 617 • CRITIQUE 617	
The Norm of Noninvolvement and the Diffusion of Responsibility	
TUNING OUT: THE NORM OF NONINVOLVEMENT 617	
Urban Problems and Social Policy	
Suburbanization	
CITY VERSUS SUBURB 618 • SUBURBAN FLIGHT 619 • LIVING AT THE MALL 619	
Disinvestment and Deindustrialization	
The Potential of Urban Revitalization	
PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY 620	
Summary and Review 620	
Thinking Critically about Chapter 20 621	

587	21 Collective Behavior and Social Movements	622
589	Collective Behavior	624
589	Early Explanations: The Transformation of People	624
591	How Crowds Change People	624
592	The Acting Crowd	625
593	The Contemporary View: The Rationality of the Crowd	626
595	The Minimax Strategy	626
	Emergent Norms	626
596	How Sociologists Study Collective Behavior	627
597	Forms of Collective Behavior	627
	Riots	627
	PARTICIPANTS IN RIOTS 628	
598	Rumors	629
598	Panics	630
	THE CLASSIC PANIC 630	
600	Mass Hysteria	632
604	Moral Panics	632
605	Fads and Fashions	634
605	Urban Legends	635
	Social Movements	636
	Types and Tactics of Social Movements	637
608	Types of Social Movements	637
	Tactics of Social Movements	638
	LEVELS OF MEMBERSHIP 638 • THE PUBLICS 638 • RELATIONSHIP TO AUTHORITIES 639	
	Multiple Realities and Social Movements	639
	Propaganda and the Mass Media	639
	GATEKEEPERS TO SOCIAL MOVEMENTS 641	
	Why People Join Social Movements	641
612	Relative Deprivation Theory: Improving Status and Power	641
612	RELATIVITY OF DEPRIVATION 641 • RELATIVE DEPRIVATION AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT 642	
613	Declining Privilege Theory: Protecting Status and Power	642
613	Moral Issues and Ideological Commitment	642
614	When Social Movements Pose a Threat to the Government	643
615	On the Success and Failure of Social Movements	643
615	The Rocky Road to Success	643
616	The Stages of Social Movements	644
616	Resurgence	645
	Summary and Review 646	
	Thinking Critically about Chapter 21 647	
617	22 Social Change and the Environment	648
618	How Social Change Transforms Social Life	650
618	The Four Social Revolutions	650
	From <i>Gemeinschaft</i> to <i>Gesellschaft</i>	650
	The Industrial Revolution and Capitalism	651
	Social Movements	652

Conflict, Power, and Global Politics	652	COMPUTERS IN EDUCATION	662 • COMPUTERS IN BUSINESS AND FINANCE	663 • COMPUTERS IN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT	663
A BRIEF HISTORY OF GEOPOLITICS	652 • G7 PLUS				
DIVIDING UP THE WORLD	652 •				
FOUR THREATS TO THIS COALITION OF POWERS	653 • THE GROWING RELEVANCE OF AFRICA				654
Theories and Processes of Social Change	654	Cyberspace and Social Inequality			664
Evolution from Lower to Higher	654	The Growth Machine versus the Earth			665
Natural Cycles	655	THE GLOBALIZATION OF CAPITALISM AND THE RACE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH	666 • A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT		666
Conflict over Power and Resources	655	Environmental Problems and Industrialization			666
Ogburn’s Theory	656	TOXIC WASTES	666 • FOSSIL FUELS AND CLIMATE CHANGE	667 • THE ENERGY SHORTAGE AND INTERNAL COMBUSTION ENGINES	669 • THE RAIN FORESTS
INVENTION	656 • DISCOVERY				669
• CULTURAL LAG	657 • EVALUATION OF OGBURN’S THEORY				669
How Technology Is Changing Our Lives	658	The Environmental Movement			669
Extending Human Abilities	658	Environmental Sociology			672
The Sociological Significance of Technology: How Technology Changes Social Life	659	Technology and the Environment: The Goal of Harmony			673
CHANGES IN PRODUCTION	659 • CHANGES IN WORKER–OWNER RELATIONS				Summary and Review
• CHANGES IN IDEOLOGY	659 • CHANGES IN CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION				674
• CHANGES IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	660				Thinking Critically about Chapter 22
When Old Technology Was New: The Impact of the Automobile	660				675
DISPLACEMENT OF EXISTING TECHNOLOGY	660 • EFFECTS ON CITIES				
• CHANGES IN ARCHITECTURE	661 • CHANGED COURTSHIP CUSTOMS AND SEXUAL NORMS				
• EFFECTS ON WOMEN’S ROLES	661				
The New Technology: The Microchip and Social Life	662	Epilogue: Why Major in Sociology?			676
		Glossary			G-1
		References			R-1
		Name Index			N-1
		Subject Index			S-1
		Credits			CR-1

Special Features

Down-to-Earth Sociology

- An Updated Version of the Old Elephant Story 7
Enjoying a Sociology Quiz—Testing Your Common Sense 8
Testing Your Common Sense—Answers to the Sociology Quiz 10
Harriet Martineau and U.S. Customs: Listening to an Early Feminist 18
W. E. B. Du Bois: The Souls of Black Folk 19
Careers in Sociology: What Applied Sociologists Do 22
Heredity or Environment? The Case of Jack and Oskar, Identical Twins 66
Gossip and Ridicule to Enforce Adolescent Norms 87
Boot Camp as a Total Institution 89
College Football as Social Structure 100
Beauty May Be Only Skin Deep, But Its Effects Go On Forever: Stereotypes in Everyday Life 112
Loading the Dice: How *Not* to Do Research 135
Gang Leader for a Day: Adventures of a Rogue Sociologist 138
The McDonaldization of Society 182
Shaming: Making a Comeback? 205
Running Naked with Pumpkins on Their Heads: Deviance or Freedom of Self-Expression? 209
Islands in the Street: Urban Gangs in the United States 212
Sexting: Getting on the Phone Isn't What It Used to Be 216
The Killer Next Door: Serial Murderers in Our Midst 221
Inequality? What Inequality? 246
How the Super-Rich Live 267
The Big Win: Life after the Lottery 271
"The American Dream": Social Mobility Today 281
What Do You Know about Poverty? A Reality Check 285
Poverty: A Personal Journey 290
Cold-Hearted Surgeons and Their Women Victims 312
Affirmative Action for Men? 315
Applying Sociology: How to Get a Higher Salary 319
Can a Plane Ride Change Your Race? 330
Living in the Dorm: Contact Theory 335
The Racist Mind 337
The Man in the Zoo 342
Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack: Exploring Cultural Privilege 349
The New Centenarians 382
Feisty to the End: Gender Roles among the Elderly 384
What Do You Think about the Red Sock? Sex in Nursing Homes 385
Women in Business: Maneuvering the Male Culture 420
The Revolving Door of Power 445
The Rape of Nanking: A Report on Dehumanization 450

- Who Are the Suicide Terrorists? Testing Your Stereotypes 452
Child Soldiers 453
Health Benefits of Marriage: Living Longer 471
"What Are *Your* Chances of Getting Divorced?" 485
Community Colleges: Facing Old and New Challenges 497
Home Schooling: The Search for Quality and Values 504
How I Became a Fairy: Education and the Perpetuation of Social Inequality 506
You Want to Get Through College? Let's Apply Sociology 512
Religion and Health: What We Know and Don't Know 524
Terrorism and Access to the Mind of God 527
José's Old Kidney: The International Black Market in Human Body Parts 561
Having Babies Is Men's Work 563
BioFoods: What's in *Your* Future? Threats to Scientific Research 594
Reclaiming Harlem: A Twist in the Invasion–Succession Cycle 611
Rumors and Riots: An Eyewitness Account of the Tulsa Riot 629
Dancing, Sex, and Monkey Men 633
"Tricks of the Trade"—Deception and Persuasion in Propaganda 640

Cultural Diversity in the United States

- Unanticipated Public Sociology: Studying Job Discrimination 23
Miami—Continuing Controversy over Language 45
Race and Language: Searching for Self-Labels 47
Immigrants and Their Children: Caught between Two Worlds 86
The Amish: *Gemeinschaft* Community in a *Gesellschaft* Society 108
Do Your Social Networks Perpetuate Social Inequality? 163
Social Class and the Upward Social Mobility of African Americans 282
Tiger Woods: Mapping the Changing Ethnic Terrain 329
The Illegal Travel Guide 350
Glimpsing the Future: The Shifting U.S. Racial–Ethnic Mix 361
The Politics of Immigrants: Power, Ethnicity, and Social Class 440

Human Heads and Animal Blood: Testing the Limits of Tolerance 541
 The New Face of Religion: Pentecostals and Spanish-Speaking Immigrants 548

