Eleventh Edition
SOCIOLOGY
A Brief Introduction
Richard T. Schaefer

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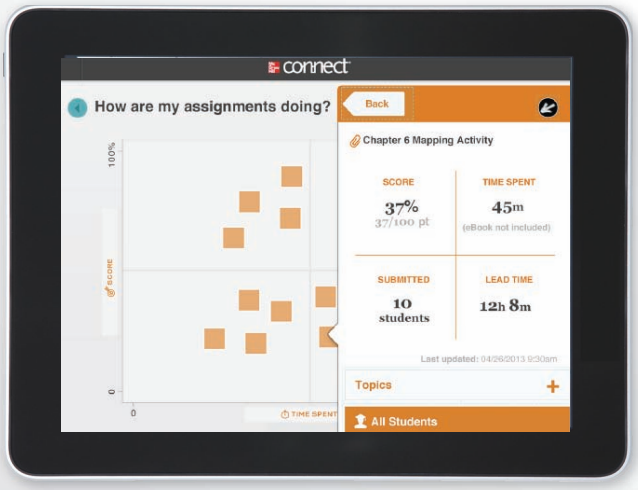

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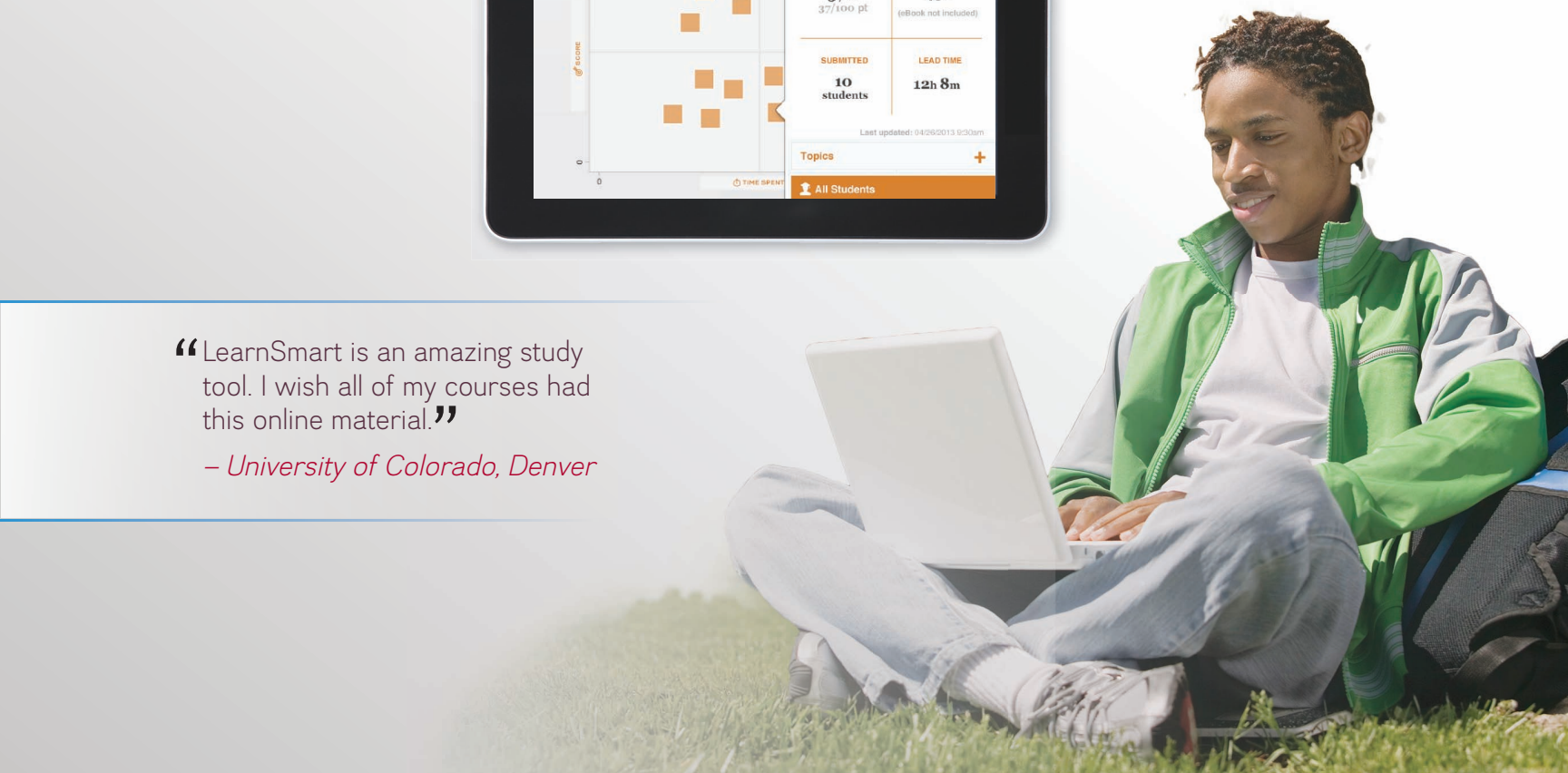

sociology

a brief introduction

11th edition

Richard T. Schaefer

DePaul University

Mc Graw Hill Education

dedication

To my grandson, Reuben. May he enjoy exploring life's possibilities.

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about the author

Richard T. Schaefer: Professor, DePaul University
B.A. Northwestern University
M.A., Ph.D. University of Chicago

Growing up in Chicago at a time when neighborhoods were going through transitions in ethnic and racial composition, Richard T. Schaefer found himself increasingly intrigued by what was happening, how people were reacting, and how these changes were affecting neighborhoods and people's jobs. His interest in social issues caused him to gravitate to sociology courses at Northwestern University, where he eventually received a BA in sociology.

"Originally as an undergraduate I thought I would go on to law school and become a lawyer. But after taking a few sociology courses, I found myself wanting to learn more about what sociologists studied, and fascinated by the kinds of questions they raised." This fascination led him to obtain his MA and PhD in sociology from the University of Chicago. Dr. Schaefer's continuing interest in race relations led him to write his master's thesis on the membership of the Ku Klux Klan and his doctoral thesis on racial prejudice and race relations in Great Britain.

