



IN **CONFLICT**
AND **ORDER**

UNDERSTANDING SOCIETY
FOURTEENTH EDITION

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In Conflict and Order

Understanding Society

Fourteenth Edition

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Preface

Many introductory students will be exposed to sociology in only one course. They should leave that course with a new and meaningful way of understanding themselves, other people, their society, and other societies. The most fundamental goal of this book, then, is to help the student develop a sociological perspective.

This goal is emphasized explicitly in the first chapter and implicitly throughout *In Conflict and Order: Understanding Society*, fourteenth edition. The sociological perspective focuses on the social sources of behavior. It requires shedding existing myths and ideologies by questioning all social arrangements. One of the most persistent questions of the sociologist is, Who benefits from the existing customs and social order, and who does not? Because social groups are created by people, they are not sacred. Is there a better way?

Although there will be disagreement on the answers to these questions, the answers are less important, sociologically, than is the willingness to call into question existing social arrangements that many people consider sacred. This is the beginning of the sociological perspective. But being critical is not enough. The sociologist must have a coherent way to make sense of the social world, and this leads us to the second goal of this edition of *In Conflict and Order*—the elaboration of a consistent framework from which to understand and interpret social life. *In Conflict and Order*, fourteenth edition, is guided by the assumption that there is an inherent duality in all societies. The realistic analysis of any one society must include both the integrating and stabilizing forces, on one hand, and the forces that are conducive to conflict and change, on the other. Society in the United States is characterized by harmony and conflict, integration and division, stability and change. This synthesis is crucial if the intricacies of social structure, the mechanisms of social change, and the sources of social problems are to be understood fully.

This objective of achieving balance between the order and the conflict perspectives is not fully realized in this book, however. Although both perspectives are incorporated into each chapter, the scales are tipped toward the conflict perspective. This imbalance is the conscious product of how the authors, as sociologists and teachers, view the structure and mechanisms of society. In addition to presenting what we believe is a realistic analysis of society, this imbalance counters the prevailing view of the order perspective, with its implicit sanctification of the status quo. Such a stance is untenable to us, given the spate of

social problems that persist in U.S. society. The emphasis on the conflict approach, on the other hand, questions existing social arrangements, viewing them as sources of social problems, a position with which we agree. Implicit in such a position is the goal of restructuring society along more humane lines.

That we stress the conflict approach over the order model does not suggest that *In Conflict and Order* is a polemic. On the contrary, the social structure is also examined from a sympathetic view. The existing arrangements do provide for the stability and maintenance of the system. But the point is that, by including a relatively large dose of the conflict perspective, the discussion is a realistic appraisal of the system rather than a look through rose-colored glasses.

This duality theme is evident primarily at the societal level in this book. But even though the societal level is the focus of our inquiry, the small-group and individual levels are not ignored. The principles that apply to societies are also appropriate for the small social organizations to which we belong, such as families, work groups, athletic teams, religious organizations, and clubs. Just as important, the sociological perspective shows how the individual is affected by groups of all sizes. Moreover, it shows how the individual's identity is shaped by social forces and how in many important ways the individual's thoughts and actions are determined by group memberships. The linkage of the individual to social groups is shown throughout *In Conflict and Order*. The relationship of the individual to the larger society is illustrated in special panels that examine societal changes and forces impinging on individuals and the choices available to us as we attempt to cope with these societal trends.

Organization of the Book

The book is divided into five parts. Part One (Chapters 1 and 2) introduces the reader to the sociological perspective, the fundamental concepts of the discipline, and the duality of social life. These chapters set the stage for an analysis of the structure (organization) and process (change) of U.S. society. The emphasis is on the characteristics of societies in general and of the United States in particular.

Part Two (Chapters 3 through 6) describes the way in which human beings are shaped by society. The topics include the values that direct our choices, the social bases of social identity and personality, the mechanisms that control individual and group behavior, and the violation of social

expectations—deviance. Throughout these chapters, we examine both the forces that work to make all of us living in the United States similar, and those that make us different.

Part Three (Chapters 7 through 10) focuses on systems of inequality. We look at how societies rank people in hierarchies. We also examine the mechanisms that ensure that some people have a greater share of wealth, power, and prestige than do others, and the positive and negative consequences of such an arrangement. Other chapters focus on the specific hierarchies of stratification: class, race, and gender.

Part Four (Chapters 11 through 15) discusses another characteristic of all societies: the presence of social institutions. Every society historically has developed a fairly consistent way of meeting its survival needs and the needs of its members. The organization of society into families, for example, ensures the regular input of new members, provides for the stable care and protection of the young, and regulates sexual activity. In addition to discussions of the family, chapters in Part Four are devoted to education, the economy, the polity, and religion. The understanding of institutions is vital to the understanding of society because these social arrangements are part of its structure, resist change, and have a profound impact on the public and private lives of people.

Part Five (Chapters 16 and 17) examines social change and human agency. This section begins with a chapter showing how three major social forces (globalization, the new immigration, and the aging of the population) affect human behavior and social life. We end the book focusing on social change from the bottom up using the specific examples of the civil rights movement, feminist movements, and the gay rights movement. The goal of this chapter is to combat the strong structural determinism bias of the earlier chapters by focusing on how human beings, individually and collectively, change social structures.