Cultural Diversity around the World

Why the Dead Need Money 39
 You Are What You Eat? An Exploration in Cultural Relativity 40
 When Women Become Men: The Sworn Virgins 79
 Human Sexuality in Cross-Cultural Perspectives 199
 Female Circumcision (Genital Cutting) 307
 China: Changing Sentiment about the Elderly 374
 The Child Workers 398
 The New Competitor: The Chinese Capitalists 406
 Doing Business in the Global Village 409
 East Is East and West Is West: Love and Arranged Marriage in India 468
 Killing Little Girls: An Ancient and Thriving Practice 602
 Why City Slums Are Better Than the Country: Urbanization in the Least Industrialized Nations 614
 The Rain Forests: Lost Tribes, Lost Knowledge 670

Thinking Critically

Are We Prisoners of Our Genes? 57
 Doing Controversial Research—Counting the Homeless 142
 Are Rapists Sick? A Close-Up View of Research 146
 If Hitler Asked You to Execute a Stranger, Would You? The Milgram Experiment 170
 Diversity in the Workplace 193
 The Saints and the Roughnecks: Labeling in Everyday Life 207
 What Should We Do About Repeat Offenders? “Three Strikes” Laws 219
 Vigilantes: When the State Breaks Down 222
 Open Season: Children as Prey 250
 When Globalization Comes Home: *Maquiladoras* South of the Border 255
 The Nation’s Shame: Children in Poverty 288
 The Coming Three-Tier Society and the Militarization of the Police 292

New Masculinities and Femininities Are on Their Way 300
 Social Security: The Magical Money Machine 378
 Would You Like to Live to 200? 391
 Targeted Killings 454
 Will Traditional College Education Disappear? 518
 Your Vote, Please: Should Doctors Be Allowed to Kill Patients? 571
 How Will Your Lifestyle Affect Your Health? 583
 Which Side of the Barricades? Prochoice and Prolife as a Social Movement 645
 Cyberwar and Cyber Defense 663
 Climate Controversy, the Island Nations, and You 668
 Eco-sabotage 671

Sociology and the New Technology

How Smart Is Your Clothing? 59
 Avatar Fantasy Life: The Blurring Lines of Reality 155
 “So, You Want to Be Yourself?” Cloning and the Future of Society 156
 Social Networking as the New Contender to Bureaucracies 185
 Surfing at Work 191
 Welcome to the Memory Hole: Enjoy the Security State 194
 Online Dating: Risks and Rewards 464
 What Color Eyes? How Tall? Designer Babies on the Way 473
 Who Should Live, and Who Should Die? The Dilemma of Rationing Medical Care 573
 The Coming Star Wars 665

Mass Media in Social Life

Lara Croft, Tomb Raider: Changing Images of Women in the Mass Media 82
 “Nothing Tastes as Good as Thin Feels”: Body Images and the Mass Media 117
 Women in Iran: The Times Are Changing, Ever So Slowly 302
 The Cultural Lens: Shaping Our Perceptions of the Elderly 375
 The Propaganda and Profits of War 448
 School Shootings: Exploding a Myth 516
 God on the Net: The Online Marketing of Religion 552

Guide to Social Maps

FIGURE 8.1	How Safe Is Your State? Violent Crime in the United States	213
FIGURE 8.5	Executions in the United States	220
FIGURE 9.3	Global Stratification: Income of the World's Nations	248
FIGURE 10.9	Patterns of Poverty	286
FIGURE 11.6	Women in the Workforce	317
FIGURE 12.6	The Distribution of Dominant and Minority Groups	348
FIGURE 13.1	The Graying of the Globe	368
FIGURE 13.6	As Florida Goes, So Goes the Nation	371
FIGURE 14.3	The Globalization of Capitalism: U.S. Ownership in Other Countries	416
FIGURE 14.4	The Globalization of Capitalism: U.S. Workers Who Work for Foreign-Owned Businesses	416
FIGURE 15.1	Which Political Party Dominates?	437
FIGURE 16.14	The "Where" of U.S. Divorce	484
FIGURE 17.2	Not Making It: Dropping Out of High School	499
FIGURE 17.3	The Unequal Funding of Education	507
FIGURE 18.2	U.S. Church Membership: Dominant Religion, by County	537
FIGURE 18.3	The Second Most Popular Religion in the United States, by State	537
FIGURE 20.12	The World's 10 Largest Megacities	609
FIGURE 20.13	How Urban Is Your State? The Rural–Urban Makeup of the United States	609
FIGURE 22.2	The Worst Hazardous Waste Sites	667

To the Student ... from the Author

WELCOME TO SOCIOLOGY! I've loved sociology since I was in my teens, and I hope you enjoy it, too. Sociology is fascinating because it is about human behavior, and many of us find that it holds the key to understanding social life.

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

When I took my first course in sociology, I was “hooked.” Seeing how marvelously my life had been affected by these larger social influences opened my eyes to a new world, one that has been fascinating to explore. I hope that you will have this experience, too.

From how people become homeless to how they become presidents, from why people commit suicide to why women are discriminated against in every society around the world—all are part of sociology. This breadth, in fact, is what makes sociology so intriguing. We can place the sociological lens on broad features of society, such as social class, gender, and race–ethnicity, and then immediately turn our focus on the smaller, more intimate level. If we look at two people interacting—whether quarreling or kissing—we see how these broad features of society are being played out in their lives.

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

One of sociology's many pleasures is that as we study life in groups (which can be taken as a definition of sociology), whether those groups are in some far-off part of the world or in some nearby corner of our own society, we gain new insights into who we are and how we got that way. As we see how *their* customs affect *them*, the effects of our own society on us become more visible.

This book, then, can be part of an intellectual adventure, for it can lead you to a new way of looking at your social world and, in the process, help you to better understand both society and yourself.

I wish you the very best in college—and in your career afterward. It is my sincere desire that *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* will contribute to that success.



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P.S. I enjoy communicating with students, so feel free to comment on your experiences with this text. You can write me at henslin@aol.com.

To the Instructor ... from the Author

REMEMBER WHEN YOU FIRST GOT “HOOKED” on sociology, how the windows of perception opened as you began to see life-in-society through the sociological perspective? For most of us, this was an eye-opening experience. This text is designed to open those windows onto social life, so students can see clearly the vital effects of group membership on their lives. Although few students will get into what Peter Berger calls “the passion of sociology,” we at least can provide them the opportunity.

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

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

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

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

xx

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

The Organization of This Text

The text is laid out in five parts. Part I focuses on the sociological perspective, which is introduced in the first chapter. We then look at how culture influences us (Chapter 2), examine socialization (Chapter 3), and compare macrosociology and microsociology (Chapter 4). After this, we look at how sociologists do research (Chapter 5). Placing research methods in the fifth chapter does not follow the usual sequence, but doing so allows students to first become immersed in the captivating findings of sociology—then, after their interest is awakened, they learn how sociologists gather their data. Students respond very well to this approach, but if you prefer the more traditional order, simply teach this chapter as the second chapter. No content will be affected.

Part II, which focuses on groups and social control, adds to the students’ understanding of how far-reaching society’s influence is—how group membership penetrates even our thinking, attitudes, and orientations to life. We first examine the different types of groups that have such profound influences on us and then look at the fascinating area of group dynamics (Chapter 6). We then examine the impact of bureaucracy and formal organizations (Chapter 7). After this, we focus on how groups “keep us in line” and sanction those who violate their norms (Chapter 8).

In Part III, we turn our focus on social inequality, examining how it pervades society and how it has an impact on our own lives. Because social stratification is so significant, I have written two chapters on this topic. The first (Chapter 9), with its global focus, presents an overview of the principles of stratification. The second (Chapter 10), with its emphasis on social class, focuses on stratification in the United States. After establishing this broader context of social stratification, we examine gender, the most global of the inequalities (Chapter 11). Then we focus on inequalities of race–ethnicity (Chapter 12) and those of age (Chapter 13).

Part IV helps students to become more aware of how social institutions encompass their lives. We first look at

economy, the social institution that has become dominant in U.S. society (Chapter 14) and then at politics, our second overarching social institution (Chapter 15). We then place the focus on marriage and family (Chapter 16), and education (Chapter 17). After this, we look at the significance of religion (Chapter 18) and, finally, that of medicine (Chapter 19). One of the emphases in this part of the book is how our social institutions are changing and how their changes, in turn, have an impact on our own lives.