Dr. Schaefer went on to become a professor of sociology at DePaul University in Chicago. In 2004 he was named to the Vincent DePaul professorship in recognition of his undergraduate teaching and scholarship. He has taught introductory sociology for over 35 years to students in colleges, adult education programs, nursing programs, and even a maximum-security prison. Dr. Schaefer's love of teaching is apparent in his interaction with his students. "I find myself constantly learning from the students who are in my classes and from reading what they write. Their insights into the material we read or current events that we discuss often become part of future course material and sometimes even find their way into my writing."

Dr. Schaefer is the author of the thirteenth edition of *Sociology* (McGraw-Hill, 2012), *Sociology in Modules,* third edition (McGraw-Hill, 2015), and the sixth edition of *Sociology Matters* (McGraw-Hill, 2014). He is also the author of *Racial and Ethnic Groups,* now in its fourteenth edition (2014), *Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the USA* (first edition, 2014), and *Race and Ethnicity in the United States,* seventh edition (2013), all published by Pearson. Together with William Zellner, he coauthored the ninth edition of *Extraordinary Groups,* published by Worth in 2011. Dr. Schaefer served as the general editor of the three-volume *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society,* published by Sage in 2008. These books have been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish, as well as adapted for use in Canadian colleges.

Dr. Schaefer's articles and book reviews have appeared in many journals, including *American Journal of Sociology; Phylon: A Review of Race and Culture; Contemporary Sociology; Sociology and Social Research; Sociological Quarterly;* and *Teaching Sociology.* He served as president of the Midwest Sociological Society in 1994–1995.

Dr. Schaefer's advice to students is to "look at the material and make connections to your own life and experiences. Sociology will make you a more attentive observer of how people in groups interact and function. It will also make you more aware of people's different needs and interests—and perhaps more ready to work for the common good, while still recognizing the individuality of each person."

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A Revision Informed by Student Data

Over the course of two years, data points showing concepts that caused students the most difficulty were collected anonymously from Connect Sociology's LearnSmart for *Sociology: A Brief Introduction,* Tenth Edition. This student performance data provided a new source of information that could be used together with instructor reviews to inform plans for the Eleventh Edition.

The data from LearnSmart were presented in the form of a **Heat Map,** which graphically illustrated "hot spots" in the text that impacted student learning. The data were analyzed and used to guide the revision of core content, as well as questions and other auto-gradable activities in **Connect Sociology** and **LearnSmart,** to further support student success.

reference group is binge drinking. On the one hand, we can view binge drinking as *deviant,* as violating a school's standards of conduct and endangering a person's health. On the other hand, we can see it as *conforming,* or complying with peer culture. In the United States, people are socialized to have mixed feelings about both conforming and nonconforming behavior. The term *conformity* can conjure up images of mindless imitation of a peer group—whether a circle of teenagers wearing "phat pants" or a group of business executives all dressed in gray suits. Yet the same term can also suggest that an individual is cooperative, or a "team player." What about those who do not conform? They may be respected as individualists, leaders, or creative thinkers who break new ground. Or they may be labeled as "troublemakers" and "weirdos."

This chapter examines the relationships among deviance and conformity, crime and social control. What is deviance, and what are its consequences? What causes crime? How does society control people's behavior, convincing us to conform to both unwritten rules and formal laws? We will begin by defining deviance and describing the stigma that is associated with it. Then we will distinguish between conformity and obedience, and examine a surprising experiment on obedience to authority. We will study the mechanisms societies use, both formal and informal, to encourage conformity and discourage deviance, paying particular attention to the law and how it reflects our social values.

Next, we will focus on theoretical explanations for deviance, including the functionalist approach employed by Émile Durkheim and Robert Merton; interactionist-based theories; labeling theory, which draws on both the interactionist and the conflict perspectives; and conflict theory. In the last part of the chapter we will focus on crime, a specific type of deviant behavior. As a form of deviance that is subject to official, written norms, crime has been a special concern of both policymakers and the public in general. We will look at various types of crime found in the United States, the ways crime is measured, and international crime rates. Finally, the Social Policy section considers the controversial topic of the death penalty.

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Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

What Is Deviance?

For sociologists, the term *deviance* does not mean perversion or depravity. **Deviance** is behavior that violates the standards of conduct or expectations of a group or society. In the United States, alcoholics, compulsive gamblers, and the mentally ill would all be classified as deviants. Being late for class is categorized as a deviant act; the same is true of wearing jeans to a formal wedding. On the basis of the sociological definition, we are all deviant from time to time. Each of us violates common social norms in certain situations (Best 2004).

Is being overweight an example of deviance? In the United States and many other cultures, unrealistic standards of appearance and body image place a huge strain on people—especially women and girls—based on how they look. Journalist Naomi Wolf (1992) has used the term *beauty myth* to refer to an exaggerated ideal of beauty, beyond the reach of all but a few females, which has unfortunate consequences. In order to shed their "deviant" image and conform to unrealistic societal norms, many women and girls become consumed with adjusting their appearances. Yet what is deviant in one culture may be celebrated in another.

In 2009, baseball fans were shocked by the revelation that, like several other baseball greats, superstar Alex Rodriguez had used banned substances and lied about it.

Think about It
If your friends or teammates violate a social norm, is their behavior deviant?

Deviance involves the violation of group norms, which may or may not be formalized into law. It is a comprehensive concept that includes not only criminal behavior but also many actions that are not subject to prosecution. The public official who takes a bribe has defied social norms, but so has the high school student who refuses to sit in an assigned seat or cuts class. Of course, deviation from norms is not always negative, let alone criminal. A member of an exclusive social club who speaks out against a traditional policy of not admitting women, Blacks, and Jews is deviating from the club's norms. So is a police officer who blows the whistle on corruption or brutality within the department.

From a sociological perspective, deviance is hardly objective or set in stone. Rather, it is subject to social definition within a particular society and at a particular time. For that reason, what is considered deviant can shift from one social era to another. In most instances, those individuals and groups with the greatest status and power define what is acceptable and what is deviant. For example, despite serious medical warnings against the dangers of tobacco, made since 1964, cigarette smoking continued to be accepted for decades—in good part because of the power of tobacco farmers and cigarette manufacturers. Only after a long campaign led by public health and anticancer activists did cigarette smoking become more of a deviant activity. Today, many state and local laws limit where people can smoke.