Themes of the Book

As in previous editions, *In Conflict and Order*, fourteenth edition incorporates four themes: diversity, the struggle by the powerless to achieve social justice, the changing economy, and globalization. First, although there are separate chapters on race, class, and gender, these fundamental sources of differences are infused throughout the book and in the photographs. This emphasis is important to an understanding of the diversity in society as well as the structural sources of inequality and injustice. Second, the tendency toward structural determinism is countered by Chapter 17 and various examples of human agency throughout the book: the powerless organizing to achieve power and positive social changes (e.g., civil rights, gay rights, rights for people with disabilities, and gender equity in sports and the workplace). Third, the sources and consequences of the

structural transformation of the economy are examined. This is a pivotal shift in the U.S. economy with significant implications for individuals, communities, the society, and the global economy. And, fourth, the focus is often shifted away from the United States to other societies through descriptions, panels, and tables. This global perspective is important for at least two reasons: to illustrate the universality of sociological concepts and to help us understand how the world is becoming ever more interdependent.

These four themes—diversity, the struggle by the powerless to achieve social justice, the changing economy, and globalization—are important concepts to consider sociologically. We see that social problems are structural in origin and that the pace of social change is accelerating, yet society's institutions are slow to change and meet the challenges. The problems of U.S. society are of great magnitude, and solutions must be found. But understanding must precede action, and that is one goal of *In Conflict and Order*.

The analysis of U.S. society is a challenging task. It is frustrating because of the heterogeneity of the population and the complexity of the forces impinging on U.S. social life. It is also frustrating because the diversity within the United States leads to many inconsistencies and paradoxes. Furthermore, it is difficult, if not impossible, for people in the United States to be objective and consistently rational about their society. Nevertheless, the sociological study of U.S. society is fascinating and rewarding. It becomes absorbing as people gain insights into their own actions and into the behavior of other people. Understanding the intricate complex of forces leading to a particular type of social structure or social problem can be liberating and can lead to collective efforts to bring about social change. This book attempts to give the reader just such a sociological perspective.

Finally, we are unabashedly proud of being sociologists. Our hope is that you will capture our enthusiasm for exploring and understanding the intricacies and mysteries of social life.

Features

To help students develop and foster their sociological perspective, we integrate the following features throughout the book.

- **Human Agency** panels show how individuals and groups can become empowered to achieve positive social change.
- **Globalization** panels present examples of the interconnections among the world's peoples.
- **Diversity** panels address tolerance and understanding of a wide range of groups, institutions, choices, and behaviors.
- **A Closer Look** panels elaborate on specific topics in detail.

- **Research Methods** panels explore different stages and facets of the research process in the social sciences.
- **Technology and Society** panels examine how technological innovations and social media affect social life.

New to This Edition

This fourteenth edition of *In Conflict and Order* is different and improved in the following ways: Minor structural changes were made to improve the flow of the book (i.e., the elimination of Chapter 2 in the last edition with relevant sections absorbed into other chapters, and the move of Chapter 8 to Part Five in order to reframe Part Five as Social Change and Human Agency) as well as an overall reduction in repetitive material. The fourteenth edition includes all updated statistics as well as new or updated topics:

- **More information about the changing economy**, including extensive coverage of the rise of multinational corporations, outsourcing and offshoring jobs, the decrease in work benefits, and the increasing gap between the wealthy and everyone else.
- **Extensive coverage of power and politics throughout the text**, including the hidden welfare system that supports big business, “the best democracy money can buy,” and the consequences of concentrated political power.
- **New information about the legacy of the Great Recession**, including its lasting effects on family structure, social class, home ownership, and inequality.
- **New coverage of popular contemporary topics**, including increasing racial tensions (e.g., conflict over police actions as racially motivated), increasing conflicts over immigration, updates on same-sex marriage equality, the debate over warrantless wiretapping, the controversy over Common Core Standards in education, the concepts of transgender and intersex added in the Gender chapter, and the increasing control of the media by a few corporations.
- **Panels** “Technology and Society,” are found throughout. Some of the topics considered are as follows: the social media and the invasion of privacy; computer technology and middle class job loss; churches’ use of social networking to sell their product, and social interaction through social media; race and computer technology; helicopter parenting and GPS devices; and gender and social networking.

- **Updated statistics** reflect rapid changes in society and the intransigence of many social problems.

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Chapter 1

The Sociological Perspective



Learning Objectives

- 1.1** Understand the assumptions of the sociological perspective.
- 1.2** Describe the contributions of four key theorists to the development of sociology.
- 1.3** Develop a sociological research question and propose a research method to answer it.
- 1.4** Explain what it is about the sociological perspective that makes some people uncomfortable.



Life appears to be a series of choices for each of us. We decide how much schooling is important and what field to major in. We choose a job, a mate, and a lifestyle. But how free are we? Have you ever felt trapped by events and conditions beyond your control? Your religious beliefs may make you feel guilty for some behaviors. Your patriotism may cost you your life—even willingly. These ideological traps are powerful, so powerful that we usually do not even see them as traps. Have you ever continued a relationship with a friend, a group of friends, or a partner when you were convinced that this relationship was wrong for you? Have you ever participated in an act, which later seemed absolutely ridiculous, even immoral, because of peer pressure? Most likely your answers to these questions are in the affirmative, because the people closest to us effectively command our conformity.

At another level, have you ever felt that because of your race, gender, age, ethnicity, or social class, certain opportunities were closed to you? For example, if you are a woman, you may want to seek a leadership position in your church but you are denied because of that church's beliefs. Or, if you are a man you may want to try certain jobs or hobbies but to do so would call your masculinity into question.

