



# Sociology In Our Times

THE ESSENTIALS

12e

DIANA KENDALL





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# SOCIOLOGY

## In Our Times

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### The Essentials 12e

**Diana Kendall**  
Baylor University



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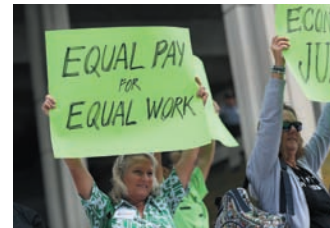
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# Sociology & **Social Policy**

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Welcome to the twelfth edition of *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials*! This best-selling text has been extensively used for more than two decades in college and university classrooms across the United States, Canada, and other nations. However, *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* continues to live up to its name, remaining highly current and relevant to today's students and professors and reflecting the latest available data and new insights on what is going on in our nation and world from a sociological perspective.

The twelfth edition focuses on social change and ways in which media, particularly social media, and various other forms of technology inevitably bring about new ways of living, interacting with others, or doing some activity or task.

Like previous editions, the twelfth edition highlights topics ranging from popular culture icons and social networking to far more serious issues of our times, such as the social effects of massive natural and human disasters, gun violence, political unrest, terrorism, war, and the individual and social consequences of problems such as growing inequality between the wealthiest and the poorest people and nations, persistent unemployment, migration concerns worldwide, and other persistent issues and problems.

The second decade of the twenty-first century offers unprecedented challenges and opportunities for each of us as individuals and for our larger society and world. In the United States, we can no longer take for granted the peace and economic prosperity that many—but far from all—people were able to enjoy in previous decades. However, even as some things change, others remain the same, and among the things that have not changed are the significance of education and the profound importance of understanding how and why people act the way they do. It is also important to analyze how societies grapple with issues such as economic hardship and the threat of terrorist attacks and war and to gain a better understanding of why many of us seek stability in our social institutions—including family, religion, education, government, and media—even if we believe that some of these institutions might benefit from certain changes.

As with previous editions, the twelfth edition of *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* highlights the relevance of sociology to help students connect with the subject and the full spectrum of topics and issues that it encompasses. It achieves this connection by providing a meaningful, concrete context within which to learn. Specifically, it presents

the stories—the *lived experiences*—of real individuals and the social issues they face while discussing a diverse array of classical and contemporary theories and examining interesting and relevant research. The first-person commentaries that begin each chapter in “Sociology & Everyday Life” show students how sociology can help them understand the important questions and social issues that not only these other individuals face but that they themselves may face as well.

*Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* includes the best work of classical and established contemporary sociologists, and it weaves an inclusive treatment of *all* people—across lines of race/ethnicity, class, gender, age, ability/disability, and other social attributes—into the examination of sociology in *all* chapters. It does not water down the treatment of sociology for students! *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* provides students with the most relevant information about sociological thinking and helps them to consider contemporary social issues through the lens of diversity. While guiding students to appreciate how sociology can help them better understand the world, this text also encourages them to see themselves as *members of their communities* and shows them what can be done in responding to social issues. As a result, students learn how sociology is not only a collection of concepts and theories but also a field that can make a difference in their lives, their communities, and the world at large.

## What's New to the Twelfth Edition?

The twelfth edition builds on the best of previous editions but places more emphasis on pressing social and political issues facing the United States and other nations of the world in the 2020s. Like previous editions, I have tried to offer professors and students alike new insights, learning tools, and opportunities to apply the content of each chapter to relevant sociological issues and major concerns of the twenty-first century. It is my top priority as an author to make each edition better than the previous one by revising and updating all chapters thoroughly, providing new discussions about contemporary issues and the embattled political climate in the nation, and most important of all, sharing the latest scholarship in sociological theory and research. For example, all statistics included in the twelfth edition, such as data relating to crime, demographics, health, and the economy, were the latest available at the time of this writing.

To assist your students in learning about sociology and reflecting their knowledge on tests, I have continued to revise the learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter and offer students a study guide at the end of each chapter. The learning objectives have been carefully conceived to help the reader focus on the most crucial concepts of the chapter.

## Changes by Chapter

### CHAPTER 1: The Sociological Perspective and Research Process

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated chapter-opening lived experience to show continued linkages among social media, bullying, and suicide regarding young people in the United States
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: The Sociology of Suicide Trends Today”
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life” quiz: “How Much Do You Know About Suicide?”
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Durkheim’s Classical Study of Suicide Applied to Twenty-First-Century India”
- Updated “The Importance of a Global Sociological Imagination”
- Updated Figure 1.3: “Using Our Global Sociological Imagination to Understand Suicide”
- Updated discussion of contemporary relevance of Auguste Comte’s focus on science relating to sociology as a STEM discipline
- Updated Figure 1.8: “Age-Adjusted U.S. Suicide Rates by Race and Sex”
- Updated “Understanding Statistical Data Presentations”
- Updated Table 1.1, “Rates (per 100,000 U.S. Population) for Homicide, Suicide, and Firearm-Related Deaths of Youths Ages 15–19, by Gender, 2017”
- Revised and updated “Sociology and Social Policy: Establishing Policies to Help Prevent Military Suicides”
- Updated Figure 1.14: “National Suicide Statistics by State at a Glance”

### CHAPTER 2: Culture

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Revised and updated opening lived experience about the relationship between food and cultural diversity
- Revised and updated “Cultural Universals”
- Updated discussion of “Symbols”
- Updated section on “Language,” including “Language and Gender,” and “Language, Race, and Ethnicity”
- Updated Figure 2.6: “States with Official English Laws”
- Updated Figure 2.7: “Languages Spoken at Home, Other Than English?”
- Updated discussion about “Cultural Diversity”

- Updated Figure 2.11: “Heterogeneity of U.S. Society” regarding religious affiliation, household income, and racial and ethnic distribution
- Updated “Culture Shock” regarding the Yanomamö
- Revised and updated “High Culture and Popular Culture”

### CHAPTER 3: Socialization

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated and revised Figure 3.4: “Types of Maltreatment Among Children Under Age 18”
- Updated discussion of “The Family”
- Updated “Mass Media”
- Revised and updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Open Doors: Study Abroad and Global Socialization”
- Revised “Looking Ahead: Socialization, Social Change, and Your Future”—regarding digital natives and digital immigrants in higher education

### CHAPTER 4: Social Structure and Interaction in Everyday Life

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Revised and updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: Does Social Structure Contribute to Homelessness?” to include how eviction affects poor people and can contribute to homelessness
- Updated “Status” and “Master Status” discussions
- Deleted former Figure 4.4: “Causes of Family Homelessness in 22 Cities”
- Changed Figure 4.5: “Role Expectation, Performance, Conflict, and Strain” to Figure 4.4
- Changed Figure 4.6 to Figure 4.5 and updated caption
- Changed Figure 4.8: “Who Are the Homeless?” to Figure 4.7 and revised figure
- Updated “Sociology and Social Policy”
- Updated “You Can Make a Difference: Offering a Helping Hand to Homeless People”

### CHAPTER 5: Groups and Organizations

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated opening lived experience to include examples of attachment to digital devices and face time.
- Revised “Sociology & Social Policy: Technological and Social Change in the Workplace: BYOD?”
- Added new “You Can Make a Difference: Can Websites and Social Media Help You Become a More Helpful Person?”