With its focus on broad social change, Part V provides an appropriate conclusion for the book. Here we examine why our world is changing so rapidly, as well as catch a glimpse of what is yet to come. We first analyze trends in population and urbanization, those sweeping forces that affect our lives so significantly but that ordinarily remain below our level of awareness (Chapter 20). Our focus on collective behavior and social movements (Chapter 21) and social change and the environment (Chapter 22) takes us to the “cutting edge” of the vital changes that engulf us all.

Themes and Features

Six central themes run throughout this text: down-to-earth sociology, globalization, cultural diversity, critical thinking, the new technology, and the influence of the mass media on our lives. For each of these themes, except globalization, which is incorporated throughout the text, I have written a series of boxes. These boxed features are one of my favorite components of the book. They are especially useful for introducing the controversial topics that make sociology such a lively activity.

Let’s look at these six themes.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

As many years of teaching have shown me, all too often textbooks are written to appeal to the adopters of texts rather than to the students who will learn from them. In writing this book, my central concern has been to present sociology in a way that not only facilitates understanding but also shares its excitement. During the course of writing other texts, I often have been told that my explanations and writing style are “down-to-earth,” or accessible and inviting to students—so much so that I chose this phrase as the book’s subtitle. The term is also featured in my introductory reader, *Down-to-Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings*, to appear in its 15th edition (New York: The Free Press, 2016).

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

- the experiences of W.E.B. Du Bois in studying U.S. race relations (Chapter 1)

- what applied sociologists do (Chapter 2)
- how gossip and ridicule enforce adolescent norms (Chapter 3)
- how football can help us understand social structure (Chapter 4)
- beauty and success (Chapter 4)
- fraudulent social research (Chapter 5)
- serial killers (Chapter 8)
- sexting (Chapter 8)
- the lifestyles of the super-rich (Chapter 10)
- the American dream and actual social mobility (Chapter 10)
- how to get a higher salary by applying sociology (Chapter 11)
- living in the dorm: contact theory (Chapter 12)
- sex in nursing homes (Chapter 13)
- women navigating male-dominated corporations (Chapter 14)
- the life of child soldiers (Chapter 15)
- the health benefits of marriage (Chapter 16)
- how to get through college by applying sociology (Chapter 17)
- terrorism in the name of God (Chapter 18)
- the international black market in human body parts (Chapter 19)
- biofoods (Chapter 20)
- mass hysteria (Chapter 21)
- the coming Star Wars (Chapter 22)

This first theme is actually a hallmark of the text, as my goal is to make sociology “down to earth.” To help students grasp the fascination of sociology, I continuously stress sociology’s relevance to their lives. To reinforce this theme, I avoid unnecessary jargon and use concise explanations and clear and simple (but not reductive) language. I also use student-relevant examples to illustrate key concepts, and I base several of the chapters’ opening vignettes on my own experiences in exploring social life. That this goal of sharing sociology’s fascination is being reached is evident from the many comments I receive from instructors and students alike that the text helps make sociology “come alive.”

Globalization

In the second theme, globalization, we explore the impact of global issues on our lives and on the lives of people around the world. All of us are feeling the effects of an increasingly powerful and encompassing global economy, one that intertwines the fates of nations. The globalization of capitalism influences the kinds of skills and knowledge we need, the types of work available to us—and whether work is available at all. Globalization also underlies the costs of the goods

and services we consume and whether our country is at war or peace—or in some uncharted middle ground between the two, some sort of perpetual war against unseen, sinister, and ever-threatening enemies lurking throughout the world. In addition to the strong emphasis on global issues that runs throughout this text, I have written a separate chapter on global stratification (Chapter 9). I also feature global issues in the chapters on social institutions and the final chapters on social change: population, urbanization, social movements, and the environment.

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

Cultural Diversity around the World and in the United States

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

To highlight this first subtheme, I have written a series of boxes called **Cultural Diversity around the World**. Among the topics with this subtheme are

- food customs that shock people from different cultures (Chapter 2)
- why the dead need money (Chapter 2)
- where virgins become men (Chapter 3)
- human sexuality in Mexico and Kenya (Chapter 8)
- how blaming the rape victim protects India’s caste system (Chapter 8)
- female circumcision (Chapter 11)
- the life of child workers (Chapter 14)
- China’s new capitalism (Chapter 14)
- the globalization of capitalism (Chapter 14)
- love and arranged marriage in India (Chapter 16)
- female infanticide in China and India (Chapter 20)
- the destruction of the rain forests and indigenous peoples of Brazil (Chapter 22)

In the second subtheme, **Cultural Diversity in the United States**, we examine groups that make up the fascinating array

of people who form the U.S. population. The boxes I have written with this subtheme review such topics as

- the language of race (Chapter 2)
- the controversy over the use of Spanish or English (Chapter 2)
- how the Amish resist social change (Chapter 4)
- how our social networks produce social inequality (Chapter 6)
- the upward social mobility of African Americans (Chapter 10)
- how Tiger Woods represents a changing racial–ethnic identity (Chapter 12)
- the author’s travels with a Mexican who transports undocumented workers to the U.S. border (Chapter 12)
- Pentecostalism among Latino immigrants (Chapter 18)
- human heads, animal sacrifices, and religious freedom (Chapter 18)
- our shifting racial–ethnic mix (Chapter 20)

Seeing that there are so many ways of “doing” social life can remove some of our cultural smugness, making us more aware of how arbitrary our own customs are—and how our taken-for-granted ways of thinking are rooted in culture. The stimulating contexts of these contrasts can help students develop their sociological imagination. They encourage students to see connections among key sociological concepts, such as culture, socialization, norms, race–ethnicity, gender, and social class. As your students’ sociological imagination grows, they can attain a new perspective on their experiences in their own corners of life—and a better understanding of the social structure of U.S. society.

Critical Thinking

In our fourth theme, critical thinking, we focus on controversial social issues, inviting students to examine various sides of those issues. In these sections, titled **Thinking Critically**, I present objective, fair portrayals of positions and do not take a side—although occasionally I do play the “devil’s advocate” in the questions that close each of the topics. Like the boxed features, these sections can enliven your classroom with a vibrant exchange of ideas. Among the social issues we tackle are

- whether rapists are sick (Chapter 5)
- our tendency to conform to authority, even though evil, as uncovered by the Milgram experiments (Chapter 6)
- how labeling keeps some people down and helps others move up (Chapter 8)
- how vigilantes fill in when the state breaks down (Chapter 8)
- the three-strikes-and-you’re-out laws (Chapter 8)

- bounties paid to kill homeless children in Brazil (Chapter 9)
- children in poverty (Chapter 10)
- biology versus culture (Chapter 11)
- emerging masculinities and femininities (Chapter 11)
- targeted killings (Chapter 15)
- medically assisted suicide (Chapter 19)
- abortion as a social movement (Chapter 21)
- cyberwar and cyber defense (Chapter 22)

These *Thinking Critically* sections are based on controversial social issues that either affect the student's own life or focus on topics that have intrinsic interest for students. Because of their controversial nature, these sections stimulate both critical thinking and lively class discussions. These sections also provide provocative topics for in-class debates and small discussion groups, effective ways to enliven a class and present sociological ideas. In the Instructor's Manual, I describe the nuts and bolts of using small groups in the classroom, a highly effective way of engaging students in sociological topics.

Sociology and the New Technology

The fifth theme, sociology and the new technology, explores an aspect of social life that has come to be central in our lives. We welcome these new technological tools, for they help us to be more efficient at performing our daily tasks, from making a living to communicating with others—whether those people are nearby or on the other side of the globe. The significance of our new technology, however, extends far beyond the tools and the ease and efficiency they bring to our lives. The new technology is better envisioned as a social revolution that will leave few aspects of our lives untouched. Its effects are so profound that it even changes the ways we view life.

This theme is introduced in Chapter 2, where technology is defined and presented as a major aspect of culture. The impact of technology is then discussed throughout the text. Examples include how technology is related to cultural change (Chapter 2), the control of workers (Chapter 7), the maintenance of global stratification (Chapter 9), social class (Chapter 10), and social inequality in early human history (Chapter 14). We also look at the impact of technology on dating (Chapter 16), family life (Chapter 16), education (Chapter 17), religion (Chapter 18), medicine (Chapter 19), and war (Chapter 22). The final chapter (Chapter 22), "Social Change and the Environment," concludes the book with a focus on the effects of technology.

To highlight this theme, I have written a series of boxes called **Sociology and the New Technology**. In these boxes, we explore how technology affects our lives as it changes society. We examine how technology

- is making our clothing smart (Chapter 2)
- blurs the distinction between reality and fantasy (Chapter 6)

- might make social networking the dominant form of social organization (Chapter 7)
- is leading to an overwhelming security state (Chapter 7)
- is being used to organize family life (Chapter 16)
- is changing the way people find mates (Chapter 16)
- is leading to designer babies (Chapter 16)
- is changing education through distance learning (Chapter 17)
- leads to dilemmas of rationing medical care (Chapter 19)

The Mass Media and Social Life

In the sixth theme, we stress how the mass media affect our behavior and permeate our thinking. We consider how the media penetrate our consciousness to such an extent that they even influence how we perceive our own bodies. As your students consider this theme, they may begin to grasp how the mass media shape their attitudes. If so, they will come to view the mass media in a different light which, should further stimulate their sociological imagination.