Deviance and Social Stigma

A person can acquire a deviant identity in many ways. Because of physical or behavioral characteristics, some people are

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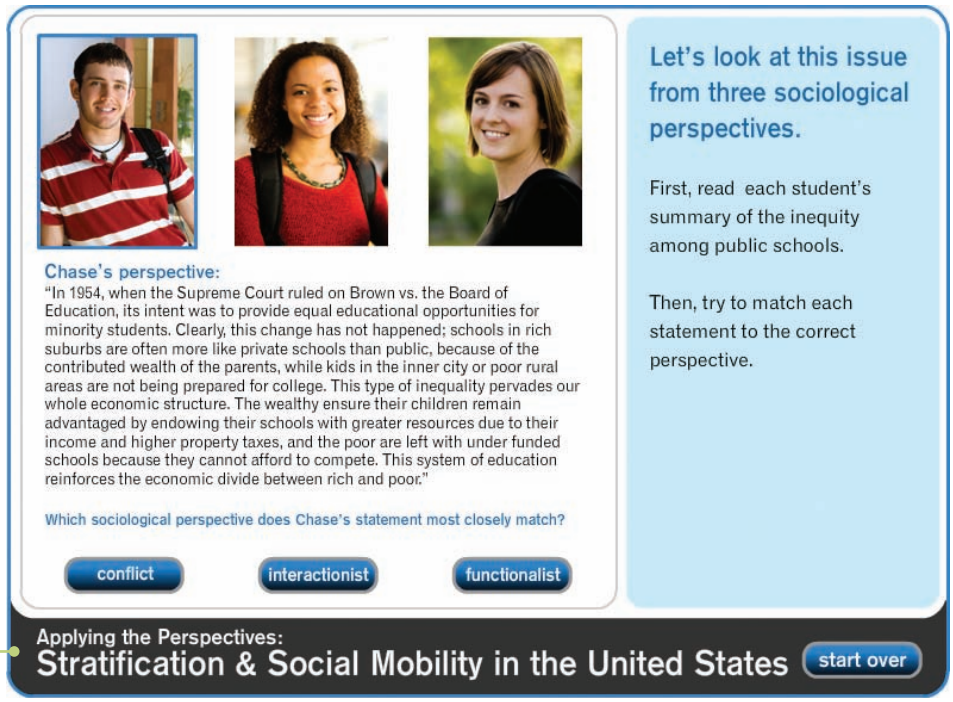

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Take Sociology with You

Sociology: A Brief Introduction highlights the distinctive ways in which sociologists examine human social behavior, as well as the ways in which research findings contribute to our understanding of society. In doing so, it helps students to think like sociologists and to apply sociological theories and concepts to human interactions and institutions. In other words, *Sociology: A Brief Introduction* gives students the tools they need to take sociology with them when they graduate from college, begin to pursue careers, and become involved in their communities and the world at large.

Thinking Critically: These questions, appearing at the end of selected sections, prompt students to review and reflect on the content.

Sociology on Campus: These sections apply a sociological perspective to issues of immediate interest to students.

Use Your Sociological Imagination: These short, thought-provoking exercises encourage students to apply the sociological concepts they have learned to the world around them.

Taking Sociology with You: These critical thinking questions and reflection prompts at the end of each chapter encourage students to apply the material they have just read to their daily lives.

Taking Sociology to Work: These boxes underscore the value of an undergraduate or community college degree in sociology by profiling individuals who studied sociology and now use its principles in their work.

Research Today: These boxes present new sociological findings on topics such as sports, social networks, and transracial adoption.

Careers in Sociology: This appendix to Chapter 1 presents career options for students who have their undergraduate degree in sociology and explains how this degree can be an asset in a wide variety of occupations.

Our Wired World: These boxes describe the Internet's effect on social activities such as lying, love, and politicking.

Sociology in the Global Community: These boxes provide a global perspective on topics such as stratification, marriage, and the women's movement.

Social Policy Sections: The end-of-chapter social policy sections apply sociological concepts and theories to important social issues currently being debated by policymakers and the general public.

Maps: Mapping Life Nationwide and Mapping Life Worldwide maps show social trends in the United States as well as in the global community.

What's New?

Chapter 1: Understanding Sociology

- Discussion of the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, founded by W. E. B. DuBois, and its contributions to applied sociology
- Expanded Thinking Critically exercise on social and cultural capital
- Subsection on queer theory, with key term treatment
- Research Today box, "Looking at Sports from Five Sociological Perspectives"

Chapter 2: Sociological Research

- Inclusion of a written report with executive summary as the final task in the scientific method
- Updated figure on educational level and household income, based on 2013 census release
- Discussion of the reliability and validity of the American Community Survey
- Updated figure on the impact of a college education on income
- Updated coverage of the U.S. Army's Human Terrain System as an example of ethnographic research
- Coverage of the use of content analysis of children's books to assess children's environmental awareness
- Section on queer theory and methodology
- In the section on the data-rich future, discussion of researchers' use of a government database to map housing conditions in Boston, with figure, "Seeing Boston's Housing Issues"
- Updated coverage of public opinion research on the legalization of marijuana

Chapter 3: Culture

- Updated figure, "Life Goals of First-Year College Students in the United States, 1966–2012"
- In the Sociology on Campus box "A Culture of Cheating," discussion of two recent cases of high-achieving students caught cheating on exams
- Sections on cultural variation and the development of culture moved to end of the chapter
- Example of the culture shock a Westerner might experience in Japan
- Use of the culture wars that arise out of regional political differences in the United States as an illustration of the development of subcultures
- In the Social Policy section, opening example of the role of language differences in increasing the risk of clinical errors in emergency rooms
- In the Social Policy section, discussion of the current trend toward linguistic diversity in the United States
- Updated Mapping Life Nationwide map, "Percentage of People Who Speak a Language Other Than English at Home, by State"
- Two Take the Issue with You exercises

Chapter 4: Socialization and the Life Course

- Opening excerpt, "The Challenge," by military journalist Jim Garamone
- Updated and expanded coverage of Romanian orphans, with photo
- Updated discussion of the effect of young people's use of social media on their socialization
- Sociology on Campus box, "Unplugging the Media: What Happens?" with figure, "Responses to a Day without Media"
- Discussion of the cost and availability of broadband Internet service in developing countries
- Updated discussion of the life events marking the passage to adulthood, with new Use Your Sociological Imagination exercise
- Discussion of the recent reversal of the trend toward early retirement and the reasons for it
- Discussion of the pressing need for day care in Japan
- Expanded discussion of the public policy perspective on day care