### CHAPTER 6: Deviance and Crime

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: The Carnage from Mass Shootings Just Keeps Going On”
- Updated discussion and examples throughout theories of deviance and crime section
- Updated crime statistics throughout chapter

- Updated “What Causes Deviance, and Why Is It Functional for Society?” to include information about the 2018 Women’s March
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Gangs Around the World: A Growing Problem”
- Updated “Deviance and Power Relations” to include the stereotyping of African American perpetrators
- Updated Figure 6.10: “Distribution of Arrests by Type of Offense, 2018”
- Updated Figure 6.11: “The FBI Crime Clock, 2018”
- Updated “Occupational and Corporate Crime”
- Updated “Internet Crime”
- Updated Figure 6.13: “Top Reported Internet Crime Types, 2018”
- Updated Figure 6.18: “Arrest Rates by Gender, 2018”
- Updated Figure 6.19: “Arrest Rates by Race, 2018”
- Revised and updated discussion of “The Police”
- Revised “Juvenile Courts” to include the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- Updated Figure 6.24: “Death Row Census, May 31, 2019”
- Updated “Sociology & Social Policy: The Eternal Political War over Gun Control”
- Updated “Questions for Critical Thinking”

## CHAPTER 7: Class and Stratification in the United States

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated opening lived experience about the “American Dream”
- Updated statistics on income, poverty, health insurance, and other issues pertaining to inequality throughout the chapter
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: A Day in Your Life: How Are You Touched by Modern Slavery?”
- Updated discussion of “The Upper (Capitalist) Class”
- Updated “The Upper-Middle Class” to include the consumer class
- Updated “The Middle Class” to include a discussion of erosion of upward mobility and achievement of the American Dream
- Revised “The Working Class” to include more about pink collar occupations
- Updated content under “The Underclass”
- Updated Figure 7.12: “Distribution of Aggregate Income in the United States, 2018”
- Updated Figure 7.13: “Mean Household Income in the United States, 2018”
- Updated Figure 7.14: “Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity in the United States, 2018”
- Updated “Wealth Inequality” to include closing the racial wealth gap
- Updated Figure 7.15: “Racial Divide in Net Worth, 2017”
- Updated Figure 7.16: “Rate of Uninsurance by Household Income, 2018”
- Revised “Physical Health, Mental Health, and Nutrition” to include a discussion about “lunch shaming” in schools

- Updated Figure 7.18: “U.S. Poverty Rates by Age, 1959–2018”
- Updated Figure 7.19: “Poverty Rates by Age and Sex, 2018”
- Revised “Solving the Poverty Problem” to include issues regarding reducing or solving the poverty problem
- Updated “Looking Ahead: U.S. Stratification in the Future”
- Updated “You Can Make a Difference: Students Helping Others through The Campus Kitchen”

## CHAPTER 8: Global Stratification

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life” quiz: “How Much Do You Know About Global Wealth and Poverty?”
- Updated statistics on income, poverty, and other issues pertaining to inequality throughout the chapter
- Updated “Wealth and Poverty in Global Perspective”
- Deleted Figure 8.1: “Wealth and Population by Region, 2015”
- Updated Figure 8.3: “High-, Middle-, and Low-Income Economies in Global Perspective” (now Figure 8.2)
- Updated “Concept: Quick Review: Classification of Economies by Income”
- Updated “Global Poverty and Human Development Issues”
- Updated Figure 8.6: “Indicators of Human Development” (now Figure 8.5)
- Updated “Education and Literacy” to include expected years of schooling and definition of *literate person*
- Updated information on *maquiladora* plants
- Revised “Looking Ahead: Global Inequality in the Future”

## CHAPTER 9: Race and Ethnicity

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated opening lived experience about the persistence of racism and police discrimination against persons of color
- Updated data and other information on all racial and ethnic categories throughout the chapter
- Revised “Sociology & Social Policy: Racist Incidents on College Campus Versus First Amendment Right to Freedom of Speech”
- Updated “Racism” to include newer examples of overt racism and beliefs regarding the First Amendment’s guarantee of freedom of speech
- Updated “WASPs and Sports”
- Updated “Discrimination Against White Ethnics” to include examples of stereotypes of white ethnics offered in film and television and information about anti-Semitism
- Revised and updated discussions of “Indochinese Americans,” “Korean Americans,” and “Japanese Americans”
- Revised and updated discussion of “Mexican Americans or Chicanos/as” to include effects of Trump Administration policies

- Updated discussion of “Puerto Ricans” to include effects of Hurricane Maria and living conditions of Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland
- Updated “Cuban Americans”
- Revised and updated “Latinx and Sports”
- Revised and updated “Middle Eastern Americans and North African Americans” to include North African Americans and Trump Administration policies
- Revised “Iranian (Persian) Americans”
- Updated “Discrimination” to include Trump Administration policies
- Updated “Middle Eastern Americans and Sports”
- Added research by Demographer William H. Frey under “Growing Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Hostility in the United States”
- Revised “You Can Make a Difference: Working for Racial and Gender Harmony on College Campuses”

## CHAPTER 10: Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated discussion of “Measuring Sexual Orientation”
- New discussion of “The Great Divide That Doesn’t Stop”
- Revised and updated discussion of LGBTQ issues throughout the chapter
- Updated sections on socialization
- Updated “Mass Media and Gender Socialization”
- Updated Table 10.3: “Percentage of the Workforce Represented by Women, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans in Selected Occupations”
- Updated Figure 10.11: “The Wage Gap, 2019”
- Updated Figure 10.12: “Women’s Median Annual Earnings as a Percentage of Men’s Median Annual Earnings in Same Racial/Ethnic Category, 2018”
- Updated discussion of “The Human Capital Model” regarding the “motherhood penalty”
- Deleted former Figure 10.13: “Women’s Earnings as a Percentage of Men’s Earnings by State, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, 2014”
- Revised “Multicultural Feminism”