Even more remotely, each of us is controlled by decisions made in corporate boardrooms, in government bureaus, and in foreign capitals. Whether we retain employment may not be the consequence of our work behavior but rather the result of corporate decisions to move a plant overseas, to outsource the work offshore, or to buy equipment that replaces human labor. Similarly, the actions of investment bankers and hedge fund managers can cause a worldwide financial crisis that affects millions of people, as occurred in the last months of 2007. When their too risky investments cratered, the stock market plunged and some major banks and brokerage houses went bankrupt while others were rescued by the government. Panic ensued and fortunes were lost. Millions of Americans lost as much as half of the value of their savings as their stock portfolios and the value of their homes plummeted.

All of these examples demonstrate that while life may appear to be a series of choices, an individual is affected by larger events outside their control. Sociology is the discipline that attempts to understand these social forces—the forces outside us that shape our lives, interests, and personalities. In this chapter we introduce you to the concept, assumptions, and craft of sociology.

MODULE 1.1

Sociology

1.1 Understand the assumptions of the sociological perspective.

Sociology is the scholarly discipline concerned with the systematic study of human society. As the science of society, institutions, and social behavior, sociology is interesting, insightful, and important. This is so because sociology explores and analyzes the ultimate issues of our personal lives, of society, and of the world. At the personal level, sociology investigates the causes and consequences of such phenomena as romantic love, violence, identity, conformity, deviance, personality, and interpersonal power. At the societal level, sociology examines and explains poverty, crime rates, racism, sexism, homophobia, pollution, and political power. At the global level, sociology researches such phenomena as societal inequality, war, conflict resolution, immigration patterns, global warming, and population growth. Other disciplines are also helpful in understanding these social phenomena, but sociology makes a unique contribution. The insights of sociology are important for individuals because they help us understand why we behave as we do. This understanding is not only liberating but a necessary precondition for meaningful social action to bring about social change.

Sociology

The scholarly discipline concerned with the systematic study of human society.

Assumptions of the Sociological Perspective

To discover the underlying order of social life and the principles that explain human behavior, scientists have focused on different levels of phenomena. The result of this division of labor has been the creation of scholarly disciplines, each concentrating on a relatively narrow sphere of phenomena. Biologists interested in social phenomena have focused on organic bases for behavior such as DNA, brain chemistry, and hormone balance. Psychological explanations assume that the source of human behavior lies in the psyches of individuals causing guilt, aggression, phobias, lack of motivation, and low self-esteem.

The understanding of human behavior benefits from the emphases of the various disciplines. Each discipline makes important contributions to knowledge. Of the three major disciplines focusing on human behavior, sociology is commonly the least understood. The explicit goal of this book is to remedy this fault by introducing the reader to the sociological ways of perceiving and interpreting the social world. Let us begin by considering the assumptions of the sociological approach that provide the foundation for this unique and insightful way of viewing and understanding the social world.

INDIVIDUALS ARE, BY THEIR NATURE, SOCIAL BEINGS. There are two fundamental reasons for this assumption. First, human babies enter the world totally dependent on other people for their survival. This initial period of dependence means, in effect, that each of us has been immersed in social groups from birth. A second basis for the social nature of human beings is that throughout history people have found it to their advantage to cooperate with other people (for defense, for material comforts, to overcome the perils of nature, and to improve technology).

INDIVIDUALS ARE, FOR THE MOST PART, SOCIALLY DETERMINED. This essential assumption stems from the first assumption, that people are social beings. Individuals are products of their social environments for several reasons. During infancy, the child is at the mercy of adults, especially parents. These people shape the infant in an infinite variety of ways, depending on their proclivities and those of their society. The parents have a profound impact on the child's ways of thinking about himself or herself and about other people. The parents transmit religious views, political attitudes, and attitudes toward the evaluation of others. The child is punished for certain behaviors and rewarded for others. Whether that child becomes a devout or an atheist, a republican or democrat, a racist or integrationist, depends in large measure on the parents, peers, and other people who interact with her or him.

The parents may transmit to their offspring some idiosyncratic beliefs and behaviors, but most significantly they act as cultural agents, transferring the ways of the society to their children. Thus, the child is born into a family and also into a society. This society into which individuals are born shapes their personalities and perceptions. Who we are, how we feel about ourselves, and how other people treat us are usually consequences of our social location, "the corners in life that people occupy because of where they are located in a society" (Henslin, 2008:4), corners such as social class, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Individuals' personalities are also shaped by the way they are accepted, rejected, and defined by other people. Whether an individual is attractive or plain, witty or dull, worthy or unworthy depends on the values



"I'm a social scientist, Michael. That means I can't explain electricity or anything like that, but if you ever want to know about people I'm your man."



Parents transmit religious views, political attitudes, and attitudes towards others to their children.

Social determinism

The assumption that human behavior is explained exclusively by social factors.

Through collective action, individuals are capable of changing the structure of society and even the course of history.

of society and the groups in which the individual is immersed. Although genes determine one's physiology and potential, the social environment determines how those characteristics will be evaluated.

Suggesting that human beings are socially determined is another way of saying that they are similar to puppets, manipulated by unseen forces. To say that we are puppets is too strong, however. This assumption is not meant to imply a total **social determinism** (the assumption that human behavior is explained exclusively by social factors). The puppet metaphor is used to convey the idea that much of who we are and what we do is a product of our social environment. But there are nonconformists, deviants, and innovators. Society is not a rigid, static entity composed of robots. While the members of society are shaped by their social environment, they also change that environment. Human beings are the shapers of society as well as the shapeds. This leads us to the third assumption of the sociological approach.