Chapter 5: Social Interaction, Groups, and Social Structure

- Opening excerpt from "Pathology of Imprisonment" by Philip Zimbardo
- Taking Sociology to Work box, "Sarah Levy, Owner, S. Levy Foods"
- Discussion of research on the importance of group solidarity following the shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007
- Explanation of the difference between social networks and social media
- Discussion of the perceived need to reform the process of bureaucratization in China
- Thinking Critically exercise
- Sociology in the Global Community box, "Disney World: A Postmodern Theme Park," with key term treatment of Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperconsumerism
- Social Policy section, "The State of the Unions Worldwide," with figure, "Labor Union Membership Worldwide"

Chapter 6: The Mass Media

- Opening excerpt from *Electronic Media* by Lynne Gross
- Inclusion of IMDb in table, "Status Conferred by the Media"
- Description of the Chinese government's efforts to minimize online dissent
- Discussion of the portrayal of homosexuality (or the lack of it) in the mass media from the perspective of queer theory
- Discussion of hyper-local media, with key term treatment
- Discussion of Rwanda's effort to develop its economy by encouraging investment in information and communications technologies

- Discussion of the mass media as a form of social capital
- Discussion of crowdsourcing as a way to encourage mobile giving, with key term treatment
- Revised figure, "Who's on the Internet"
- Revised figure, "Media Penetration in Selected Countries," including cell phones, the Internet, and social networking
- Discussion of the monitoring of text messages by public health researchers in Kenya to track the spread of malaria
- Thoroughly revised Social Policy section, "The Right to Privacy," including discussion of (a) Edward Snowden's revelations about the National Security Agency's collection of massive amounts of data on ordinary citizens, with key term treatment of Charles Tilly's concept of *big data;* (b) the approval of "tower dumps," or the indiscriminate collection of information from all cell phones in an area, by subpoena only; and (c) the installation of data-recording sensors on appliances, security badges, and other objects

Chapter 7: Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

- Discussion of the stigmatization of people with mental illness as potentially violent and criminal, despite evidence to the contrary
- Updated Mapping Life Nationwide map, "The Status of Medical Marijuana"
- Updated table, "National Crime Rates and Percentage Change"
- Figure, "Victimization Rates, 1993–2012"
- Social Policy section on gun control, including (a) recent shootings in Aurora, Colorado, and Newtown, Connecticut; (b) statistics on gun ownership in the United States compared to other countries; (c) expanded coverage of the cutoff of funding for research on gun violence; and (d) the public health perspective on gun control
- Two Thinking Critically exercises

Chapter 8: Stratification and Social Mobility in the United States

- Chapter-opening excerpt from "Cost of Homelessness" by the National Alliance to End Homelessness
- Expanded subsection on the supposed existence of class warfare in the United States, with discussion of the Occupy Wall Street movement
- Expanded discussion of conspicuous consumption, including ostentatious displays on Facebook, with key term treatment
- Discussion of the growing inequality in household wealth
- Discussion of precarious workers' use of social media to gain political recognition
- Updated coverage of the impact of race and ethnicity on intergenerational mobility
- Social Policy section, "Minimum Wage Laws," including discussions of (a) wage theft; (b) President Obama's proposal to raise the minimum wage; and (c) the concept of a living wage, with key term treatment

Chapter 9: Global Inequality

- Expanded coverage of the Millennium Project
- Revised figure, "Foreign Aid per Capita in Nine Countries"
- Sociology in the Global Community Box, "Walking the Last Mile in Uganda: The Avon Approach"
- Revised figure, "Multinational Corporations Compared to Nations"

Chapter 10: Racial and Ethnic Inequality

- Chapter-opening excerpt from "Iyeska: Notes from Mixed-Blood Country" by Charles Trimble
- Updated figure, "U.S. Median Income by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender"
- Research Today box, "Institutional Discrimination in the Voting Booth," with map, "Voter ID Requirements"
- Expanded coverage of residential segregation in the United States, with table, "Segregated Metropolitan America"
- Mapping Life Nationwide map, "Minority Population by County"

Chapter 11: Stratification by Gender

- Chapter-opening excerpt from Azadeh Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran*
- Sociology in the Global Community box, "Women in Combat Worldwide"
- Discussion of the glass escalator, with key term treatment
- Updated discussion of feminism
- Updated Social Policy section, "The Battle over Abortion from a Global Perspective," with discussion of recent changes in state and local policies regarding abortion clinics and Mapping Life Nationwide double map, "State Abortion-Related Policies, 2000–2011"

Chapter 12: The Family and Human Sexuality

- Discussion of how the gay marriage debate has revived the polygamous marriage debate
- Our Wired World box, "Love Is in the Air and on the Web"
- Discussion of the Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Initiative under the Obama administration
- Mapping Life Nationwide map, "Same-Sex Couple Households as Percent of All Households"
- Coverage of increased acceptance of LGBT people, especially by businesses and federal agencies
- Thoroughly revised Social Policy section on gay marriage, including (a) discussion of queer theorists' perspective on gay marriage; (b) the Supreme Court decision in *United States v. Windsor,* which invalidated a key section of the Defense of Marriage Act; (c) local resistance to gay marriage; (d) dissenting LGBT views of same-sex marriage; and (e) Mapping Life Nationwide map, "Gay Marriage Recognition by State"

Chapter 13: Religion and Education

- Opening excerpt from *Toying with God: The World of Religious Games and Dolls,* by Nikki Bado-Fralick and Rebecca Sachs Norris
- Research Today box, "Mormons: A Controversial Denomination"
- Discussion of the persistence of school segregation in the United States, despite recent suburbanization of African American and Hispanic families
- Updated figure, "Tuition Costs, 1981–2011"
- Updated Mapping Life Nationwide map, "Average Salary for Teachers"
- Social Policy section, "Religion in the Schools"

Chapter 14: Government and the Economy

- Chapter-opening excerpt from *Who Rules America? The Triumph of the Corporate Rich,* Seventh Edition, by G. William Domhoff
- Our Wired World box, "Politicking Online"
- Subsection on the temporary workforce
- Discussion of "reshoring," a countertrend to offshoring of U.S. manufacturing and service centers

Chapter 15: Health and the Environment

- Figure, "AIDS by the Numbers"
- Section on mental Illness, with subsections on (a) theoretical models of mental disorders, including the medical model and labeling theory, and (b) patterns of care; and Use Your Sociological Imagination exercise
- Subsection on climate change, with key term treatment of climate change and global warming
- Discussion of migrations caused by climate change in the western United States

Chapter 16: Social Change in the Global Community

- Opening excerpt, "The Information Revolution's Broken Promises," by Karl Albrecht
- Our Wired World box, "Organizing for Controversy via Computer-Mediated Communication"
- Discussion of the possibility that technological advances may eliminate people's jobs, with table, "Jobs Projected to Be Eliminated by Computerization"
- Our Wired World box, "The Internet's Global Profile"
- Discussion of transnationals' participation in social movements
- Thinking Critically exercise

Teaching Resources

Instructor's Manual. The Instructor's Manual includes detailed chapter outlines and chapter summaries; learning objectives; a chapter-by-chapter bulleted list of new content; key terms; essay questions; and critical thinking questions.