## CHAPTER 11: Families and Intimate Relationships

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated chapter opening lived experience and quiz about “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About Contemporary Trends in U.S. Family Life?”
- Revised statistics on families throughout chapter
- Updated discussion of “Extended and Nuclear Families”
- Updated “The Contemporary Family—Family Diversity in the Twenty-first Century”
- Updated data on cohabitation and domestic partnerships throughout chapter
- Added content about matriarchal societies under “Power and Authority in Families”
- Replaced previous Figure 11.7 with new Figure 11.7, “Percentage of U.S. Households by Type, 1947 to 2019”

- Revised “Marriage” to include new discussion of the downward trend in the number of married U.S. households and the upward swing in the age of many first marriages
- Updated content about same-sex marriage and LGBTQ rights throughout chapter
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Wombs-for-Rent: Commercial Surrogacy in India”
- Updated “Deciding to Have Children”
- Updated Figure 11.10: “U.S. Birth Rates per 1,000 Females Ages 15–19, by Race/Ethnicity, 1990–2018”
- Updated Figure 11.12: “Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old for Selected Years, 1970–2019”
- Updated “Children in Foster Care” to include reasons for children’s removal from their own homes
- Updated Figure 11.14: “U.S. Divorce Rate by State, 1990–2017”
- Revised “Looking Ahead: Family Issues in the Future”

## CHAPTER 12: Education and Religion

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated the “Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About the Effects of Religion on U.S. Education?”
- Updated statistics for education and religion throughout the chapter
- Updated Figure 12.7: “Percentage Distribution of Total Public Elementary–Secondary School System Revenue, 2017–2018”
- Updated Figure 12.8: “Status Dropout Rates for 16- to 24-Year-Olds, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity, 2017–2018”
- Updated “Racial Segregation and Resegregation”
- Updated “Homeschooling”
- Updated “School Safety and Violence at All Levels”
- Revised and updated “Four-Year Colleges and Universities”
- Updated “The High Cost of a College Education”
- Revised “Racial and Ethnic Differences in Enrollment” to include a new study by Chun and Feagin
- Revised and updated Figure 12.13: “Highest Level of Educational Attainment of the U.S. Population Ages 25 and Over by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2018”
- Revised Figure 12.15: “Original Locations of the World’s Major Religions”
- Updated “Sociology & Social Policy: Fighting It Out on the Football Field: Prayer in Public Schools and the Issue of Separation of Church and State”
- Updated Figure 12.19: “U.S. Religious Traditions’ Membership”
- Revised and updated “Looking Ahead: Education and Religion in the Future”

## CHAPTER 13: Politics and the Economy in Global Perspective

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Revised “Sociology & Everyday Life” to include the 2016 Election of President Donald Trump

- Updated “Politics, Power, and Authority”
- Updated Figure 13.4: “Outside Spending Including Super PACS in the 2016 Presidential Election”
- Updated Figure 13.6: “Major U.S. Political Parties”
- Updated “Discontent with the Current Political System and Parties” to include the 2016 election of President Donald Trump and projections for the 2020 presidential elections
- Updated “Voter Turnout and Political Preferences”
- Updated Figure 13.8: “Voter Participation in the 2016 Presidential Election by Race and Ethnicity”
- Revised “Voter Turnout in Swing (“Battleground”) States”
- Updated Figure 13.9: “2016 Presidential Election: State by State”
- Revised “Voter Apathy or Something Else?”
- Updated Figure 13.10: “The ‘Typical’ Federal Civilian Employee, 2018”
- Updated Table 13.1: “*Forbes* List of the World’s 15 Largest Public Companies Based on Market Capitalization”
- Updated Table 13.2: “The Music Industry’s Big Three”
- Updated Figure 13.13: “The General Motors Board of Directors”
- Revised and updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: China’s Economic Slowdown and the Fate of Factory and Office Workers”
- Updated data and statistics about unemployment, labor unions, worker activism throughout the chapter
- Updated “You Can Make a Difference: Keeping an Eye on the Media”
- Updated “Looking Ahead: Politics and the Global Economy in the Future”

#### CHAPTER 14: Health, Health Care, and Disability

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: Medicine as a Social Institution”
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life” quiz: “How Much Do You Know About Health, Illness, and Health Care?”
- Updated information and statistics on illness and health care throughout the chapter
- Updated discussions about life expectancy, drug use, STDs, health insurance, and disability throughout the chapter
- Revised “Health in Global Perspective”
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Medical Crises and Response in the Aftermath of Natural Disasters”
- Updated “Alcohol” and problems associated with alcohol abuse
- Updated Figure 14.5: “Percentage of Adults Who Binge Drink”
- Updated “Illegal Drugs,” particularly marijuana use and changes in state laws on illegal drug use
- Updated Figure 14.8: “Chlamydia—Rates of Reported Cases by Age Group and Sex, United States, 2018”

- Updated Figure 14.9: “Prevalence of Self-Reported Adult Obesity in the United States, 2018”
- Updated Figure 14.11: “Increase in Cost of Health Care, 1993–2018”
- Revised and updated information on the Affordable Care Act and its implementation throughout the chapter
- Updated Figure 14.13: “Percentage of Children Under the Age of 19 by Without Health Insurance Coverage by Selected Characteristics: 2017 and 2018”
- Updated “Holistic Medicine and Alternative Medicine”
- Revised “Mental Disorders”
- Updated Table 14.2: “Percentage of Noninstitutionalized Adults Age 18 and Older with Disabilities in the United States”
- Updated “Looking Ahead: Health Care in the Future”

#### CHAPTER 15: Population and Urbanization

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated “Sociology & Everyday Life: The Immigration and Deportation Crisis in the United States”
- New Figure 15.1: “Projected Global Population Growth between 2019 and 2050”
- Updated information and statistics on population, fertility, mortality, and migration throughout the chapter
- Revised “Mortality” to include how educational attainment affects life expectancy
- Updated Table 15.1: “The Ten Leading Causes of Death in the United States, 1900 and 2019”
- Updated discussion of “Migration”
- Updated Figure 15.5: “Population Pyramids for Mexico, Iran, the United States, and France, 2020”
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective: Global Diaspora and the Migrant Crisis in India and Other Countries”
- Revised “Cities and Persons with a Disability” to include new content on the Americans With Disabilities Act
- Updated Figure 15.14: “The World’s Fifteen Largest Agglomerations”
- Updated “The Continuing Fiscal Crises of the Cities”
- Updated “Looking Ahead: Population and Urbanization in the Future”

#### CHAPTER 16: Collective Behavior, Social Movements, and Social Change

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated the “Sociology & Everyday Life: Collective Behavior, Climate Activism, and Environmental Issues”
- Updated the “Sociology & Everyday Life” quiz: “How Much Do You Know About Collective Behavior and Environmental Issues?”
- Revised “Collective Behavior” to include new Pew Research Center study
- Updated “Conditions for Collective Behavior”