INDIVIDUALS CREATE, SUSTAIN, AND CHANGE THE SOCIAL FORMS WITHIN WHICH THEY CONDUCT THEIR LIVES. Even though individuals are largely puppets of society, they are also puppeteers. Social groups of all sizes and types (families, peer groups, work groups, corporations, communities, and societies) are constructed by people. Interacting people create a social structure that becomes a source of control over those individuals (i.e., they become puppets of their own creation). But the continuous interaction of the group's members also changes the group.

There are four important implications of this assumption that groups are human-made. First, these social forms that are created have a certain momentum of their own that defies change. The ways of doing and thinking common to the group are viewed as natural and right. Although human-made, the group's expectations and structures take on a sacred quality—the sanctity of tradition—that constrains behavior in the socially prescribed ways.

A second implication is that social organizations, because they are created and sustained by people, are imperfect. Slavery benefited some segments of society by taking advantage of other segments. A free enterprise system creates winners and losers. The wonders of technology make worldwide transportation and communication easy and relatively inexpensive but create pollution and waste natural resources. These



examples show that there are positive and negative consequences of the way people have organized themselves.

The third implication is that through collective action, individuals are capable of changing the structure of society and even the course of history. Consider, for example, the social movement in India led by Mahatma Gandhi that ended colonial rule by Great Britain, or the civil rights movement in the South led by Martin Luther King, Jr.

The final significance of this assumption is that individuals are not passive. Rather, they actively shape social life by adapting to, negotiating with, and changing social structures. This process is called **human agency**. A discussion devoted to this meaningful interaction between social actors and their social environment, bringing about social change, is reserved for the final chapter. Human agency provides the crucial vantage point and insights from the bottom up, and whereas most of this book examines social life from the top down, occasional panels will highlight human agency throughout the text.

Human agency

When individuals actively shape social life by adapting to, negotiating with, and changing social structures.

The Sociological Imagination

C. Wright Mills (1916–1962), in his classic *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), wrote that the task of sociology was to realize that individual circumstances are inextricably linked to the structure of society. The **sociological imagination** involves several related components:

- The sociological imagination is stimulated by a willingness to view the social world from the perspective of others.
- It involves moving away from thinking in terms of the individual and her or his problem, focusing rather on the social, economic, and historical circumstances that produce the problem. Put another way, the sociological imagination is the ability to see the societal patterns that influence individuals, families, groups, and organizations.
- Possessing a sociological imagination, one can shift from the examination of a single family to national budgets, from a low-income person to national welfare policies, from an unemployed person to the societal shift from manufacturing to a service/knowledge economy, from a single mother with a sick child to the high cost of health care for the uninsured, and from a homeless family to the lack of affordable housing.
- To develop a sociological imagination requires a detachment from the taken-for-granted assumptions about social life and establishing a critical distance (Andersen and Taylor, 2000:10–11). In other words, one must be willing to question the structural arrangements that shape social behavior.
- When we have this imagination, we begin to see the solutions to social problems not in terms of changing problem people, but in changing the structure of society.

Sociological imagination

The ability to see the societal patterns that influence individuals, families, groups, and organizations.

MODULE 1.2

The Historical Development of Sociology

1.2 Describe the contributions of four key theorists to the development of sociology.

Sociology emerged in Western Europe in the late eighteenth century during the Enlightenment (also known as the Age of Reason). Spurred by dramatic



French philosopher Auguste Comte coined the word “sociology.”

social changes such as the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, urbanization, and capitalism, intellectuals during this period promoted the ideals of progress, democracy, freedom, individualism, and the scientific method. These ideas replaced those of the old medieval order, in which religious dogma and unquestioned obedience to royal authorities dominated. The new intellectuals believed that human beings could solve their social problems. They also believed that society itself could be analyzed rationally. Out of this intellectual mix, several key theorists laid the foundation for contemporary sociological thought. We focus briefly on the contributions of four: Auguste Comte, Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber. We further elaborate on the sociological explanations of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber throughout this book.

Auguste Comte (1798–1857): The Science of Society

The founder of sociology was a Frenchman, Auguste Comte, who coined the word *sociology*—from the Latin *socius* (“companion,” “with others”) and the Greek *logos* (“study of”)—for the science of society and group life. Comte sought to establish sociology as a science (his initial name for the discipline was “social physics”) free of religious arguments about society and human nature using the Enlightenment’s emphasis on **positivism** (knowledge based on systematic observation, experiment, and comparison). Comte was convinced that, using scientific principles, sociologists could solve social problems such as poverty, crime, and war.

Positivism

Knowledge based on systematic observation, experiment, and comparison.

Social facts

Social factors that exist external to individuals such as tradition, values, laws, and religious ideology.

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917): Social Facts and the Social Bond

Durkheim provided the rationale for sociology by emphasizing social facts. His classic work *Suicide* (Durkheim, 1951, first published in 1897) demonstrates how social factors explain individual behavior. Durkheim focused on **social facts**—social factors that exist external to individuals such as tradition, values, laws, religious ideology, and population density. The key for Durkheim was that these factors affect the behaviors of people, thus allowing for sociological explanations rather than biological and psychological reasoning.

Durkheim was also interested in social integration—what holds groups and society together. His works show how belief systems bind people together; how public ceremonies and rituals promote solidarity; how labeling some people as deviant reaffirms what society deems to be right; and how similarities (shared traditions, values, ideology) provide the societal glue in traditional societies, while differences (division of labor) provide the social bond in complex societies (i.e., due to the specialization in work roles, people need each other).

Durkheim made invaluable contributions to such core sociological concepts as social roles, socialization, anomie, deviant behavior, social control, and the social bond. In particular, Durkheim’s works provide the foundation for the order model that is found throughout this book, which will be explained thoroughly in Chapter 2.