PowerPoint Slides. The PowerPoint Slides include bulleted lecture points, figures, and maps. They can be used as is or modified to meet the instructor's individual needs.

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Every year McGraw-Hill conducts several Introductory Sociology symposia for instructors from across the country. These events offer a forum for instructors to exchange ideas and experiences with colleagues they might not have the chance to meet otherwise. They also provide an opportunity for members of the McGraw-Hill team to learn about the needs and challenges of the Introductory Sociology course for both instructors and students. The feedback we have received has been invaluable and contributed—directly and indirectly—to this edition of *Sociology:*

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INSIDE

What Is Sociology?

What Is Sociological Theory?

The Development of Sociology

Major Theoretical Perspectives

Taking Sociology with You

Appendix: Careers in Sociology

No matter where you're going—to work, to study abroad, or just on vacation—you can take sociology and its insights with you.

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Pat O'Brien, *Elgin Community College*
Jacob Oni, *Cape Cod Community College*
Robert Orrange, *Eastern Michigan University*
Diane Owsley, *Elizabeth Community College*
Kevin Payne, *Park University*
Lisa Pellerin, *Ball State University*
Paul C. Price, *Pasadena City College*
Richard Rosell, *Westchester Community College*
Alan Rudy, *Central Michigan University*
Terri Schrantz, *Tarrant County Community College–Southeast*
Barbara Seiter, *Raritan Valley Community College*
Michelle Smith, *Lakeland Community College*
Rachael Stehle, *Cuyahoga Community College*
Lawrence Stern, *Collin College*
Rose Suggett, *Southeast Community College*
Richard Sweeny, *Modesto Junior College*
Margaret Taylor, *Greenville Technical College*
Baishakhi Banerjee Taylor, *Duke University*
Michelle Stewart Thomas, *Mt. San Antonio College*
Ruth Thompson-Miller, *Texas A&M University*
Ronald Thrasher, *Oklahoma State University*
Vu-Duc Vuong, *DeAnza College*
Marie L. Wallace, *Pima Community College*
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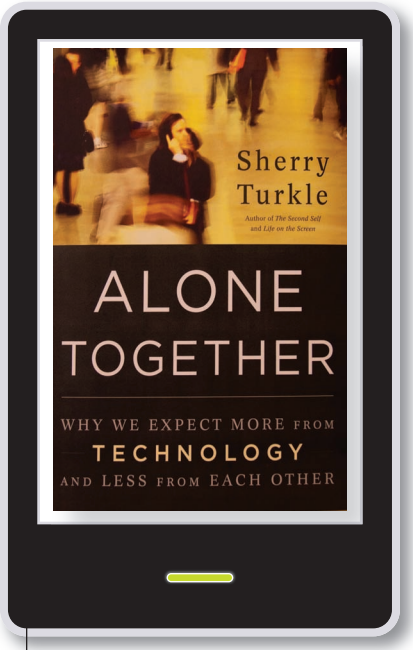
Understanding Sociology 1



Did you ever suspect that you were hiding from people while you were online with them?

MIT sociologist and psychologist Sherry Turkle thinks that the web may actually distance us from others.

"Technology proposes itself as the architect of our intimacies. These days, it suggests substitutions that put the real on the run. The advertising for Second Life, a virtual world where you get to build an avatar, a house, a family, and a social life, basically says, "Finally, a place to love your body, love your friends, and love your life." In Second Life, a lot of people, as represented by their avatars, are richer than they are in first life and a lot younger, thinner, and better dressed. And we are smitten with the idea of sociable robots, which most people first meet in the guise of artificial pets. Zhu Zhu pet hamsters, the "it" toy of the 2009–2010 holiday season, are presented as "better" than any real pet could be. We are told they are lovable and responsive, don't require cleanup, and will never die.

Technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities. And as it turns out, we are very vulnerable indeed. We are lonely but fearful of intimacy. Digital connections and the sociable robot may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship. Our networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we are tethered to each other. We'd rather text than talk.

From the start, people used interactive and reactive computers to reflect on the self and think about the difference between machines and people. Were intelligent machines alive? If not, why not?

Computers no longer wait for humans to project meaning onto them. Now, sociable robots meet our gaze, speak to us, and learn to recognize us. They ask us to take care of them; in response, we imagine that they might care for us in return. Indeed, among the most talked about robotic designs are in the area of care and companionship. In summer 2010, there are enthusiastic reports in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* on robotic teachers, companions, and therapists. And Microsoft demonstrates a virtual human, Milo, that recognizes the people it interacts with and whose personality is sculpted by them. Tellingly, in the video that introduces Milo to the public, a young man begins by playing games with Milo in a virtual garden; by the end of the demonstration, things have heated up—he confides in Milo after being told off by his parents.

We are challenged to ask what such things augur. Some people are looking for robots to clean rugs and help with the laundry. Others hope for a mechanical bride. As sociable robots propose themselves as substitutes for people, new networked devices offer us machine-mediated relationships with each other, another kind of substitution. We romance the robot and become inseparable from our smartphones. As this happens, we remake ourselves and our relationships with each other through our new intimacy with machines. People talk about web access on their BlackBerries as "the place for hope" in life, the place where loneliness can be defeated. A woman in her late sixties describes her new iPhone: "It's like having a little Times Square in my pocketbook. All lights. All the people I could meet." People are lonely. The network is seductive. But if we are always on, we may deny ourselves the rewards of solitude."

Digital connections and the sociable robot may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship.

(Turkle 2011:1–3)

Think about your life before you owned a cell phone: How did you connect with others then? How do you connect with them now? In this excerpt from *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other,* Sherry Turkle writes that modern technology—especially communications technology—is changing the way we relate to others. Today, our digital communications devices tend to preoccupy us, often burying us in a deluge of information, both audio and video. Yet in the end, they cannot substitute for the ties that bind, the face-to-face relationships that hold family and friends together. Ironically, in an effort to dig out from the communications overflow, we are constantly seeking new networking gadgets (Turkle 2011:280).