- Revised “Protest Crowds”
- Updated “Convergence Theory” to include climate activists
- Updated “Emergent Norm Theory” to include new content about crimes committed in disaster areas
- Updated “Rumors and Gossip”
- Revised Table 16.1: “Top 6 Problems and Policy Priorities of the U.S. Public, 2019”
- Updated Table 16.1, “Public Opinion”
- Updated “Revolutionary Movements”
- Updated “Religious Movements” to include people identifying themselves as “nones” on Pew Research Surveys
- Updated “Sociology in Global Perspective; “Change Does Occur: Activist Cleans Up Environmental Pollution at Some Chinese Factories”
- Updated “Political Opportunity Theory”
- Revised “New Social Movement Theory” to include climate change activism
- Updated “The Physical Environment and Change”
- Revised and updated “Social Institutions and Change”

## Overview of the Text’s Contents

*Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials*, twelfth edition, contains sixteen high-interest, up-to-date, clearly organized chapters to introduce students to the best of sociological thinking. The length of the text makes full coverage of the book possible in the time typically allocated to the introductory course so that all students are purchasing a book that their instructors will have the time and desire to cover in its entirety.

*Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* is divided into five parts.

**Part 1** establishes the foundation for studying society and social life. **Chapter 1** introduces students to the sociological imagination and traces the development of sociological thinking. The chapter sets forth the major theoretical perspectives used by sociologists in analyzing compelling social issues and shows students how sociologists conduct research. This chapter provides a thorough description of both quantitative and qualitative methods of sociological research, and shows how these approaches have been used from the era of Emile Durkheim to the present to study social concerns such as suicide. In **Chapter 2** culture is spotlighted as either a stabilizing force or a force that can generate discord, conflict, and even violence in societies. Cultural diversity is discussed as a contemporary issue, and unique coverage is given to popular culture and leisure and to divergent perspectives on popular culture. **Chapter 3** looks at the positive and negative aspects of socialization, including a lived experience of learning the socialization cues of medical school. This chapter presents an innovative analysis of gender and racial–ethnic socialization and issues associated with recent immigration.

**Part 2** examines social groups and social control. **Chapter 4** applies the sociological imagination to an examination of society, social structure, and social interaction, using homelessness as a sustained example of the dynamic interplay of structure and interaction in society. Unique to this chapter are discussions of the sociology of emotions and of personal space as viewed through the lenses of race, class, gender, and age.

**Chapter 5** analyzes groups and organizations, including innovative forms of social organization and ways in which organizational structures may differentially affect people based on race, class, gender, and age. **Chapter 6** examines how deviance and crime emerge in societies, using diverse theoretical approaches to describe the nature of deviance, crime, and the criminal justice system. Key issues are dramatized for students through an analysis of recent mass shootings and the consequences of violence on individuals and society.

**Part 3** focuses on social differences and social inequality, looking at issues of class, race/ethnicity, and sex/gender, while also touching on issues relating to social inequality based on age. **Chapter 7** focuses on class and stratification in the United States, analyzing the causes and consequences of inequality and poverty, including a discussion of the ideology and accessibility of the American Dream. **Chapter 8** addresses the issue of global stratification and examines differences in wealth and poverty in rich and poor nations around the world. Explanations for these differences are discussed.

The focus of **Chapter 9** is race and ethnicity, including an illustration of the historical relationship (or lack of it) between sports and upward mobility by persons from diverse racial–ethnic groups. A thorough analysis of prejudice, discrimination, theoretical perspectives, and the experiences of diverse racial and ethnic groups is presented, along with global racial and ethnic issues. **Chapter 10** examines sex, gender, and sexuality, with special emphasis on gender stratification in historical perspective. Linkages between gender socialization and contemporary gender inequality are described and illustrated by lived experiences and perspectives on body image.

**Part 4** offers a systematic discussion of social institutions, building students’ awareness of the importance of these foundational elements of society and showing how a problem in one often has a significant influence on others. Families and intimate relationships are explored in **Chapter 11**, which includes both U.S. and global perspectives on family relationships, a view of families throughout the life course, and a discussion of diversity in contemporary U.S. families. Education and religion are presented in **Chapter 12**, which highlights important sociological theories pertaining to these social institutions and integrates the theme of the influence of religion on education and life. In the process, the chapter highlights issues of race, class, and gender inequalities in current U.S. education. The chapter also provides a thorough discussion of religion in global perspective, including a survey of world



religions and an analysis of how religious beliefs affect other aspects of social life. Current trends in U.S. religion are explored, including various sociological explanations of why people look to religion to find purpose and meaning in life.

**Chapter 13** discusses the intertwining nature of politics, economy, and media in global perspective, highlighting the international context in which contemporary political and economic systems operate. The chapter emphasizes the part that social media are increasingly playing in politics and the economy throughout the world.

**Chapter 14** analyzes health, health care, and disability from both U.S. and global perspectives. Among the topics included are social epidemiology, lifestyle factors influencing health and illness, health care organization in the United States and other nations, social implications of advanced medical technology, and holistic and alternative medicine. This chapter is unique in that it contains a thorough discussion of the sociological perspectives on disability and of social inequalities based on disability. The Affordable Care Act and its ramifications are explored in detail.

**Part 5** surveys social dynamics and social change. **Chapter 15** examines population and urbanization, looking at demography, global population change, and the process and consequences of urbanization. Special attention is given to race- and class-based segregation in urban areas and the crisis in health care in central cities. **Chapter 16** concludes the text with an innovative analysis of collective behavior, social movements, and social change. The need for persistence in social movements, such as the continuing work of environmental activists over the past sixty years, is used as an example to help students grasp the importance of collective behavior and social movements in producing social change.

## Distinctive, Classroom-Tested Features

The following special features are specifically designed to demonstrate the relevance of sociology in our lives, as well as to support students' learning. As the preceding overview of the book's contents shows, these features appear throughout the text, some in every chapter and others in selected chapters.

### Unparalleled Coverage of and Attention to Diversity

From its first edition, I have strived to integrate diversity in numerous ways throughout this book. The individuals portrayed and discussed in each chapter accurately mirror the diversity in society itself. As a result, this text speaks to a wide variety of students and captures their interest by taking into account their concerns and perspectives. Moreover, the research used includes the best work of classical and established contemporary sociologists—including many white women and people of color—and it weaves an inclusive treatment of *all* people into the examination of sociology in *all* chapters. Therefore, this text helps students

consider the significance of the interlocking nature of individuals' class, race, and gender (and, increasingly, age) in all aspects of social life.