The 99% Movement is an excellent example of class consciousness.

Karl Marx (1818–1883): Economic Determinism

Karl Marx devoted his life to analyzing and criticizing the society he observed. He was especially concerned with the gap between the people at the bottom of society and the elite, between the powerless and the powerful, the dominated and the dominant. Marx reasoned that the type of economy found in a society provides its basic structure (system of stratification, unequal distribution of resources, the bias of the law, and ideology). Thus, he was vitally interested in how the economic system of his day—capitalism—shaped society. The owners of capital (the bourgeoisie) exploited their workers (the proletariat) to extract maximum profits. They used their economic power to keep the less powerful in their place and to benefit unequally from the educational system, the law, and other institutional arrangements in society. These owners of capital also determined the prevailing ideas in society because they controlled the political system, religion, and media outlets. In this way, members of the working class accept the prevailing ideology. Marx called this **false consciousness** (believing in ideas that are not in a group's objective interests but rather in the best interests of the capitalist class). Social change occurs when the contradictions inherent in capitalism (see Chapter 11) cause the working class to recognize their oppression and develop **class consciousness** (recognizing their class interests, common oppression, and an understanding of who the oppressors are), resulting in a revolt against the system. Thus, class conflict is the engine of social change.

Marx made extraordinary contributions to such core sociological concepts as systems of inequality, social class, power, alienation, and social movements. Marx's view of the world is the foundation of the conflict perspective, which is infused throughout this book and explained in Chapter 2.

Max Weber (1864–1920): A Response to Marx

Although it is an oversimplification, it helps to think of Weber's thought as a reaction to the writings of Marx. In Weber's view, Marx was too narrowly deterministic. In response, Weber showed that the basic structure of society comes from three sources: the political, economic, and cultural spheres, not just the economic, as Marx argued. Similarly, social class is not determined just by economic resources, but also includes status

False consciousness

Believing in ideas that are not in a group's objective interests but rather in the best interests of the capitalist class.

Class consciousness

Recognizing class interests, common oppression, and an understanding of who the oppressors are.

Charisma

A special charm or appeal that causes people to feel attracted and excited by someone (such as a politician).

(prestige) and power dimensions. Political power does not stem just from economic resources, as Marx argued, but also from the expressive qualities of individual leaders (**charisma**). But power can also reside in organizations (not individuals), as Weber showed in his extensive analysis of bureaucracy. Weber countered Marx's emphasis on material economic concerns by showing how ideology shapes the economy. Arguably his most important work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 1958, first published in 1904) demonstrates how a particular type of religious thought (the protestant belief system) made capitalism possible. In sum, Weber's importance to sociology is seen in his mighty contributions to such core concepts as power, ideology, charisma, bureaucracy, and social change.

MODULE 1.3

The Craft of Sociology

1.3 Develop a sociological research question and propose a research method to answer it.

Sociological Questions

Sociological research is dependent on reliable scientific data and logical reasoning. Before we describe how sociologists gather reliable data and make valid conclusions, let us examine the kinds of questions sociologists ask. To begin, sociologists ask factual questions. For example, let's assume that we want to know whether the U.S. public education system provides equal educational opportunities for all youth. To determine this, we need to do an empirical investigation to find the facts concerning such items as the amount spent per pupil by school districts within each state. Within school districts, we need to know the facts concerning the distribution of monies by neighborhood schools. Are these monies appropriated equally, regardless of the social class or racial composition of the school? Are curriculum offerings the same for girls and boys within a school? Are extra fees charged for participation in extracurricular activities, and does this affect the participation of children by social class?

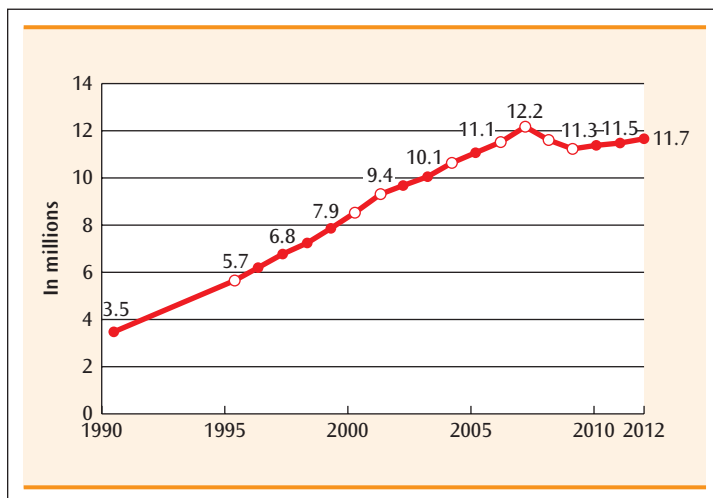
Sociologists also may ask comparative questions—that is, how does the situation in one social context compare with that in another? Most commonly, these questions involve the comparison of one society with another. Examples here might be the comparisons among industrialized nations on infant mortality, murder, drug use, or the mathematics scores of sixteen-year-olds. Or, using the previous example, how do states compare to each other on per pupil spending? How does the United States compare to Sweden on educational equality? These are all examples of comparative questions.

A third type of question that a sociologist may ask is historical. Sociologists are interested in trends. What are the facts now concerning divorce, immigration, crime, and political participation, for example, and how have these patterns changed over time? Figure 1.1 provides an example of trends over time by examining unauthorized immigrant population in the United States from 1990–2012.

The three types of sociologist questions considered so far determine the way things are. But these

Figure 1.1 Estimates of the U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Population, 1990–2012.