To make this theme more prominent for students, I have written a series of boxed features called **Mass Media in Social Life**. Among these are

- the presentation of gender in computer games (Chapter 3)
- the worship of thinness—and how this affects our body images (Chapter 4)
- the issue of censoring high-tech pornography (Chapter 8)
- the reemergence of slavery in today's world (Chapter 9)
- the slowly changing status of women in Iran (Chapter 11)
- the profits and propaganda of war (Chapter 15)
- God on the Net (Chapter 18)

What's New in This Edition?

Because sociology is about social life and we live in a changing global society, an introductory sociology text must reflect the national and global changes that engulf us, as well as represent the new sociological research. An indication of the thoroughness of incorporating recent sociological research is the text's hundreds of new citations. This edition of *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* also has more than 300 new instructional photos. I have either selected or taken each of the photos, which are tied directly into the content of the text. I have designed it so that the photos and their captions are part of the students' learning experience.

I won't bother listing the numerous changes that run throughout the text. Instead, on the two pages that follow this Note to the Instructor (pp. xxvi and xxvii) I have listed just the new topics, boxed features, and tables and figures that are new in this edition. This gives you the best idea of how extensively this edition is revised.

Visual Presentations of Sociology

SHOWING CHANGES OVER TIME In presenting social data, many of the figures and tables show how data change over time. This feature allows students to see trends in social life and to make predictions on how these trends might continue—and how the trends even affect their own lives. Examples include

- Figure 1.4 *U.S. Marriage, U.S. Divorce* (Chapter 1)
- Figure 3.2 *Transitional Adulthood: A New Stage in Life* (Chapter 3)
- Figure 8.2 *How Much Is Enough? The Explosion in the Number of Prisoners* (Chapter 8)
- Figure 10.3 *The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: Dividing the Nation's Income* (Chapter 10)
- Figure 16.2 *In Two-Paycheck Marriages, How Do Husbands and Wives Divide Their Responsibilities?* (Chapter 16)
- Figure 16.4 *The Number of Children Americans Think Are Ideal* (Chapter 16)
- Figure 16.9 *The Decline of Two-Parent Families* (Chapter 16)
- Figure 16.11 *Cohabitation in the United States* (Chapter 16)
- Figure 17.1 *Educational Achievement in the United States* (Chapter 17)
- Figure 20.11 *How the World Is Urbanizing* (Chapter 20)

THROUGH THE AUTHOR'S LENS Using this format, students are able to look over my shoulder as I experience other cultures or explore aspects of this one. These eight photo essays should expand your students' sociological imagination and open their minds to other ways of doing social life, as well as stimulate thought-provoking class discussions.

VIENNA: SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL INTERACTION IN A VIBRANT CITY appears in Chapter 4. The photos I took in this city illustrate how social structure surrounds us, setting the scene for our interactions, limiting and directing them.

WHEN A TORNADO STRIKES: SOCIAL ORGANIZATION FOLLOWING A NATURAL DISASTER When a tornado hit a small town just hours from where I lived, I photographed the aftermath of the disaster. The police let me in to view the neighborhood where the tornado had struck, destroying homes and killing several people. I was impressed by how quickly people were putting their lives back together, the topic of this photo essay (Chapter 4).

COMMUNITY IN THE CITY, in Chapter 6, is also from Vienna. This sequence of four photos focuses on strangers who are helping a man who has just fallen. This event casts doubt on the results of Darley and Latane's laboratory experiments. This short sequence was serendipitous in my research. One of my favorite photos is the last in the series, which

portrays the cop coming toward me to question why I was taking photos of the accident. It fits the sequence perfectly.

THE DUMP PEOPLE OF PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA Among the culture shocks I experienced in Cambodia was not to discover that people scavenge at Phnom Penh's huge city dump—this I knew about—but that they also live there. With the aid of an interpreter, I was able to interview these people, as well as photograph them as they went about their everyday lives. An entire community lives in the city dump, complete with restaurants amid the smoke and piles of garbage. This photo essay reveals not just these people's activities but also their social organization (Chapter 9).

WORK AND GENDER: WOMEN AT WORK IN INDIA As I traveled in India, I took photos of women at work in public places. The more I traveled in this country and the more photos I took, the more insight I gained into gender relations. Despite the general dominance of men in India, women's worlds are far from limited to family and home. Women are found at work throughout the society. What is even more remarkable is how vastly different "women's work" is in India than it is in the United States. This, too, is an intellectually provocative photo essay (Chapter 11).

SMALL TOWN USA: STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE To take the photos for this essay, on a road trip from California to Florida I went off the beaten path. Instead of following the interstates, I followed those "little black lines" on the map. They took me to out-of-the-way places that the national transportation system has bypassed. Many of these little towns are putting on a valiant face as they struggle to survive, but, as the photos show, the struggle is apparent, and, in some cases, so are the scars (Chapter 14).

HOLY WEEK IN SPAIN, in Chapter 18, features processions in two cities in Spain: Malaga, a provincial capital, and Almuñecar, a smaller city in Granada. The Roman Catholic heritage of Spain runs so deeply that the *La Asunción de María* (The Assumption of Mary) is a national holiday, with the banks and post offices closing. City streets carry such names as (translated) Conception, Piety, Humility, Calvary, Crucifixion, The Blessed Virgin. In large and small towns throughout Spain, elaborate processions during Holy Week feature *tronos* that depict the biblical account of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. I was allowed to photograph the preparations for one of the processions, so this essay also includes "behind-the-scenes" photos.

During the processions, the participants walk slowly for one or two minutes; then because of the weight of the *tronos*, they rest for one or two minutes. This process repeats for about six hours. As you will see, some of the most interesting activities occur during the rest periods.

A WALK THROUGH EL TIRO IN MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA One of the most significant social changes in the world is

taking place in the Least Industrialized Nations. In the search for a better life, people are abandoning rural areas. Fleeing poverty, they are flocking to the cities, only to be greeted with more poverty. Some of these settlements of the new urban poor are dangerous. I was fortunate to be escorted by an insider through a section of Medellin, Colombia, that is controlled by gangs (Chapter 20).

OTHER PHOTO ESSAYS To help students better understand subcultures, I have retained the photo essay *Standards of Beauty* in Chapter 2. I have also kept the photo essay in Chapter 12 on ethnic work, as it helps students see that ethnicity doesn't "just happen." Because these photo essays consist of photos taken by others, they are not a part of the series, *Through the Author's Lens*. I think you will appreciate the understanding these two photo essays can give your students.

PHOTO COLLAGES Because sociology lends itself so well to photographic illustrations, this text also includes photo collages. In Chapter 1, the photo collage, in the shape of a wheel, features some of the many women who became sociologists in earlier generations, women who have largely gone unacknowledged as sociologists. In Chapter 2, students can catch a glimpse of the fascinating variety that goes into the cultural relativity of beauty. The collage in Chapter 6 illustrates categories, aggregates, and primary and secondary groups, concepts that students sometimes wrestle to distinguish. The photo collage in Chapter 11 lets students see how differently gender is portrayed in different cultures.

OTHER PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR Sprinkled throughout the text are photos that I took in Austria, Cambodia, India, Latvia, Spain, and the United States. These photos illustrate sociological principles and topics better than photos available from commercial sources. As an example, while in the United States, I received a report about a feral child who had been discovered living with monkeys. The possibility of photographing and interviewing that child who had been taken to an orphanage was one of the reasons that I went to Cambodia. That particular photo is on page 63. Another of my favorites is on page 198.

Other Special Pedagogical Features

In addition to chapter summaries and reviews, key terms, and a comprehensive glossary, I have included several special features to help students learn sociology. **In Sum** sections

help students review important points within the chapter before going on to new materials. I have also developed a series of **Social Maps** that illustrate how social conditions vary by geography. All the maps in the text are original.

Learning Objectives I have written learning objectives for the main points of each chapter. These learning objectives are presented in a list at the beginning of the chapter, at the point where that specific material is presented, and again in the chapter's Summary and Review. These learning objectives provide a guiding "road map" for your students.