### Personal Narratives That Highlight Issues and Serve as Chapter-Length Examples

Authentic first-person commentaries appear in the “Sociology & Everyday Life” features that open each chapter and personalize the issue that unifies the chapter's coverage. These lived experiences provide opportunities for students to examine social life beyond their own experiences and for instructors to systematically incorporate into lectures and discussions an array of interesting and relevant topics that help demonstrate to students the value of applying sociology to their everyday lives. Topics include “Does Social Structure Contribute to Homelessness?,” which discusses sociologist Matthew Desmond's touching book, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, describing the plight of people living in some of the poorest neighborhoods in the United States (Chapter 4); updated research by sociologist Sherry Turkle on “Social Media in the Classroom and the Real World” (Chapter 5); a discussion of gun violence during the Trump administration in “The Carnage from Mass Shootings Just Keeps Going On” (Chapter 6); “The Endless Controversy in Schools,” new lived experiences about how people argue over issues pertaining to the teaching of creationism and evolution in public schools (Chapter 12); “The Immigration and Deportation Crisis in the United States,” with new lived experiences and information about immigration and population problems affecting the United States (Chapter 15); and “Collective Behavior, Climate Activism, and Environmental Issues,” which describes the role of young activists in calling attention to climate change and the environmental crisis (Chapter 16).

### Focus on the Relationship Between Sociology and Everyday Life

Each chapter has a brief quiz in the opening “Sociology & Everyday Life” feature that relates the sociological perspective to the pressing social issues presented in the vignette. (Answers are provided at the end of the chapter.)

### Emphasis on the Importance of a Global Perspective

The global implications of all topics are examined throughout each chapter and in the “Sociology in Global Perspective” features, which highlight our interconnected world and reveal how the sociological imagination extends beyond national borders.

### Emphasis on Social and Global Change

The twelfth edition also strives to relate the importance of social and global change in its many forms and how this change affects not only our everyday lives but also our communities and the entire nation and world.

## Applying the Sociological Imagination to Social Policy

The “Sociology & Social Policy” features in selected chapters help students understand the connection between law and social policy issues in society.

## Focus on Making a Difference

Designed to help students learn how to become involved in their communities, the “You Can Make a Difference” features look at ways in which students can address, on a personal level, social issues and problems raised by the chapter themes.

## Effective Study Aids

In addition to basic reading and study aids such as learning objectives, key terms, and a running glossary, *Sociology in Our Times* includes the following pedagogical aids to aid students’ mastery of the course’s content:

- **Concept Quick Review.** These tables categorize and contrast the major theories or perspectives on the specific topics presented in a chapter.
- **Questions for Critical Thinking.** Each chapter concludes with a set of questions to encourage students to reflect on important issues, to develop their own critical-thinking skills, and to highlight how ideas presented in one chapter often build on those developed previously.
- **Feature-Concluding Reflect & Analyze Questions.** From activating prior knowledge related to concepts and themes to highlighting main ideas and reinforcing diverse perspectives, this text’s questions encourage students to reflect on issues and to analyze content rather than to simply memorize and recall course content.
- **End-of-Chapter Summaries in Question-and-Answer Format.** Chapter summaries provide a built-in review for students by reexamining material covered in the chapter in an easy-to-read question-and-answer format to review, highlight, and reinforce the most important concepts and issues discussed in each chapter.

## Comprehensive Supplements Package

### Products for Blended and Online Courses

**MindTap™** *MindTap Sociology for Kendall’s Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials*, twelfth edition, from Cengage Learning, represents a new approach to a highly customizable, online learning platform. A fully online learning solution, MindTap combines all of a student’s learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments—into a learning path that guides the student through the introduction to sociology course. Instructors can customize the experience to suit the learning needs of their students, even seamlessly introducing their own content into the learning path via apps that integrate into the MindTap platform. Learn more at [www.cengage.com/mindtap](http://www.cengage.com/mindtap).

MindTap for Kendall’s *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials*, twelfth edition, is easy to use and saves instructors time by allowing them to do the following:

- Seamlessly deliver appropriate content and technology assets from a number of providers to students, as needed.
- Break course content down into movable objects to promote personalization, encourage interactivity, and ensure student engagement.
- Customize the course—from tools to text—and make adjustments “on the fly,” making it possible to intertwine breaking news into your lessons and incorporate today’s teachable moments.
- Bring interactivity into learning through the integration of multimedia assets (apps from Cengage Learning and other providers) and numerous in-context exercises and supplements.
- Track students’ use, activities, and comprehension in real time, which provides opportunities for early intervention to influence progress and outcomes. Grades are visible and archived so students and instructors always have access to current standings in the class.
- Assess knowledge throughout each section: after readings and in activities, homework, and quizzes.
- Automatically grade homework and quizzes.

### Resources for Customizing Your Textbook

Cengage Learning is pleased to offer three modules that help you tailor *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials*, twelfth edition, to your course. In addition, you can choose to add your own materials or reorganize the table of contents. Work with your local Cengage Learning consultant to find out more.

**Teaching Aids for Instructors** A broad array of teaching aids is available to make course planning faster and easier, giving you more time to focus on your students. All of these resources can be accessed with a single account. Go to [login.cengage.com](http://login.cengage.com) to log in.

**Online Instructor’s Resource Manual** This text’s *Online Instructor’s Resource Manual* is designed to maximize the effectiveness of your course preparation. Beginning with a list of “What’s New in Each Chapter” and the Key Terms, it offers brief chapter outlines correlated to student learning objectives, creative lecture and teaching ideas, student active learning activities, Internet activities, video suggestions, and additional resources.

**Online Test Bank** The twelfth edition’s test bank consists of revised and updated multiple-choice questions and true/false questions for each chapter of the text, along with an answer key and text references for each question. Each multiple-choice item has the question type (fact, concept, or application) indicated. Also included are essay questions

for each chapter. All test bank questions are aligned to learning objectives for each chapter.

**Online PowerPoint® Slides** Helping you make your lectures more engaging while effectively reaching your more visually oriented students, these Microsoft® PowerPoint® slides outline the chapters of the main text in classroom-ready presentations that include tables, selected figures, image-based “Consider This” questions, and a “Quick Quiz.” The PowerPoint slides are updated to reflect the content and organization of the new edition of the text.

**Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero** This is a flexible online system that allows you to do the following:

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- Create multiple test versions in an instant
- Deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want

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I invite you to send your comments and suggestions about this book to me in care of:

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DIANA KENDALL is Professor of Sociology at Baylor University, where she was named an Outstanding University Professor. She has taught a variety of courses, including Introduction to Sociology; Sociological Theory (undergraduate and graduate); Sociology of Medicine; Sociology of Law; and Race, Class, and Gender. Previously she enjoyed many years of teaching sociology and serving as chair of the Social and Behavioral Science Division at Austin Community College.