SOURCE: Jeffrey Passel, D'Vera Cohn, and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera. "Population Decline of Unauthorized Immigrants Stalls, May Have Reversed" September 23, 2013. Accessed at: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/09/23/population-decline-of-unauthorized-immigrants-stalls-may-have-reversed/>



Research Methods

Thinking Like a Sociologist

In 2014 the Annie E. Casey Foundation released a report indicating that White and Asian children are far better positioned for success than Black, Latino, and American Indian children. They used 12 indicators to measure a child's success from birth to adulthood, and state that Blacks, American Indians, and Latinos are in serious trouble in numerous issue areas including reading and math proficiency, teen birthrates, and high school graduation rates.

A sociologist interested in race and class inequality might wish to research this apparent trend. The particular research questions of the sociologist depend on his or her interests and theoretical orientation. For our purposes, though, some likely questions might be the following.

Factual Questions

What is the racial gap for each of the 12 indicators? Is the inequality purely a product of social class, or do poor White and Asian children still have a higher chance of success than other racial/ethnic groups?

Comparative Questions

Is gender a factor—that is, are the racial gaps the same for boys and girls? Are the racial inequities more of an urban

phenomenon or are they found in the suburbs and rural areas as well? Is inequality more concentrated in the South or is it found throughout the United States? Is this trend limited to the United States or is it found in other societies as well? If so, are these societies similar to the United States in affluence, religious heritage, and economic activities?

Historical Questions

How do the current results compare with other times in the United States? Is racial inequality increasing or decreasing over time?

Theoretical Questions

According to the report, the vast racial gap in children's success exists in every region of the country, so we must ask, why? How is the system working to disadvantage groups based on race and ethnicity? Which institutions are contributing to the problem, and how?

For more information on this topic see the Annie E. Casey Foundation report "Race for Results" at: <http://www.aecf.org/resources/race-for-results/>

types of questions are not enough. Sociologists go beyond the factual to ask why. Why have real wages (controlling for inflation) declined since 1973 in the United States? Why are the poor poor? Why do birth rates decline with industrialization? Why do some people commit crimes and not others? These types of "why" questions lead to the development of theories. A **sociological theory** is a set of ideas that explains a range of human behavior and a variety of social and societal events. A researcher's theoretical approach guides the research process from the types of questions that are asked, to the development of a hypothesis, to the analysis of the results. See the Research Methods panel titled "Thinking like a Sociologist" for an example of sociological questions applied to a particular research question.

Sociological theory

A set of ideas that explains a range of human behavior and a variety of social and societal events.

Sources of Data

Sociologists do not use stereotypes to explain behavior, nor do they speculate based on faulty samples. Because we are part of the world that is to be explained, sociologists must obtain evidence that is beyond reproach. In addition to observing scrupulously the canons of science, there are four basic sources of data that yield valid results for sociologists: survey research, experiments, observation, and existing data. We describe these techniques briefly here.

SURVEY RESEARCH. Sociologists are interested in obtaining information about people with certain social attributes. They may want to know how political beliefs and behaviors are influenced by differences in sex, race, ethnicity, religion, and social class. They may want to determine whether poor people have different values from other people in society, the answer to which will have a tremendous impact on the ultimate solution to poverty. Or they may want to know whether voting patterns, work

behaviors, or marital relationships vary by income level, educational attainment, or religious affiliation.

To answer these and similar questions, the sociologist may use personal interviews, written questionnaires, or online surveys to gather the data. The researcher may obtain information from all possible subjects or from a selected **sample** (a representative part of a population). Because the former method is often impractical due to population size, a random sample of subjects is selected from the larger population. If the sample is selected scientifically (i.e., each individual in the population under study has an equal chance of being included in the sample) a relatively small proportion can yield satisfactory results—that is, the inferences made from the sample will be reliable about the entire population. For example, a probability sample of only 2,000 from a total population of 1 million can provide data very close to what would be discovered if a survey were taken of the entire 1 million.

A special type of survey research, **longitudinal surveys**, holds special promise for understanding human behavior. This type of research collects information about the same persons over many years. For example, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics at the University of Michigan is the longest running longitudinal household survey in the world. It began in 1968 and has followed over 18,000 individuals and their descendants, collecting data on marriage, child development, income, employment, and other topics (University of Michigan, 2014).

EXPERIMENTS. A **variable** is something that can be changed, such as a characteristic, value, or belief. To understand the cause-and-effect relationship among a few variables, sociologists use controlled experiments. Let us assume, for example, that we want to test whether students' attitudes toward aging are affected by what they see in film. Using the experimental method, the researcher will take a number of students and randomly assign some to watch a film that portrays aging in a negative light, accompanied by a neutral lecture on aging statistics. The other group, the **control group**, will not watch the film but will hear the same lecture on aging. (The control group is a group of subjects not exposed to the independent variable—in this case, the film.) Before viewing the film, all the students will be given a test of their attitudes toward aging. This pre-test establishes a benchmark from which to measure any changes in attitudes. The other group is called the **experimental group** because they are exposed to the independent variable—the film. The researcher might hypothesize that those students in the experimental group will have more negative attitudes toward aging than the control group that only heard the neutral lecture. Following the film and lecture, the students in both groups will be tested again on their attitudes toward aging. If this posttest reveals that the experimental group differs from the control group in attitudes toward aging (the **dependent variable**), then it is assumed that the film (the **independent variable**) is the source of the change. In other words, the independent variable is the presumed cause, and the dependent variable is the presumed effect of the independent variable.