CHAPTER-OPENING VIGNETTES These accounts feature down-to-earth illustrations of a major aspect of each chapter's content. Several of these vignettes are based on my research with the homeless, the time I spent with them on the streets and slept in their shelters (Chapters 1, 10, and 19). Others recount my travels in Africa (Chapters 2 and 11) and Mexico (Chapters 16 and 20). I also share my experiences when I spent a night with street people at DuPont Circle in Washington, D.C. (Chapter 4). For other vignettes, I use current and historical events (Chapters 5, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 21, and 22), composite accounts (Chapter 14), classical studies in the social sciences (Chapters 3, 8, and 13), and even scenes from novels (Chapters 6 and 15). Many students have told their instructors that they find these vignettes compelling, that they stimulate interest in the chapter.

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT THE CHAPTERS I close each chapter with critical thinking questions. Each question focuses on a major feature of the chapter, asking students to reflect on and consider some issue. Many of the questions ask the students to apply sociological findings and principles to their own lives.

ON SOURCES Sociological data are found in a wide variety of sources, and this text reflects that variety. Cited throughout this text are standard journals such as the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Problems*, *American Sociological Review*, and *Journal of Marriage and Family*, as well as more esoteric journals such as the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, *Chronobiology International*, and *Western Journal of Black Studies*. I have also drawn heavily from standard news sources, especially the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, as well as more unusual sources such as *El País*. In addition, I cite unpublished research and theoretical papers by sociologists.

Acknowledgments

The gratifying response to this text's earlier editions indicates that my efforts at making sociology down-to-earth have succeeded. The years that have gone into writing this text are a culmination of the many years that preceded its writing—from graduate school to that equally demanding endeavor known as classroom teaching. No text, of course, comes solely from its author. Although I am responsible for the final words on the printed page, I have received excellent feedback from instructors who have taught from the first twelve editions.

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I couldn't ask for a more outstanding team than the one that I have the pleasure to work with at Pearson. I want to thank Billy Grieco and Emily Tamburri, who joined the team for this 13th edition, for coordinating the many tasks that were necessary to produce this new edition; Navin Kumar and Mark Schaefer, who provided excellent research, tracking down both standard and esoteric items that made an impact on the book; and Kate Cebik, for her creativity in photo research and for her willingness to "keep on looking."

I do appreciate this team. It is difficult to heap too much praise on such fine, capable, and creative people. Often going "beyond the call of duty" as we faced nonstop deadlines, their untiring efforts coalesced with mine to produce this text. Students, whom we constantly kept in mind as we prepared this edition, are the beneficiaries of this intricate teamwork.

Since this text is based on the contributions of many, I would count it a privilege if you would share with me your

teaching experiences with this book, including suggestions for improving the text. Both positive and negative comments are welcome. This is one way that I continue to learn.

I wish you the very best in your teaching. It is my sincere desire that *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* contributes to your classroom success.



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What's New in the 13th Edition?

Chapter 2

Cultural Diversity around the World Box: Why the Dead Need Money

Sociology and the New Technology Box: How Smart Is Your Clothing?

Topic: The wearable computers that are coming will make Google Glass look like a museum piece

Chapter 3

Topic: Transitional adulthood has become so extended that some companies have a "Bring Your Parents to Work Day"

Topic: Research on orphans in Romania with experimental and control groups: Personalized care improves not only social skills but also increases brain cells

Topic: A university is offering a varsity sports scholarship in video games

Chapter 4

Topic: To apply body language, Homeland Security spends \$200 million a year on training "Behavior Detection Officers"

Topic: Attractive people are treated more favorably by judges and juries

Topic: "Image consultants" teach women executives how to display power amid "soft" femininity

Chapter 7

Sociology and the New Technology Box: Welcome to the Memory Hole: Enjoy the Security State

Topic: Corporate team building fad: pseudo sumo wrestling in fat suits

Topic: Bureaucratic dysfunctions: France bought a fleet of new trains that are too wide for their railroad stations

Chapter 8

Down-to-Earth Sociology Box: Sexting: Getting On the Phone Isn't What It Used to Be

Figure 8.3 How Fast They Return: Recidivism of U.S. Prisoners

Topic: Differential association in the cyber age

Topic: Mexico moves against the militias that citizens have formed to fight the drug cartels

Topic: GM executives did not take action on the ignition problem that accidentally turned off the engine and air bags, causing many deaths

Chapter 9

Down-to-Earth Sociology Box: Inequality? What Inequality?

Topic: The FBI is pressuring Google and Amazon to stop sales of encrypted mobile devices

Chapter 10

Thinking Critically Section: The Frightful Future: The Three-Tier Society

Figure 10.12 How Does Income Influence Births to Single Women?

Topic: The gender gap in social mobility: As adults, women are less likely than men to live in families with higher income than the one in which they grew up

Topic: Larry Ellison has a basketball court on his yacht and a basketball retriever who trails the yacht, scooping up errant balls

Topic: A \$39,000 backpack for the ultra-rich by Ashley and Mary-Kate Olsen.

Topic: The Waltons of Walmart fame are worth more than the bottom 40 percent of all Americans

Topic: Callie Rogers, youngest lottery winner in Great Britain, added to the box on lottery winners

Chapter 11

Thinking Critically Section: New Masculinities and Femininities Are on the Way

Topic: Holding a real gun increases levels of testosterone.

Topic: "Girlie feminism" promoted by some women in the current third wave

Topic: *Swara*, a practice in tribal areas of Pakistan: Unmarried girls, even children, are given as brides to compensate a family for a man's crime

Chapter 12

Topic: Supreme Court upholds states' rights to ban affirmative action in college admissions

Topic: Associate's degree added to Table 12.3

Topic: North Koreans who defile the "sacred Korean race" are tortured, raped, and starved

Topic: Native American tribes clash over casino profits

Topic: Donald Sterling forced to give up the ownership of the Los Angeles Clippers, banned from professional basketball for life, and fined \$2.5 million

Topic: Social class as the answer to the affirmative action controversy in college admissions

Chapter 13

Topic: 97% of the nation's total income tax from individuals is spent on just Social Security and Medicare

Chapter 14

Topic: To find cheaper workers, China's capitalists are moving factories to Africa.

Topic: The ascent of China: Of the world's ten largest multinational corporations, three are Chinese; seven years ago none were

Topic: The mobile shift is bringing the deskless office

Chapter 15

Topic: New research by Gilens and Page on 1,800 policy decisions by the U.S. government supports the power elite perspective

Topic: Russia–West dispute threatens G8 alliance

Chapter 16

Topic: The single father

Topic: Same-sex and heterosexual couples have about the same rate of divorce

Topic: Uber as a parent substitute

Chapter 17

Down-to-Earth Sociology: Box You Want to Get Through College? Let's Apply Sociology

Figure 17.4 Parents' Income and Quality of College Attended

Thinking Critically Section: Will Traditional College Education Disappear?

Topic: The *NanoDegree*

Topic: To make Russia's textbooks more patriotic, Putin arranged for his old judo partner to become Russia's main textbook publisher

Topic: Egypt plans to pattern its education on the British model

Topic: Three models of online teaching/learning

Topic: Some U.S. schools provide three meals a day for students in poverty

Chapter 18

Table 18.1 New Pew research on how Americans identify with religion

Figure 18.3 The Second Most Popular Religion in the United States, by State

Topic: The shooting deaths of 140 Pakistani schoolchildren

Chapter 19

Topic: Getting close to an HIV vaccine: An engineered molecule blocks the entry points of the virus that causes AIDS

Topic: Deaths from medical errors run over 1,000 a day

Topic: A NEJM study shows that surgical checklists don't reduce surgical deaths

Topic: More than ten times more Americans have died from smoking than have died in all the wars that the United States has fought

Topic: The 2014 surgeon general's 50-year report on tobacco and health

Topic: Digital medicine, smartphones, and nanobots

Topic: Retail health clinics

Topic: Telemedicine to reduce medical costs

Topic: E-cigarettes

Topic: The Ebola outbreak

Chapter 20

Topic: The Communist Party of China now allows married couples to have two children

Topic: To encourage childbirth, officials in Turkey pin a gold medal on women who have their first child

Topic: Since the 1990s, world hunger has dropped 40 percent

Topic: Update on the controversy over biofoods

Topic: Corporate funding and the threat to objective scientific research

Topic: There are 28 megacities; by 2030 there will be 41

Topic: Edge cities are being changed to give them the look and feel of traditional cities

Topic: Forced urbanization: deciding that urbanization fuels economic growth, China's top leaders are forcing villagers to move to the city

Topic: Some aging suburbs are turning their malls into town centers

Topic: Megaregions have developed

Chapter 21

Topic: *Project Minerva*, a step to militarizing higher education on the way to the garrison state

Topic: 2015 panic on Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, leaving 700 dead

Topic: Foods as fashion

Chapter 22

Topic: The United States and Russia are backing opposing sides in the oil-rich region of the Middle East

Topic: G8 becomes G7 (with Russia's absence), which might become G8 again (if China cooperates)

Topic: U.S. and Russia fighting a proxy war in Syria

Topic: The X-47B pilotless drone

A Note from the Publisher on the Supplements

Instructor Supplements

Unless otherwise noted, instructor supplements are available at no charge to adopters—in electronic formats through the Instructor’s Resource Center (www.pearsonhighered.com/irc).