Dr. Kendall received her Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin, where she was invited to membership in the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. Her areas of specialization and primary research interests are sociological theory and the sociology of medicine. Dr. Kendall is the author of *Sociology in Our Times* (Cengage Learning, 2017), *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* (Cengage, 2018), *Social Problems in a Diverse Society* (Pearson, 2019), *The Power of Good Deeds: Privileged Women and the Social Reproduction of the Upper Class* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), *Members Only: Elite Clubs and the Process of Exclusion* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), and *Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America*, Second Edition (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012). Much of Dr. Kendall's research focuses on the intersectionality of race, class, and gender, including her publication "Class: Still Alive and Reproducing in the United States," a book chapter in *Privilege: A Reader*, Fourth Edition, 2016, edited by Michael S. Kimmel and Abby L. Ferber and published by Westview Press. Dr. Kendall is also the author of the forthcoming book, *Rich Woman, Poor Woman: The Plight of Women during the Trump Era*, and she is a coauthor of the recently published scholarly publication, "Religious Conservatives and TV News: Are They More Likely to be Religiously Offended?" *Social Problems*, November, 2019 (with coauthors Robert Thomson and Jerry Z. Park). Dr. Kendall is actively involved in numerous national and regional sociological associations, including the American Sociological Association, the Society for the Study of Social Problems, and the Southwestern Sociological Association.





# The Sociological Perspective and Research Process

# 1

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Discuss** how sociology can contribute to our understanding of social life.
- 2 Explain** the sociological imagination and importance of a global sociological imagination.
- 3 Describe** the historical context in which sociological thinking developed, emphasizing the ideas of early social thinkers.
- 4 Discuss** how the views of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel on social change influenced modern sociology.
- 5 Compare** the functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and postmodern perspectives on social life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
- 6 Explain** how sociologists and other social scientists question ordinary assumptions and use specific research methods to find out more about the social world.
- 7 Distinguish** between a quantitative research model and a qualitative research model.
- 8 Describe** survey research and the types of surveys.
- 9 Compare** field research, experiments, and secondary analysis of existing data.
- 10 Discuss** the ethical concerns involved in sociological research and the professional codes that protect research participants.

Jeffrey Isaac Greenberg 1/Alamy Stock Photo

# SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

## Social Media and the Teen Bullying and Suicide Crisis

**“Her actions consisted of starting rumors of the victim having sexually transmitted diseases, vulgar name-calling... and threats to ‘expose’ personal and sensitive details of the victim’s life.”**

—Statement from a Panama City Beach, Florida, police report describing the law enforcement investigation into a middle-school student’s social media account after the suicide death of a 12-year-old young woman who had routinely been cyberbullied by this person and other students at her school (Lynch, 2018).

**“A police officer stood outside [her front door], demanding her daughter’s phone. A day earlier, [this mother] had spoken at the funeral of her 15-year-old daughter . . . who had committed suicide that week. [The mother] knew little about what caused the teen to take her own life, beyond a strange stream of apologetic Facebook messages from friends chiming from [the daughter’s] open laptop.” . . . “I don’t think [my daughter] thought she could start over . . .”**

—A mother describes what happened when Phoenix, Arizona, police officers came to her home late on a Sunday night shortly after her 15-year-old daughter had taken her own life following being raped at a Labor Day party and others had shared a photo of the violent event online (Mensik, 2019).

One of the things that law enforcement officials often do in their investigation after a young person’s suicide is to look at the victim’s cellphone and social



The tragic loss of many young people to suicide has brought about some new state laws aimed at deterring bullying, cyberbullying, and sexual assault. Shown here, the District Attorney of Santa Clara County, California, introduces “Audrie’s Law,” named in honor of Audrie Pott, a high school student whose life tragically ended in suicide allegedly linked to bullying and sexual assault.

**S**uicides committed by young people who have been the victims of cyberbullying deeply touch the lives of their families, friends, and others who have not even met them. Although we will never know the full story of what happened to the young people described earlier, these tragic occurrences bring us to larger sociological questions: Why does anyone commit suicide? Is suicide purely an individual phenomenon, or is it related to our social interactions and the social environment and society in which we live? How have technologies such as smartphones and social media affected our communication—both positively and negatively—with others?

As you are well aware, social media use among teens and college students continues to grow rapidly. You are engulfed by smartphones, tablets, and computers. Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other networking sites are all taken for granted. You enjoy the positive effects of social media, but the digital age has also produced some harmful outcomes, particularly when people harass others, cause psychological and physical harm, and sometimes even contribute to suicide because of cyberbullying and other forms of aggressive behavior.

Although suicide may seem like a depressing discussion for starting your study of sociology, I have chosen this topic as a beginning

point because suicide is one of the first social topics that some early sociologists studied. These thinkers believed that identifying the *social causes* of such behavior sets sociology apart from psychology, philosophy, and other areas of inquiry. These early sociologists also wanted to show others how many acts we think of as purely *individual* in nature are also social in their origin and consequences.

In Chapter 1, we examine how sociological theories and research can help all of us to better understand social life, including such seemingly individualistic acts such as attempting or committing suicide. We hope you will see how sociological theory and research methods are used to answer complex questions and give you a chance to wrestle with some of the problems sociologists experience as they study human behavior. Before reading on, please test your knowledge about suicide by taking the “Sociology and Everyday Life” quiz. ●

## Putting Social Life into Perspective

**Sociology** is the systematic study of human society and social interaction. It is a *systematic* study because sociologists apply both theoretical perspectives and research methods

media accounts, as well as all other persons who might have cyberbullied or otherwise threatened their well-being. This approach is one way to learn about possible motivations for the individual's death because social media is a prime way in which today's young people may be psychologically harmed by friends

or acquaintances who can anonymously verbally attack them. Cyberbullying as a social phenomenon contributes to problems of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and a general feeling of helplessness that may make some young people feel like living is not worthwhile.

## How Much Do You Know About Suicide?

TRUE	FALSE	
T	F	1 Suicide primarily occurs in high-income nations of the world.
T	F	2 Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death overall in the United States.
T	F	3 More than twice as many suicides occur in the United States each year as there are homicides.
T	F	4 Although females are more likely to attempt suicide, males are more likely to complete suicide (take their own life).
T	F	5 Each year about 500,000 suicide deaths occur worldwide.
T	F	6 Firearms are the most commonly used method of suicide among males and females.
T	F	7 Among males, the U.S. suicide rate is highest for men aged 65 and older.
T	F	8 The prevalence of suicide attempts typically is highest each year among adults between the ages of 18 and 25.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

(or orderly approaches) to examinations of social behavior. Sociologists study human societies and their social interactions to develop theories of how human behavior is shaped by group life and how, in turn, group life is affected by individuals. Sociologists often examine social institutions and social relationships among people. This helps us understand how the social institutions and larger societal structures, such as government, religion, education, health care, and law, influence our lives and the groups of which we are a part on a daily basis.