We've come a long way from the days when home entertainment meant black-and-white television, and "reaching out" involved a land-line telephone and voice messages. Today, we not only carry the telephone with us; we use it to watch television and movies delivered over the Internet. Social life is being impacted by and carried out through an object we hold in our hand.

As a field of study, sociology is extremely broad in scope. You will see throughout this book the range of topics sociologists investigate—from suicide to TV viewing habits, from Amish society to global economic patterns, from peer pressure to genetic engineering. Sociology looks at how others influence our behavior; how major social institutions like

the government, religion, and the economy affect us; and how we ourselves affect other individuals, groups, and even organizations.

How did sociology develop? In what ways does it differ from other social sciences? This chapter will explore the nature of sociology as both a field of inquiry and an exercise of the "sociological imagination." We'll look at the discipline as a science and consider its relationship to other social sciences. We'll meet four pioneering thinkers—Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and W. E. B. DuBois—and examine the theoretical perspectives that grew out of their work. We'll note some of the practical applications for sociological theory and research. Finally, we'll see how sociology helps us to develop a sociological imagination. For those students interested in exploring career opportunities in sociology, the chapter closes with a special appendix.

What Is Sociology?

"What has sociology got to do with me or with my life?" As a student, you might well have asked this question when you signed up for your introductory sociology course. To answer it, consider these points: Are you influenced by what you see on television? Do you use the Internet? Did you vote in the last election? Are you familiar with binge drinking on campus? Do you use alternative medicine? These are just a few of the everyday life situations described in this book that sociology can shed light on. But as the opening excerpt indicates, sociology also looks at large social issues. We use sociology to investigate why thousands of jobs have moved from the United States to developing nations, what social forces promote prejudice, what leads someone to join a social movement and work for social change, how access to computer technology can reduce social inequality, and why relationships between men and women in Seattle differ from those in Singapore.

Sociology is, simply, the scientific study of social behavior and human groups. It focuses on social relationships; how those relationships influence people's behavior; and how societies, the sum total of those relationships, develop and change.

The Sociological Imagination

In attempting to understand social behavior, sociologists rely on a particular type of critical thinking. A leading sociologist, C. Wright Mills, described such thinking as the **sociological imagination**—an awareness of the relationship between an individual and the wider society, both today and in the past (Mills [1959] 2000a). This awareness allows all of us (not just sociologists) to comprehend the links between our immediate, personal social settings and the remote, impersonal social world that surrounds and helps to shape us.

A key element in the sociological imagination is the ability to view one's own society as an outsider would, rather than only from the perspective of personal experiences and cultural biases. Consider something as simple as sporting events. On college campuses in the United States, thousands of students cheer well-trained football players. In Bali, Indonesia, dozens of spectators gather around a ring to cheer on roosters trained in cockfighting. In both instances, the spectators debate the merits of their favorites and bet on the outcome of the events. Yet what is considered a normal sporting event in one part of the world is considered unusual in another part.

The sociological imagination allows us to go beyond personal experiences and observations to understand broader public issues. Divorce, for example, is unquestionably a personal hardship for a husband and wife who split apart. However, C. Wright Mills advocated using the sociological imagination to view divorce not as simply an individual's personal problem but rather as a societal concern. Using this perspective, we can see that an increase in the divorce rate actually redefines a major social institution—the family. Today's households frequently include stepparents and half-siblings whose parents have divorced and remarried. Through the complexities of the blended family, this private concern becomes a public issue that affects schools, government agencies, businesses, and religious institutions.

The sociological imagination is an empowering tool. It allows us to look beyond a limited understanding of human behavior to see the world and its people in a new way and through a broader lens than we might otherwise use. It may be as simple as understanding why a roommate prefers country music to hip-hop, or it may open up a whole different way of understanding other populations in the world. For example, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, many citizens wanted to understand how Muslims throughout the world perceived their country, and why. From time to time this textbook will offer you the chance to exercise your sociological imagination in a variety of situations.

use your sociological *imagination*

You are walking down the street in your city or hometown. In looking around you, you can't help noticing that half or more of the people you see are overweight. How do you explain your observation? If you were C. Wright Mills, how do you think you would explain it?

Sociology and the Social Sciences

Is sociology a science? The term **science** refers to the body of knowledge obtained by methods based on systematic observation. Just like other scientific disciplines, sociology involves the organized, systematic study of phenomena (in this case, human

Sociology is the scientific study of social behavior and human groups.

behavior) in order to enhance understanding. All scientists, whether studying mushrooms or murderers, attempt to collect precise information through methods of study that are as objective as possible. They rely on careful recording of observations and accumulation of data.

Of course, there is a great difference between sociology and physics, between psychology and astronomy. For this reason, the sciences are commonly divided into natural and social sciences. **Natural science** is the study of the physical features of nature and the ways in which they interact and change. Astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, and physics are all natural sciences. **Social science** is the study of the social features of humans and the ways in which they interact and change. The social sciences include sociology, anthropology, economics, history, psychology, and political science.

These social science disciplines have a common focus on the social behavior of people, yet each has a particular orientation. Anthropologists usually study past cultures and preindustrial societies that continue today, as well as the origins of humans. Economists explore the ways in which people produce and exchange goods and services, along with money and other resources. Historians are concerned with the peoples and events of the past and their significance for us today. Political scientists study international relations, the workings of government, and the exercise of power and authority. Psychologists investigate personality and individual behavior. So what do *sociologists* focus on? They study the influence that society has on people's attitudes and behavior and the ways in which people interact and shape society. Because humans are social animals, sociologists examine our social relationships scientifically. The range of the relationships they investigate is vast, as the current list of sections in the American Sociological Association suggests (Table 1-1).

Let's consider how different social scientists might study the impact of the global recession that began in 2008. Historians would stress the pattern of long-term fluctuations in world markets. Economists would discuss the roles played by government, the private sector, and the world monetary system. Psychologists would study individual cases of emotional stress among workers, investors, and business owners. And political scientists would study the degree of cooperation among nations—or lack of it—in seeking economic solutions.