Instructor’s Manual and Test Bank

For each chapter in the text, the Instructor’s Manual provides a list of key changes to the new edition, chapter summaries and outlines, learning objectives, key terms and people, discussion topics, classroom activities, recommended films and Web sites, and additional references. The Instructor’s Manual also includes sample syllabi and a section by Jim Henslin on how to make your class more interactive and stimulating by using small, in-class discussion groups.

Test Bank

The Test Bank contains approximately 125 questions for each chapter in multiple-choice, true/false, short answer, essay, and matching formats. There is also a set of questions based on the text’s figures, tables, and maps. The questions are correlated to each chapter’s in-text learning objectives.

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The printed Test Bank is also available online through Pearson’s computerized testing system, MyTest. The user-friendly interface allows you to view, edit, and add questions, transfer questions to tests, and print tests in a variety of fonts. Search and sort features allow you to locate questions quickly and to arrange them in whatever order you prefer. The Test Bank can be accessed anywhere with a free MyTest user account. There is no need to download a program or file to your computer.

PowerPoint Presentation Slides

Lecture PowerPoint Presentations are available for this edition. The lecture slides outline each chapter of the text, while the line art slides provide the charts, graphs, and maps found in the text. PowerPoint software is not required as PowerPoint viewer is included.

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About the Author

Jim Henslin was born in Minnesota, graduated from high school and junior college in California and from college in Indiana. Awarded scholarships, he earned his master's and doctorate degrees in sociology at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. After this, he won a postdoctoral fellowship from the National Institute of Mental Health and spent a year studying how people adjust to the suicide of a family member. His primary interests in sociology are the sociology of everyday life, deviance, and international relations. Among his many books are *Down-to-Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings* (Free Press), soon in its 15th edition, and *Social Problems* (Allyn and Bacon), soon to be in its 12th edition. He has also published widely in sociology journals, including *Social Problems* and *American Journal of Sociology*.

While a graduate student, Jim taught at the University of Missouri at St. Louis. After completing his doctorate, he joined the faculty at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, where he is Professor Emeritus of Sociology. He says, "I've always found the introductory course enjoyable to teach. I love to see students' faces light up when they first glimpse the sociological perspective and begin to see how society has become an essential part of how they view the world."

Jim enjoys reading and fishing, and he also does a bit of kayaking and weight lifting. His two favorite activities

are writing and traveling. He especially enjoys visiting and living in other cultures, for this brings him face to face with behaviors and ways of thinking that challenge his perspectives and "make sociological principles come alive." A special pleasure has been the preparation of *Through the Author's Lens*, the series of photo essays that appear in this text.

Jim moved to Latvia, an Eastern European country formerly dominated by the Soviet Union, where he had the experience of becoming an immigrant. There he observed firsthand how people struggle to adjust to capitalism. While there, he interviewed aged political prisoners who had survived the Soviet gulag. He then moved to Spain, where he was able to observe how people adjust to a declining economy and the immigration of people from contrasting cultures. (Of course, for this he didn't need to leave the United States.) To better round out his cultural experiences, Jim recently visited South Korea, Vietnam, and again India. He plans to travel extensively in South America, where he expects to do more photo essays to reflect their fascinating cultures. He is grateful to be able to live in such exciting social, technological, and geopolitical times—and to have access to portable broadband Internet while he pursues his sociological imagination.

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Chapter 1

The Sociological Perspective



Learning Objectives

- 1.1 Explain why both history and biography are essential for the sociological perspective. (p. 3)
- 1.2 Know the focus of each social science. (p. 5)
- 1.3 Trace the origins of sociology, from tradition to Max Weber. (p. 8)
- 1.4 Summarize the opposing arguments in the debate about values in sociological research. (p. 13)
- 1.5 State what *Verstehen* is and why it is valuable. (p. 14)
- 1.6 Trace the development of sociology in North America and explain the tension between objective analysis and social reform. (p. 16)
- 1.7 Explain the basic ideas of symbolic interactionism, functional analysis, and conflict theory. (p. 23)
- 1.8 Explain how research versus reform and globalization are likely to influence sociology. (p. 30)

I quickly scanned the room filled with 100 or so bunks. I was relieved to see that an upper bunk was still open. I grabbed it, figuring that attacks are more difficult in an upper bunk. Even from the glow of the faded red-and-white exit sign, its faint light barely illuminating this bunk, I could see that the sheet was filthy. Resigned to another night of fitful sleep, I reluctantly crawled into bed.

I kept my clothes on.

The next morning, I joined the long line of disheveled men leaning against the chain-link fence. Their faces were as downcast as their clothes were dirty. Not a glimmer of hope among them.

No one spoke as the line slowly inched forward.

When my turn came, I was handed a cup of coffee, a white plastic spoon, and a bowl of semiliquid that I couldn't identify. It didn't look like any food I had seen before. Nor did it taste like anything I had ever eaten.

My stomach fought the foul taste, every spoonful a battle. But I was determined. "I will experience what they experience," I kept telling myself. My stomach reluctantly gave in and accepted its morning nourishment.

The room was strangely silent. Hundreds of men were eating, each one immersed in his own private hell, his mind awash with disappointment, remorse, bitterness.

As I stared at the Styrofoam cup that held my coffee, grateful for at least this small pleasure, I noticed what looked like teeth marks. I shrugged off the thought, telling myself that my

The room was strangely silent. Hundreds of men were eating, each immersed in his own private hell, . . .

long weeks as a sociological observer of the homeless were finally getting to me. “It must be some sort of crease from handling,” I concluded.

I joined the silent ranks of men turning in their bowls and cups. When I saw the man behind the counter swishing out Styrofoam cups in a washtub of murky water, I began to feel sick to my stomach. I knew then that the jagged marks on my cup really had come from another person’s mouth.

How much longer did this research have to last? I felt a deep longing to return to my family—to a welcome world of clean sheets, healthy food, and “normal” conversations.

The Sociological Perspective

1.1 Explain why both history and biography are essential for the sociological perspective.

Why were these men so silent? Why did they receive such despicable treatment? What was I doing in that homeless shelter? After all, I hold a respectable, professional position, and I have a home and family.

You are in for an exciting and eye-opening experience. Sociology offers a fascinating view of social life. The *sociological perspective* (or imagination) opens a window onto unfamiliar worlds—and offers a fresh look at familiar ones. In this text, you will find yourself in the midst of Nazis in Germany and warriors in South America. Sociology is broad, and your journey will even take you to a group that lives in a city dump. (If you want to jump ahead, you can see the photos I took of the people who live—and work and play—in a dump in Cambodia on pages 252–253.) You will also find yourself looking at your own world in a different light. As you view other worlds—or your own—the sociological perspective enables you to gain a new perception of social life. In fact, this is what many find appealing about sociology.

The sociological perspective has been a motivating force in my own life. Ever since I took an introductory course in sociology as a freshman in college, I have been enchanted by the perspective that sociology offers. I have enjoyed both observing other groups and questioning my own assumptions about life. I sincerely hope the same happens to you.

Seeing the Broader Social Context

The **sociological perspective** stresses the social contexts in which people live. It examines how these contexts influence people’s lives. At the center of the sociological perspective is the question of how groups influence people, especially how people are influenced by their **society**—a group of people who share a culture and a territory.

To find out why people do what they do, sociologists look at **social location**, the corners in life that people occupy because of their place in a society. Sociologists look at how jobs, income, education, gender, race–ethnicity, and age affect people’s ideas and behavior. Consider, for example, how being identified with a group called *females* or with a group called *males* when you were growing up has shaped *your* ideas of who you are. Growing up as a female or a male has influenced not only how you feel about yourself but also your ideas of what you should attain in life and how you should relate to others. Even your gestures and the way you laugh come from your identifying with one of these groups.

Sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) put it this way: “The sociological imagination [perspective] enables us to grasp the connection between history and biography.” By *history*, Mills meant that each society is located in a broad stream of events. This gives each society specific characteristics—such as its ideas about what roles are proper for men

sociological perspective

understanding human behavior by placing it within its broader social context

society

people who share a culture and a territory

social location

the group memberships that people have because of their location in history and society



We all learn our basic views of the world from the group in which we grow up. Just as this principle applies to this woman in the Bayaka tribe of the Central African Republic, so it applies to you.

and women. By *biography*, Mills referred to your experiences within a specific historical setting, which gives you your orientations to life. In short, you don't do what they do because you inherited some internal mechanism, such as instincts. Rather, *external* influences—your experiences—become part of your thinking and motivation. Or we can put it this way: At the center of what you do and how you think is the society in which you grow up and your particular location in that society.

Consider a newborn baby. As you know, if we were to take the baby away from its U.S. parents and place it with the Yanomamö Indians in the jungles of South America, his or her first words would not be in English. You also know that the child would not think like an American. The child would not grow up wanting credit cards, for example, or designer clothes, a car, a smartphone, an iPad, and video games. He or she would take his or her place in Yanomamö society—perhaps as a food gatherer, a hunter, or a warrior—and would not even know about the world left behind at birth. And, whether male or female, the child would grow up assuming that it is natural to want many children, not debating whether to have one, two, or three children.

People around the globe take their own views of the world for granted. Something inside us Americans tells us that hamburgers are delicious, small families desirable, and designer clothing attractive. Yet something inside some of the Sinai desert Arab tribes tells them that warm, fresh camel's blood makes a fine drink and that everyone should have a large family and wear flowing robes (Murray 1935; McCabe and Ellis 1990). That "something" certainly isn't an instinct. As sociologist Peter Berger (1963/2016) phrased it, that something is *society within us*.

Although obvious, this point frequently eludes us. We often think and talk about people as though their behavior were caused by their sex ("men are like that"), their race ("those people are like that"), or some other factor transmitted by their genes. The sociological perspective helps us escape from this cramped, personal view by exposing the broader social context that underlies human behavior. It helps us see how social settings shape people's behavior.

If you have been thinking along with me—and I hope you have—you should be thinking about how *your* social groups have shaped *your* ideas and desires. Over and over in this text, you will see that the way you look at the world is the result of your exposure to specific human groups. I think you will enjoy the process of self-discovery that sociology offers.

The Global Context—and the Local

As is evident to all of us—from the labels on our clothing that say Hong Kong, Brunei, or Macau to the many other imported products that have become part of our daily lives—our world has become a global village. How life has changed! Our predecessors lived on isolated farms and in small towns. They grew their own food and made their own clothing, buying only sugar, coffee, and a few other items that they couldn't produce. Beyond the borders of their communities lay a world they perceived only dimly.

And how slow communications used to be! In December 1814, the United States and Great Britain signed a peace treaty to end the War of 1812. Yet *two weeks later*, their armies

fought a major battle at New Orleans. Neither the American nor the British forces there had heard that the war was over (Volti 1995).

Now we can grab our cell phone or use the Internet to communicate instantly with people anywhere on the planet. News flashes from around the world are part of our everyday life. Although we are engulfed in instantaneous global communications, we also continue to occupy our own little corners of life. Like those of our predecessors, our worlds, too, are marked by differences in family background, religion, job, age, gender, race–ethnicity, and social class. In these smaller corners of life, we continue to learn distinctive ways of viewing the world.

One of the beautiful—and fascinating—aspects of sociology is that it enables us to look at both parts of our current reality: being part of a global network *and* having unique experiences in our smaller corners of life. This text reflects both of these worlds, each vital in understanding who we are.

Sociology and the Other Sciences

1.2 Know the focus of each social science.

Just as humans today have an intense desire to unravel the mysteries around them, so did people in ancient times. Their explanations were based not only on observations, however, but were mixed with magic and superstition.

To satisfy their basic curiosity about the world, humans gradually developed **science**, systematic methods for studying the social and natural worlds and the knowledge obtained by those methods. *Sociology*, the study of society and human behavior, is one of these sciences.

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

science

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

The Natural Sciences

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

natural sciences

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

The Social Sciences

People have also developed the **social sciences**, which examine human relationships. Just as the natural sciences attempt to objectively understand the world of nature, the social sciences attempt to objectively understand the social world. Just as the world of nature contains ordered (or lawful) relationships that are not obvious but must be discovered through controlled observations, so the ordered relationships of the human or social world are not obvious and must be revealed by means of repeated observations.

social sciences

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

Like the natural sciences, the social sciences are divided into specialized fields based on their subject matter. These divisions—anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology—are, like the natural sciences, subdivided into specialized fields. Anthropology includes cultural and physical anthropology; economics has macro (large-scale) and micro (small-scale) specialties; political science has theoretical

and applied branches; psychology may be clinical or experimental; and sociology has its quantitative and qualitative branches. Since our focus is sociology, let's contrast sociology with each of the other social sciences.

ANTHROPOLOGY Anthropology, which traditionally focuses on tribal peoples, is closely related to sociology. The chief goal of anthropologists is to understand *culture*, a people's total way of life. Culture includes a group's (1) *artifacts*, such as its tools, art, and weapons; (2) *structure*, the patterns that determine how its members interact with one another, such as positions of leadership; (3) *ideas and values*, the ways the group's beliefs affect its members' lives; and (4) *forms of communication*, especially language.

Students working on their doctorates in anthropology used to spend a year or two living with a tribal group. In their reports, they emphasized the group's family (kin) relationships. As there are no "undiscovered" groups left in the world, this focus on tribal groups has given way to the study of groups in agricultural settings and, increasingly, in industrialized society (Welker et al. 2011). When they study the same groups that sociologists do, anthropologists place more emphasis on artifacts, authority (hierarchy), and language, especially kinship terms.

ECONOMICS Economics concentrates on a single social institution. Economists study the production and distribution of the material goods and services of a society. They want to know what goods are being produced, what they cost, and how those goods are distributed. Economists are also interested in the choices that determine production and consumption; for example, they study what motivates people to buy one item instead of another item.

POLITICAL SCIENCE Political science focuses on politics and government. Political scientists examine how governments are formed, how they operate, and how they are related to the other institutions of society. Political scientists are especially interested in how people attain ruling positions, how they maintain those positions, and the consequences of their actions for the people they govern.

PSYCHOLOGY The focus of psychology is on processes that occur *within* the individual, inside what they call the "skin-bound organism." Experimental psychologists do research on intelligence, emotions, perception, memory, even sleep and dreams. Some study how personality is formed and the causes and treatment of mental illness. Clinical psychologists work as therapists, helping people resolve personal problems, such as recovering from abuse or addiction to drugs. Others work as counselors in school and work settings, where they give personality tests, intelligence tests, and vocational aptitude tests.

SOCIOLOGY Sociology overlaps these other social sciences. Like anthropologists, sociologists also study culture; they, too, do research on group structure and belief systems, as well as on how people communicate with one another. Like economists, sociologists do research on how a society's goods and services are distributed, especially how that distribution results in inequality. Like political scientists, sociologists study how people govern one another, especially how those in power affect people's lives. And like psychologists, sociologists also study how people adjust to the difficulties of life.

With such similarities, what distinguishes sociology from the other social sciences? Unlike anthropologists, sociologists focus primarily on industrialized and postindustrialized societies. Unlike economists and political scientists, sociologists do not concentrate on a single social institution. And unlike psychologists, sociologists stress factors *external* to the individual to determine what influences people and how they adjust to life. These differences might not be entirely clear, so let's go to the Down-to-Earth Sociology box and, in an updated ancient tale, consider how members of different disciplines might perceive the same subject matter.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

An Updated Version of the Old Elephant Story

It is said that in the recent past, five wise men and women, all blindfolded, were led to an elephant and asked to explain what they “saw.” The first, an anthropologist, tenderly touching the trunk and the tusks, broke into a huge grin and said, “This is really primitive. I feel very comfortable here. Concentrate on these.”

The second, an economist, feeling the mouth, said, “This is what counts. What goes in here is distributed throughout the body. Concentrate your research on what goes in here and how it is distributed.”

The third, a political scientist, feeling the gigantic ears, announced, “This is the power center. What goes in here controls the entire beast. Concentrate your studies here.”

The fourth, a psychologist, stroking the top of the elephant’s head, smiled contentedly and said, “This is the only thing that counts. All feeling and thinking take place inside here. To understand this beast, we’ll study this part.”

Then came the sociologist (of course!), who, after feeling the entire body, said, “You can’t understand the beast by concentrating on only one part. Each is part of the whole. The trunk and tusks, the mouth, the ears, the head—all are

important. But so are the parts of the beast that you haven’t mentioned. We must remove our blindfolds so we can see the larger picture. We have to see how everything works together to form the entire animal.”

Pausing for emphasis, the sociologist added, “And we also need to understand how this creature interacts with similar creatures. How does its life in groups influence its behavior?”