## Why Should You Study Sociology?

Sociology helps you gain a better understanding of yourself and other people, cultures, and environments we encounter in our larger social world. It enables you to see how the groups to which you belong and the society in which you live largely shape behavior. A **society** is a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations,

such as the United States, Mexico, or Nigeria. Many rapid changes continue to occur in the twenty-first century. Many societies have not only dominant cultural groupings and expectations but also many smaller groupings that have their own unique cultural identities. Global migration and interdependence of various nation-states have shifted the meaning of *society* in the twenty-first century where we tend to look at issues on a more international basis.

Examining the world order helps us understand that each of us is affected by *global interdependence*—a relationship in which the lives of all people are closely intertwined and any one nation's problems are part of a larger global problem. Environmental problems are an example: People throughout

### sociology

the systematic study of human society and social interaction.

### society

a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.





**FIGURE 1.1** Fields That Use Social Science Research

In many careers, including jobs in health and human services, business, communication, academia, and law, the ability to analyze social science research is an important need.

Source: Based on Katzer, Cook, and Crouch, 1991.

the world share the same biosphere. When environmental degradation, such as removing natural resources or polluting the air and water, takes place in one region, it may have an adverse effect on people around the globe. Consider, for example, the effects of the recent forest fires in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil, which produces an estimated 20 percent of the world's oxygen. Devastation from these fires will affect regions worldwide with regard to wildlife, natural resources, health, and our oxygen supply. In addition to affecting the global ecosystem, disasters such as this will also deeply affect not only the indigenous people who live in the area but also the health and well-being of individuals worldwide.

What are some ways that you might personally benefit from studying sociology? You can benefit from studying sociology because sociology enables us to move beyond established ways of thinking and allows us to gain new insights into ourselves. It also helps us develop a greater awareness of the connections between our own personal “world” and that of other people. According to sociologist Peter Berger (1963: 23), sociological inquiry helps us see that “things are not what they seem.” Sociology provides new ways of approaching social problems and making decisions in everyday life. For this reason, people with knowledge of sociology are employed in a variety of fields that apply sociological insights to everyday life (see ■ Figure 1.1).

Sociology promotes understanding and tolerance by enabling each of us to look beyond intuition, common sense, and our personal experiences. Many of us rely on intuition or common sense gained from personal experience to help us understand our daily lives and other people's behavior. *Commonsense knowledge* guides ordinary conduct in everyday life. However, many commonsense notions are actually myths. A *myth* is a popular but false notion that may be used, either intentionally or unintentionally, to perpetuate certain beliefs or “theories” even in the light of conclusive evidence to the contrary.

By contrast, sociologists strive to use scientific standards, not popular myths or hearsay, in studying society and social interaction. They use systematic research techniques

and are accountable to the scientific community for their methods and the presentation of their findings. Whereas some sociologists argue that sociology must be completely value free—free from distorting subjective (personal or emotional) bias—others do not think that total objectivity is an attainable or desirable goal when studying human behavior. However, all sociologists attempt to discover patterns or commonalities in human behavior. When they study suicide, for example, they look for recurring patterns of behavior in individuals and groups. Consequently, we seek the multiple causes and effects of social issues and analyze the effect of the problem not only from the standpoint of the people directly involved but also from the standpoint of the effects of such behavior on all people.

## The Sociological Imagination

Do you wonder how your daily life compares to what other people are doing? Our interest in Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media sites reflects how fascinated we are by what other people are thinking and doing. But how can you really link your personal life with what is going on with other people in the larger social world? You can make an important linkage known as the sociological imagination.

Sociological reasoning is often referred to as the *sociological imagination*—the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society (Mills, 1959b). The sociological imagination is important to each of us because having this awareness enables us to understand the link between our personal experiences and the social contexts in which they occur. Think for a minute about some of the problems you face. Are these problems totally individualistic in nature or do they have their roots in the larger society? What about the high cost of college and university education? At a personal level, you and your family are the ones who have to figure out how to meet these economic demands and sometimes financial hardships caused by the cost of your education. However, what you must pay to attend college and how the costs of your overall education

# SOCIOLOGY IN **Global Perspective**

## Durkheim's Classical Study of Suicide Applied to Twenty-First-Century India

The bond attaching [people] to life slackens because the bond which attaches [them] to society is itself slack.  
—Emile Durkheim, *Suicide* (1964b/1897)

Although this statement described social conditions accompanying the high rates of suicide found in late-nineteenth-century France, Durkheim's words ring true today as we look at contemporary suicide rates for young people in India. The suicide rate among young people aged 15–29 is more than three times the national average for all suicides. Ironically, these rates are high among persons living in the wealthier and more educated regions of the nation (*Times of India*, 2019).

Doesn't this seem unlikely? Many people think rural farmers facing poor harvests and high debt would have the greatest risk of suicide; however, this has not proven true in India. At first glance, we might think that economic success and a good education would provide insurance against suicide because of the greater happiness and job satisfaction among individuals in cities such as New Delhi, as



JeremyRichards/Shutterstock.com

Durkheim's words about suicide still ring true today in India, where suicide rates for young people in cities such as New Delhi are high, particularly among those in the 15–29 age category. Why might an economic boom not only create new opportunities but also intensify social problems such as high rates of suicide when social change is linked to rapid urbanization and weakening social ties?

these individuals have gained new opportunities and higher salaries in recent years. However, this economic boom—including the more open markets of India in the twenty-first century—has not only created new opportunities for people; but these changes have also contributed to rapid urbanization and weakened social ties.

The result of all this change? Intensified job anxiety, higher expectations, and more pressure for individual achievement. Social bonds have been weakened or dissolved as people move away from their families and their community. Ironically, newer technologies such as cellphones and social networking sites have contributed to the breakdown of traditional family units as communication has become more impersonal and fragmented.

In addition, life in the cities moves at a much faster pace than in the rural areas, and many individuals experience loneliness, sleep disorders, family discord, and major health risks such as heart disease and depression. In fact, Durkheim's sociology of suicide remains highly relevant to finding new answers to the question of why there is such a rash of suicides among young people in urban areas and villages of India. In India and globally, concern about reducing high rates of suicide is often linked to diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. However, social analysts also have learned that in addition to medications and psychiatric care, human contact with other individuals through suicide hotlines or personal encounters where people have someone available to talk with them may be able to curb more suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts (*Times of India*, 2019). What do you think?