OBSERVATION. There are two methods of observation in sociological research: participant and nonparticipant. Using **participant observation**, the researcher actually joins the group being studied in order to fully understand their behavior. For example, in order to study a particular religious group the researcher might become a member, attending ceremonies and studying their beliefs. The researcher, without intervention, can observe as accurately as possible what occurs in a community, group, or social event. This type of procedure is especially helpful in understanding such social phenomena as the decision-making process, the stages of a riot, the attraction of cults for their members, or different employment experiences. For example, in 2001 Barbara Ehrenreich published her book *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*. In her book she details her experiences working as a waitress, hotel maid, Walmart employee, house cleaner, and nursing home aide. Her experiences show the difficulties of paying for housing and transportation on low wages.

Sample

A representative part of a population.

Longitudinal surveys

This type of research collects information about the same persons over many years.

Variable

Something that can be changed such as a characteristic, value, or belief.

Control group

A group of subjects that is not exposed to the independent variable in an experiment.

Experimental group

A group of subjects that is exposed to the independent variable in an experiment.

Dependent variable

The variable being measured in an experiment. It may or may not be affected by the independent variable.

Independent variable

A variable that may or may not affect the dependent variable.

Participant observation

The researcher joins the group being studied in order to fully understand their behavior.



Sociologists use methods such as participant observation to study groups such as the homeless.

Using **nonparticipant observation**, the researcher does not become a part of the group that they are studying, nor participate directly in any activities being observed. The goal of nonparticipant observation is to observe events and social interactions in their natural environment. Nonparticipant observation is often used with other research methods like surveys, interviews, and existing data.

Nonparticipant observation

The research does not join the group or participate directly in any activities being observed.

EXISTING DATA. The sociologist can also use existing data to test theories. The most common sources of information are the various agencies of the government. Data are provided for the nation, regions, states, communities, and census tracts on births, deaths, income, education, unemployment, business activity, health delivery systems, prison populations, military spending, poverty, migration, crime, and so on. Important information can also be obtained from such sources as business firms, athletic teams and leagues, unions, and professional associations. Statistical techniques can be used with these data to describe populations and the effects of social variables on various dependent variables.

Objectivity

A fundamental problem with the sociological perspective is that bane of the social sciences—objectivity. We are all guilty of harboring stereotyped conceptions of different social groups. Moreover, we interpret events, material objects, and people's behavior through the perceptual filter of our own religious and political beliefs. When fundamentalists oppose the use of certain books in school, when abortion is approved by a legislature, when the president advocates cutting billions from the federal budget by eliminating social services, or when the Supreme Court denies private schools the right to exclude certain racial groups, most of us rather easily take a position in the ensuing debate.

Sociologists are thus caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, they are members of society with beliefs, feelings, and biases. On the other hand, their professional task is to study society in a disciplined and scientific way. This latter requirement is that scientist-scholars be dispassionate, objective observers. In short, if they take sides, they lose their status as scientists.

This ideal of **value neutrality** (to be absolutely free of bias in research) is problematic. First of all, should scientists be morally indifferent to the implications of

Value neutrality

To be absolutely free of bias in research.

their research? In sociology, often the types of problems researched and the strategies used tend either to support the existing societal arrangements or to undermine them. Should sociologists remain neutral about these implications?

Second, is a purely neutral position possible? Most likely it is not. This argument is based on several related assumptions. One is that the values of the scholar-researcher enter into the choices of what will be studied and what questions will be asked. For example, in the study of poverty, a critical decision involves the object of the study—should one study the poor themselves or the system that tends to perpetuate poverty among a certain segment of society? The answer might very well depend on the researcher's values. Or, in choosing to study female prostitution, whether one believes that female prostitutes are sexually empowered or that they are exploited may change the types of questions asked or the interpretation of what is observed.

Furthermore, our values lead us to decide from which vantage point we will gain access to information about a particular social organization. If researchers want to understand how a prison operates, they must determine whether they want a description from the inmates, from the guards, from the prison administrators, or from the state board of corrections. Each view provides useful insights about a prison, but obviously a biased one.

In summary, bias is inevitable in the study and analysis of social problems. The choice of a research problem, the perspective from which one analyzes the problems, and the solutions proposed all reflect a bias that either supports the existing social arrangements or does not. Moreover, unlike biologists, who can dispassionately observe the behavior of sperm and the egg at conception, sociologists are participants in the social life they seek to study and understand. As they study homelessness, poor children, or urban blight, sociologists cannot escape from their own feelings and values. They must, however, not let their feelings and values render their analysis invalid. In other words, research and reports of research must reflect reality, not as the researcher might want it to be. Sociologists must display scientific integrity, which requires recognizing biases in such a way that these biases do not invalidate the findings. When research is properly done in this spirit, an atheist can study a religious sect, a pacifist can study the military-industrial complex, a divorced person can study marriage, and a person who abhors the beliefs of the Ku Klux Klan can study that organization and its members.

MODULE 1.4

A Challenge to Think Sociologically

1.4 Explain what it is about the sociological perspective that makes some people uncomfortable.

Sociology can be uncomfortable to some because the behavior of the subjects is not always certain. Prediction is not always accurate, because people can choose among options or be persuaded by irrational factors. For example, will a child born to poor, drug-addicted parents struggle in school and have poor life outcomes? We can predict, based on statistics on previous research, that this may happen but there are no certainties. In chemistry, on the other hand, scientists know exactly what will occur if a certain measure of sodium is mixed with a precise amount of chlorine in a test tube. Civil engineers armed with the knowledge of rock formations, rainfall patterns, types of soils, wind currents, and temperature extremes know exactly what specifications are needed when building a dam in a certain place. They could not know these, however, if the foundation and building materials kept shifting. That is the problem—and the source of excitement—for the sociologist.