What approach would sociologists take? They might note a change in marital patterns in the United States. Since the recession began, the median age of first marriage has risen to 28.7 years for men and 26.7 years for women. Sociologists might also observe that today, fewer people are making that trip to the altar than in the past. If the U.S. marriage rate had remained the

As the nation struggled to recover from a deep and lengthy recession, recently laid-off workers jostled the long-term unemployed at a crowded job fair in San Francisco. Sociologists use a variety of approaches to assess the full impact of economic change on society.

TABLE 1-1 SECTIONS OF THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Aging and the Life Course	Emotions	Organizations, Occupations, and Work
Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco	Environment and Technology	Peace, War, and Social Conflict
Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity	Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis	Political Economy of the World-System
Animals and Society	Evolution, Biology, and Society	Political Sociology
Asia and Asian America	Family	Population
Body and Embodiment	Global and Transnational Sociology	Race, Gender, and Class
Children and Youth	History of Sociology	Racial and Ethnic Minorities
Collective Behavior and Social Movements	Human Rights	Rationality and Society
Communication and Information Technologies	International Migration	Religion
Community and Urban Sociology	Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility	Science, Knowledge, and Technology
Comparative and Historical Sociology	Labor and Labor Movements	Sex and Gender
Consumers and Consumption	Latino/a Sociology	Sexualities
Crime, Law, and Deviance	Law	Social Psychology
Culture	Marxist Sociology	Sociological Practice and Public Sociology
Development	Mathematical Sociology	Teaching and Learning
Disability and Society	Medical Sociology	Theory
Economic Sociology	Mental Health	
Education	Methodology	

Think about It Which of these topics do you think would interest you the most? Why?

Source: American Sociological Association 2014.

The range of sociological issues is very broad. For example, sociologists who belong to the Animals and Society section of the ASA may study the animal rights movement; those who belong to the Sexualities section may study global sex workers or the gay, bisexual, and transgendered movements. Economic sociologists may investigate globalization or consumerism, among many other topics.

same as it was in 2006, about 4 million more Americans would have married by 2010.

Similarly, sociologists might evaluate the recession's impact on education. In the United States, private school enrollment from elementary through high school declined from 13.6 percent in 2006 to 12.8 percent in 2010 as families cut back on nonessential expenditures. Sociologists might even consider the recession's effect on environmental actions, such as carpooling. In all but 1 of the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the United States (New Orleans), the percentage of working people aged 16 to 64 dropped significantly during the recession. When friends and co-workers are laid off, carpools shrink and more people end up driving to work alone (El Nasser and Overberg 2011).

Sociologists would take a similar approach to studying episodes of extreme violence. In April 2007, just as college students were beginning to focus on the impending end of the semester, tragedy struck on the campus of Virginia Tech. In a two-hour shooting spree, a mentally disturbed senior armed with semi-automatic weapons killed a total of 32 students and faculty at Virginia's largest university. Observers struggled to describe the events and place them in some social context. For sociologists in particular, the event raised numerous issues and topics for study, including the media's role in describing the attacks, the presence of violence in our educational institutions, the gun control debate, the inadequacy of the nation's mental health care system, and the stereotyping and stigmatization of people who suffer from mental illness.

Besides doing research, sociologists have a long history of advising government agencies on how to respond to disasters. Certainly the poverty of the Gulf Coast region complicated the challenge of evacuating New Orleans in 2005. With Hurricane Katrina bearing down on the Gulf Coast, thousands of poor inner-city residents had no automobiles or other available means of escaping the storm. Added to that difficulty was the high incidence of disability in the area. New Orleans ranked second among the nation's 70 largest cities in the proportion of people over age 65 who are disabled—56 percent. Moving wheelchair-bound residents to safety requires specially equipped vehicles, to say nothing of handicap-accessible accommodations in public shelters. Clearly, officials must consider these factors in developing evacuation plans (Bureau of the Census 2005b).

Sociological analysis of the disaster did not end when the floodwaters receded. Long before residents of New Orleans staged a massive anticrime rally at City Hall in 2007, researchers were analyzing resettlement patterns in the city. They noted that returning residents often faced bleak job prospects. Yet families who had stayed away for that reason often had trouble enrolling

their children in schools unprepared for an influx of evacuees. Faced with a choice between the need to work and the need to return their children to school, some displaced families risked sending their older children home alone. Meanwhile, opportunists had arrived to victimize unsuspecting homeowners. And the city's overtaxed judicial and criminal justice systems, which had been understaffed before Katrina struck, had been only partially restored. All these social factors led sociologists and others to anticipate the unparalleled rise in reported crime the city experienced in 2006 and 2007 (Jervis 2008; Kaufman 2006).

Throughout this textbook, you will see how sociologists develop theories and conduct research to study and better understand societies. And you will be encouraged to use your sociological imagination to examine the United States (and other societies) from the viewpoint of a respectful but questioning outsider.

Sociology and Common Sense

Sociology focuses on the study of human behavior. Yet we all have experience with human behavior and at least some knowledge of it. All of us might well have theories about why people become homeless, for example. Our theories and opinions typically come from common sense—that is, from our experiences and conversations, from what we read, from what we see on television, and so forth.

In our daily lives, we rely on common sense to get us through many unfamiliar situations. However, this commonsense knowledge, while sometimes accurate, is not always reliable, because it rests on commonly held beliefs rather than on systematic analysis of facts. It was once considered common sense to accept that the earth was flat—a view rightly questioned by Pythagoras and Aristotle. Incorrect commonsense notions are not just a part of the distant past; they remain with us today.

Contrary to the common notion that women tend to be chatty compared to men, for instance, researchers have found little difference between the sexes in terms of their talkativeness. Over a five-year period they placed unobtrusive microphones on 396 college students in various fields, at campuses in Mexico as well as the United States. They found that both men and women spoke about 16,000 words per day (Mehl et al. 2007).

Similarly, common sense tells us that today, violent crime holds communities on the border between the United States and Mexico in a kind of death grip, creating an atmosphere of lawlessness reminiscent of the old Wild West. Based on televised news stories and on concerns expressed by elected officials throughout the southwestern United States, this assertion may sound reasonable; however, it is not true. Although some communities in Mexico have fallen under the control of drug cartels, the story is different on the U.S. side of the border. All available crime data—including murder, extortion, robbery, and kidnapping rates, whether reported or documented in victim surveys—show that in the hundred-mile-deep border area stretching from San Diego to Brownsville, Texas, crime rates are significantly lower than in similar U.S. cities outside the area. Furthermore, the crime rate has been dropping faster near the border than in other similar-size U.S. communities for at least the last 15 years (Gillum 2011; Gomez et al. 2011).