I wish I could conclude this tale by saying that the anthropologist, the economist, the political scientist, and the psychologist were dazzled on hearing the wisdom of the sociologist, and, amidst gasps of wonderment, they tore off their blindfolds, joined together, and began to examine the entire animal. But, alas and alack! On hearing this sage advice, the specialists stubbornly bound

their blindfolds even tighter so they could concentrate all the more on their particular part. And if you listened very, very carefully, you could even hear them mutter, “Don’t touch the tusks.” “Stay away from the mouth—that’s my area.” “Take your hands off the ears.” “The top of the head is mine—get away from it.”



The traditional version of the blind men and the elephant does not include social scientists.

The Goals of Science

The first goal of each science is to *explain* why something happens. The second goal is to make **generalizations**, that is, to go beyond the individual case and make statements that apply to a broader group or situation. For example, a sociologist wants to explain not only why Mary went to college or became an armed robber but also why people with her characteristics are more likely than others to go to college or to become armed robbers. To achieve generalizations, sociologists look for *patterns*, recurring characteristics or events. The third scientific goal is to *predict*, to specify in the light of current knowledge what will happen in the future.

To attain these goals, scientists do not rely on magic, superstition, or common beliefs but, instead, they do systematic research. They explain exactly how they did their research so it can be reviewed by others. Secrecy, biases, and “trying to prove the way you want something to be” go against the grain of science.

Sociologists and other scientists also move beyond **common sense**—the prevailing ideas in a society, the things that “everyone knows” are true. “Everyone” can be as misguided today as everyone was when common sense dictated that the world was flat or that no human could ever walk on the moon. As sociologists do their research, their findings may confirm or contradict commonsense notions about social life.

Do you want to test your own common sense? Take the little Down-to-Earth Sociology quiz.

generalization

a statement that goes beyond the individual case and is applied to a broader group or situation

common sense

those things that “everyone knows” are true

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Enjoying a Sociology Quiz—Testing Your Common Sense

Some findings of sociology support commonsense understandings of social life, and others contradict them.

Can you tell the difference?

Answer *all* questions before turning the page to see the answers.

- True/False** More U.S. students are killed in school shootings now than ten or fifteen years ago.
- True/False** The earnings of U.S. women have just about caught up with those of U.S. men.
- True/False** With life so rushed and more women working for wages, today's parents spend less time with their children than parents of previous generations did.
- True/False** It is more dangerous to walk near topless bars than fast-food restaurants.
- True/False** Most rapists are mentally ill.
- True/False** A large percentage of terrorists are mentally ill.
- True/False** Most people on welfare are lazy and looking for a handout. They could work if they wanted to.
- True/False** Compared with women, men make more eye contact in face-to-face conversations.
- True/False** Because bicyclists are more likely to wear helmets now than a few years ago, their rate of head injuries has dropped.
- True/False** As measured by their divorce rate, couples who live together before marriage are usually more satisfied with their marriages than couples who did not live together before marriage.

The Risks of Being a Sociologist

Sometimes the explorations of sociologists take them into nooks and crannies that people would prefer remain unexplored. For example, a sociologist might study how muggers choose their victims or how people make decisions to cheat on their spouses. Since sociologists are intrigued with understanding social life, they don't stop doing research because people disapprove of it or feel uncomfortable about it. Sociologists consider all realms of human life legitimate avenues to explore, and they research both the respectable and the downright disreputable.

When sociologists do research on organizations, they sometimes face pressure to keep things secret. Every group, it seems, nourishes some ideal image that it presents to others. Because sociologists are interested in knowing what is *really* going on, they peer behind the scenes to get past those sugar-coated images (Berger 1963, 2016). An objective report can threaten a group's image, leading to pressure and conflict—all part of the adventure, and risk, of being a sociologist.



Upsetting the entire social order, the French Revolution removed the past as a sure guide to the present. This stimulated Auguste Comte to analyze how societies change. Shown here is the king of France, Louis XVI, as he is about to be executed by guillotine in 1793.

Origins of Sociology

1.3 Trace the origins of sociology, from tradition to Max Weber.

Tradition versus Science

So when did sociology begin? Even ancient peoples tried to figure out how social life works. They, too, asked questions about why war exists, why some people become more powerful than others, and why some are rich but others are poor. However, they often based their answers on superstition, myth, even the positions of the stars. They did not *test* their assumptions.

Science, in contrast, requires theories that can be tested by research. Measured by this standard, sociology emerged about the middle of the 1800s, when social observers began to use scientific methods to test their ideas. Three main events set the stage for the challenge to tradition and the emergence of sociology.

The first was the social upheaval of the Industrial Revolution. As agriculture gave way to factory production, masses of people moved to cities in search of work. The city's greeting was harsh: miserable pay, long hours,

and dangerous work. To help their family survive, even children worked in these miserable conditions, some of them chained to machines to keep them from running away. With their ties to the land broken and their world turned upside down, no longer could people count on tradition to provide the answers to the difficult questions of life.

The second was the social upheaval of political revolution. The American and French revolutions swept away the existing social orders—and with them the answers they had provided. Before this period, tradition had ruled. The reply to questions of “why” was “We do this because it has always been done this way.” A new social order challenges traditional answers and ushers in new ideas. The ideas that emerged during this period challenged tradition even further. Especially powerful was the new idea that each person possesses inalienable rights. This idea caught fire to such an extent that people were willing to die for it, forcing many traditional Western monarchies to give way to more democratic forms of government.

The third was the imperialism (empire building) of the time. The Europeans had conquered so many countries that their new colonies stretched across the world, from Asia and Africa to North and South America. This exposed them to radically different ways of life, and they began to ask why cultures differ.

The industrial revolution, political revolution, and imperialism, then, led to a questioning of traditional answers. At this same time, **the scientific method**—using objective, systematic observations to test theories—was being tried in chemistry and physics. This revealed many secrets that had been concealed in nature. With traditional answers failing, the next step was to apply the scientific method to questions about social life. The result was the birth of sociology.

Let’s take a quick overview of some of the main people in this development.

Auguste Comte and Positivism

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) suggested that we apply the scientific method to the social world, a process known as **positivism**. With the bloody upheavals of the French Revolution fresh in his mind—and he knew that the crowds had cheered at the public execution of the king and queen of France—Comte started to wonder what holds society together. He asked why we have social order instead of anarchy or chaos. And when society becomes set on a particular course, what causes it to change?

These were pressing questions, and Comte decided that the scientific method held the key to answering them. Just as the scientific method had revealed the law of gravity, so, too, it would uncover the laws that underlie society. Comte called this new science **sociology**—“the study of society” (from the Greek *logos*, “study of,” and the Latin *socius*, “companion,” or “being with others”). The purpose of this new science, he said, would not only be to discover social principles but also to apply them to social reform. Comte developed a grandiose view: Sociologists would reform society, making it a better place to live.

Applying the scientific method to social life meant something quite different to Comte than it does to sociologists today. To Comte, it meant a kind of “armchair philosophy”—drawing conclusions from informal observations of social life. Comte did not do what we today call research, and his conclusions have been abandoned. But because he proposed that we observe and classify human activities to uncover society’s fundamental laws and coined the term *sociology* to describe this process, Comte often is credited with being the founder of sociology.

Herbert Spencer and Social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), who grew up in England, is sometimes called the second founder of sociology. Spencer disagreed sharply with Comte. He said that sociologists should *not* guide social reform. If they did, he said, it would interfere with a natural process that improves societies. Societies are evolving from a lower form (“barbarian”) to higher (“civilized”) forms. As generations pass, a society’s most capable and intelligent

scientific method

the use of objective, systematic observations to test theories

positivism

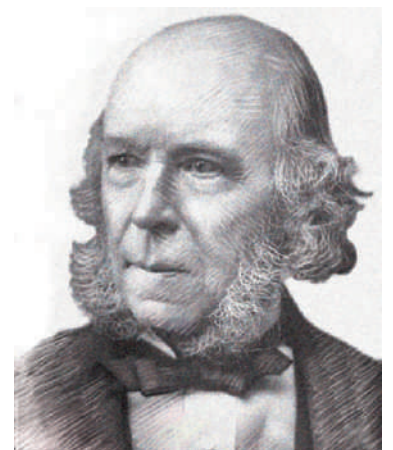
the application of the scientific approach to the social world

sociology

the scientific study of society and human behavior



Auguste Comte (1798–1857), who is credited as the founder of sociology, began to analyze the bases of the social order. Although he stressed that the scientific method should be applied to the study of society, he did not apply it himself.



Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), sometimes called the second founder of sociology, coined the term “survival of the fittest.” Spencer thought that helping the poor was wrong, that this merely helped the “less fit” survive.