Sociology is also uncomfortable for some because it is not black and white—it is not like a math problem with only one right answer. For example, in explaining poverty one sociologist may focus on family background and the lack of upward mobility between generations, another may focus on our system of education that disadvantages some and not others, while another may focus on occupational conditions that trap people in poverty. As previously indicated, sociologists may explain behavior in different ways based on their particular theoretical perspective. This may be frustrating to some students who would rather have just one correct answer or perspective on a social problem, but this is exactly what is exciting about the sociological perspective!

Finally, sociology is not a comfortable discipline because it challenges and critically examines long-standing cultural beliefs, institutions, and behaviors. Sociology frightens some people because it questions what they normally take for granted. Sociologists ask such questions as: How does society really work? Who really has power? Who benefits under the existing social arrangements, and who does not? To ask such questions means that the inquirer is interested in looking beyond the commonly accepted official definitions. The underlying assumption of the sociologist is that things are not as they seem. Is the mayor of your town the most powerful person in the community? Is the system of justice truly just? Is the United States a meritocratic society in which talent and effort combine to stratify people fairly? To make such queries calls into question existing myths, stereotypes, and official dogma.

The critical examination of society sensitizes the individual to the inconsistencies present in society. Clearly, that will result if you ask: Why does the United States, in the name of freedom, protect dictatorships around the world? Why do we encourage subsidies to the affluent, but resent those directed to the poor? How high would George W. Bush have risen politically if his surname was Hernandez and his parents had been migrant workers? Why are people who have killed Whites more likely to be sentenced to death than people who have killed African Americans? Why, in a democracy such as the United States, are there so few truly democratic organizations?

A common reaction by students to sociology is that they find this inquiry threatening. Sociology is subversive—that is, sociology undermines our foundations because it questions all social arrangements, whether religious, political, economic, or familial. Even though this critical approach may be uncomfortable for some people, it is necessary for understanding human social arrangements and for finding solutions to social problems. Thus, we ask that you think sociologically. The process may be uncomfortable at first, but the results will bring enlightenment, interest, and excitement in all things social.

Chapter Review

1. Sociology is the scholarly discipline concerned with the systematic study of human society. It is the discipline that attempts to understand the social forces that shape our lives, interests, and personalities. Sociologists, then, work to discover the underlying order of social life and the principles regarding it that explain human behavior.
2. The assumptions of the sociological perspective are that (a) individuals are, by their nature, social beings; (b) individuals are socially determined; and (c) individuals create, sustain, and change the social forms within which they conduct their lives.
3. The sociological imagination involves (a) a willingness to view the social world from the perspective of others; (b) focusing on the social, economic, and historical circumstances that influence families, groups, and organizations; (c) questioning the structural arrangements that shape social behavior; and (d) seeing the solutions to social problems not in terms of changing problem people but in changing the structure of society.
4. Sociology emerged as a science in the late eighteenth century. The development of sociology was dependent on four European intellectuals. Auguste Comte

was the founder of sociology. His emphasis was on a rigorous use of the scientific method. Émile Durkheim emphasized social factors that exist external to individuals such as tradition, values, laws, and religion. Karl Marx wrote about the importance of economics in understanding social stratification, power, and ideology. Max Weber, in reaction to Marx, argued that the structure of society comes from political, economic, and cultural spheres, not just the economic sphere as Marx suggested.

5. Sociology is a science, and the rules of scientific research guide the efforts of sociologists to discover the principles of social organization and the sources of social constraints on human behavior.
6. Sociological research involves factual, comparative, historical, and theoretical questions.
7. Survey research is a systematic means of gathering data to obtain information about people's behaviors, attitudes, and opinions.
8. Sociologists may use experiments to assess the effects of social factors on human behavior. One of two

similar groups—the experimental group—is exposed to an independent variable. If this group later differs from the control group, then the independent variable is known to have produced the effect.

9. Participant and Nonparticipant Observation is another technique for obtaining reliable information. Various social organizations such as prisons, hospitals, schools, churches, cults, families, communities, and corporations can be studied and understood through systematic observation.
10. Sociologists also use existing sources of data to test their theories.
11. Sociology depends on reliable data and logical reasoning. Although value neutrality is impossible in the social sciences, bias is minimized by the norms of science.
12. Sociology is uncomfortable for many people because (a) the behavior of people is not always certain; (b) it involves multiple theoretical perspectives; and (c) it challenges and critically examines long-standing cultural beliefs, institutions, and behaviors.

Key Terms

Charisma, p. 8

Class consciousness, p. 7

Control group, p. 10

Dependent variable, p. 10

Experimental group, p. 10

False consciousness, p. 7

Human agency, p. 5

Independent variable, p. 10

Longitudinal surveys, p. 10

Non-participant observation, p. 11

Participant observation, p. 11

Positivism, p. 6

Sample, p. 10

Social determinism, p. 4

Social facts, p. 6

Sociological imagination, p. 5

Sociological theory, p. 9

Sociology, p. 2

Value neutrality, p. 11

Variable, p. 10

Chapter 2

The Duality of Social Life: Order and Conflict



Learning Objectives

- 2.1** Compare and contrast the order and conflict models of social systems.
- 2.2** Provide examples to demonstrate the integrative forces in society that maintain order.
- 2.3** Provide examples to demonstrate the divides in society that lead to conflict.
- 2.4** Analyze a social problem from the order and conflict perspectives.