Like other social scientists, sociologists do not accept something as a fact because "everyone knows it." Instead, each piece of information must be tested and recorded, then analyzed in relation to other data. Sociologists rely on scientific studies in order to describe and understand a social environment. At times, the findings of sociologists may seem like common sense, because they deal with familiar facets of everyday life. The difference is that such findings have been *tested* by researchers. Common sense now tells us that the earth is round, but this particular commonsense notion is based on centuries of scientific work that began with the breakthroughs made by Pythagoras and Aristotle.

thinking CRITICALLY

What aspects of the social and work environment in a fast-food restaurant would be of particular interest to a sociologist? How would the sociological imagination help in analyzing the topic?

What Is Sociological Theory?

Why do people commit suicide? One traditional commonsense answer is that people inherit the desire to kill themselves. Another view is that sunspots drive people to take their lives. These explanations may not seem especially convincing to contemporary researchers, but they represent beliefs widely held as recently as 1900.

Sociologists are not particularly interested in why any one individual commits suicide; they are more concerned with identifying the social forces that systematically cause some people to take their own lives. In order to undertake this research, sociologists develop a theory that offers a general explanation of suicidal behavior.

We can think of theories as attempts to explain events, forces, materials, ideas, or behavior in a comprehensive manner. In sociology, a **theory** is a set of statements that seeks to explain problems, actions, or behavior. An effective theory may have both explanatory and predictive power. That is, it can help us to see the relationships among seemingly isolated phenomena, as well as to understand how one type of change in an environment leads to other changes.

The World Health Organization (2010) estimates that almost a million people die from suicide every year. More than a hundred years ago, a sociologist tried to look at suicide data scientifically. Émile Durkheim ([1897] 1951) developed a highly original theory about the relationship between suicide and social factors. Durkheim was primarily concerned not with the personalities of individual suicide victims, but rather with suicide rates and how they varied from country to country. As a result, when he looked at the number of reported suicides in France, England, and Denmark in 1869, he also noted the total population of each country in order to determine the rate of suicide in each nation. He found that whereas England had only 67 reported suicides per million inhabitants, France had 135 per million and Denmark had 277 per million. The question then became "Why did Denmark have a comparatively high rate of reported suicide?"

Durkheim went much deeper into his investigation of suicide rates. The result was his landmark work *Suicide,* published in 1897. Durkheim refused to accept unproved explanations regarding suicide, including the beliefs that inherited tendencies or cosmic forces caused such deaths. Instead, he focused on social

factors, such as the cohesiveness or lack of cohesiveness of religious, social, and occupational groups.

Durkheim's research suggested that suicide, although it is a solitary act, is related to group life. He found that people without religious affiliations had a higher suicide rate than those who were affiliated; the unmarried had much higher rates than married people; and soldiers had a higher rate than civilians. In addition, there seemed to be higher rates of suicide in times of peace than in times of war and revolution, and in times of economic instability and recession rather than in times of prosperity. Durkheim concluded that the suicide rates of a society reflected the extent to which people were or were not integrated into the group life of the society.

Émile Durkheim, like many other social scientists, developed a theory to explain how individual behavior can be understood within a social context. He pointed out the influence of groups and societal forces on what had always been viewed as a highly personal act. Clearly, Durkheim offered a more *scientific* explanation for the causes of suicide than that of inherited tendencies or sunspots. His theory has predictive power, since it suggests that suicide rates will rise or fall in conjunction with certain social and economic changes.

Of course, a theory—even the best of theories—is not a final statement about human behavior. Durkheim's theory of suicide is no exception. Sociologists continue to examine factors that contribute to differences in suicide rates around the world and to a particular society's rate of suicide. In Las Vegas, for example, sociologists have observed that the chances of dying by suicide are strikingly high—twice as high as in the United States as a whole. Noting Durkheim's emphasis on the relationship between suicide and social isolation, researchers have suggested that Las Vegas's rapid growth and constant influx of tourists have undermined the community's sense of permanence, even among longtime residents. Although gambling—or more accurately, losing while gambling—may seem a likely precipitating factor in suicides there, careful study of the data has allowed researchers to dismiss that explanation. What happens in Vegas may stay in Vegas, but the sense of community cohesiveness that the rest of the country enjoys may be lacking (Wray et al. 2008, 2011).

thinking CRITICALLY

Can you think of any other explanation for the high suicide rate in Las Vegas? Does that explanation agree with Durkheim's theory?

The Development of Sociology

People have always been curious about sociological matters—how we get along with others, what we do for a living, whom we select as our leaders. Philosophers and religious authorities of ancient and medieval societies made countless observations about human behavior. They did not test or verify those observations scientifically; nevertheless, their observations often became the foundation for moral codes. Several of these early social philosophers correctly predicted that a systematic study of human behavior would emerge one day. Beginning in the 19th century, European theorists made pioneering contributions to the development of a science of human behavior.

Early Thinkers

Auguste Comte The 19th century was an unsettling time in France. The French monarchy had been deposed in the revolution of 1789, and Napoleon had suffered defeat in his effort to conquer Europe. Amid this chaos, philosophers considered how society might be improved. Auguste Comte (1798–1857), credited with being the most influential of the philosophers of the early 1800s, believed that a theoretical science of society and a systematic investigation of behavior were needed to improve society. He coined the term *sociology* to apply to the science of human behavior.

Writing in the 1800s, Comte feared that the excesses of the French Revolution had permanently impaired France's stability. Yet he hoped that the systematic study of social behavior would eventually lead to more rational human interactions. In Comte's hierarchy of the sciences, sociology was at the top. He called it the "queen," and its practitioners "scientist-priests." This French theorist did not simply give sociology its name; he presented a rather ambitious challenge to the fledgling discipline.

Harriet Martineau Scholars learned of Comte's works largely through translations by the English sociologist Harriet Martineau (1802–1876). But Martineau was a pathbreaker in her own right: she offered insightful observations of the customs and social practices of both her native Britain and the United States. Martineau's book *Society in America* ([1837] 1962) examined religion, politics, child rearing, and immigration in the young nation. It gave special attention to social class distinctions and

Harriet Martineau, an early pioneer of sociology who studied social behavior both in her native England and in the United States. Martineau proposed some of the methods still used by sociologists, including systematic observation.