### Reflect & Analyze

How does sociology help us examine seemingly private acts such as suicide within a larger social context? Why are some people more inclined to commit suicide if they are not part of a strong social fabric and have, at the same time, high job anxiety and intensive pressure to achieve?

are funded (through savings, part-time jobs, family contributions, grants, scholarships, or other economic means) are embedded in the larger structures of higher education and the politics and economics of our larger society.

The sociological imagination will enable you to grasp the relationship between economic and social arrangements, such as the cost of higher education, at the societal

#### sociological imagination

C. Wright Mills's term for the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society.

level and your own biography at the individual level. This way of looking at social life also helps you distinguish between personal troubles and social (or public) issues. *Personal troubles* are private problems that affect individuals and the networks of people with whom they regularly associate. As a result, individuals within their immediate social settings must solve those problems. For example, one person being unable to afford a college education or being unemployed may be viewed by some other people as a personal trouble. But, by contrast, *public issues* are problems that affect large numbers of people and often require solutions at the societal level. To pay for a college education, many students must rely on loans that may follow them many years after college. Some estimates suggest that more than 44 million people in the United States have a combined total of more than \$1.4 trillion in student debt. This is a societal problem, not just an individual one!

The sociological imagination helps us place seemingly personal troubles, such as having difficulty paying for a college education, losing one's job, or thinking about taking one's own life (referred to as "suicidal ideation"), into a larger social context, where we can distinguish whether and how personal troubles may be related to public issues. Let's compare the two perspectives by looking at suicide.

**Suicide as a Personal Trouble** Have you ever heard someone say, "They have no one to blame but themselves" regarding some problem? In everyday life, we often blame other people for "creating" their own problems. Although individual behavior can contribute to social problems, our individual experiences are often largely beyond our own control. They are determined by society as a whole—by its historical development and its organization. In everyday life, we often blame individuals for creating or contributing to their own problems. If a person commits suicide, many people consider it to be strictly the result of that individual's own personal problems, not the social world in which the person lived.

**Suicide as a Public Issue** Using the sociological imagination to look at the problem of suicide, we can see that it is often a public issue—a societal problem. Early sociologist Emile Durkheim refused to accept popular explanations of suicide. In what is probably the first sociological study to use scientific research methods, he related suicide to the issue of cohesiveness (or lack of it) in society instead of viewing suicide as an isolated act that could be understood only by studying individual personalities or inherited tendencies. In *Suicide* (1964b/1897), Durkheim documented his contention that a high suicide rate indicated large-scale societal problems.

## The Importance of a Global Sociological Imagination

How is it possible to think globally when you live in one location and have been taught to think a certain way? Although we live in one country and rely heavily on Western

sociological theory and research, we can access the world beyond the United States and learn to develop a more comprehensive *global* approach for the future. One way we can do this is to reach beyond studies that have focused primarily on the United States to look at the important challenges we face in a rapidly changing world and develop a more comprehensive *global* approach for the future (see ■ Figure 1.2). These issues range from political and economic instability to environmental concerns, natural disasters, and terrorism. We can also examine the ways in which nations are not on equal footing when it comes to economics and politics.

The world's *high-income countries* are nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income. Examples include the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the countries of Western Europe.

As compared with other nations of the world, many high-income nations have a high standard of living and a lower death rate because of advances in nutrition and medical technology. However, not everyone living in a so-called high-income country has these advantages.

In contrast, *middle-income countries* are nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income. Examples of middle-income countries include the nations of Eastern Europe and many Latin American countries.

*Low-income countries* are primarily agrarian nations with little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income. Examples of low-income countries include many of the nations of Africa and Asia, particularly India and the People's Republic of China, where people typically work the land and are among the poorest in the world. However, generalizations are difficult to make because there are wide differences in income and standards of living within many nations (see Chapter 8).

If we look at the problem of suicide from a global perspective, we find that it is a major concern: Worldwide, more than 800,000 people die by suicide every year. In addition, many more people attempt suicide. Based on what you have read earlier about high-, middle-, and low-income countries, it is important for us to think about the fact that about 79 percent of global suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries. Risk factors are shown in ■ Figure 1.3.

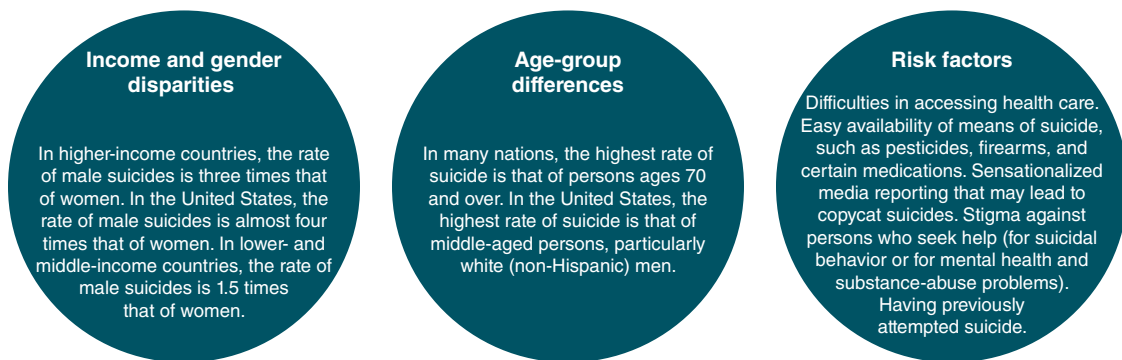
Throughout this text, we will continue to develop our sociological imaginations by examining social life in the United States and other nations. The future of our nation is deeply intertwined with the future of all other nations of the world on economic, political, environmental, and humanitarian levels.

Whatever your race/ethnicity, class, sex, or age, are you able to include in your thinking the perspectives of people who are quite different from you in experiences and points of view? Before you answer this question, a few definitions are in order. *Race* is a term used by many people to specify groups of people distinguished by physical characteristics



**FIGURE 1.2** The World's Economies in the Early Twenty-First Century  
High-, middle-, and low-income countries.

Photos, left to right: John Berry/Syracuse Newspapers/The Image Works; Gable/Alamy Stock Photo; Philipbigg/Alamy Stock Photo



**FIGURE 1.3** Using Our Global Sociological Imagination to Understand Suicide

Sources: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015a; World Health Organization, 2015a.

such as skin color. *Ethnicity* refers to the cultural heritage or identity of a group and is based on factors such as language or country of origin. *Class* is the relative location of a person or group within the larger society, based on wealth, power, prestige, or other valued resources. *Sex* refers to the biological and anatomical differences between females and males. By contrast, *gender* refers to social and/or cultural distinctions associated with being male or female. Historically,

**high-income countries**

nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income.

**middle-income countries**

nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income.