

sociology

exploring the architecture of everyday life



11 david m. newman



Sociology

Eleventh Edition

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Sociology

Exploring the Architecture of Everyday Life

Eleventh Edition

David M. Newman
DePauw University



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC



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Preface

It was the first day of the fall semester in 1994. I had just finished making the final adjustments to the very first edition of this book, which was due to be published the following January. I felt pretty good about myself, like I'd just accomplished something monumental. Even my two sons were impressed with me (although not as impressed as the time we went to a professional hockey game and I leaped out of my seat to catch an errant, speeding puck barehanded). I walked into the first meeting of my Contemporary Society class eager to start teaching wide-eyed, first-year students a thing or two about sociology.

In my introductory comments to the class that day, I mentioned that I had just written this book. The panicked look in their eyes—a curious combination of awe and fear—calmed when I told them I wouldn't be requiring them to read it that semester. I told them that the process of writing an introductory text helped me immensely in preparing for the course and that I looked forward to passing on to them the knowledge I had accumulated.

The next day after class, one of the students—a bright, freshly scrubbed 18-year-old—approached me. The ensuing conversation would leave a humbling impression even two decades later:

Student: Hi. Umm. Professor Newman . . . I called my parents last night to, like, tell them how my first day in college went. I think they were, like, more nervous than I was. You know how parents can be.

Me: Yes, I sure do. I'm a parent myself, you know.

Student: Yeah, whatever. Anyway, I was telling them about my classes and my professors and stuff. I told them about this class and how I thought it would be pretty cool. I told them you had written a book. I thought that would impress them, you know, make it seem like they were getting their money's worth and everything.

Me: Well, thanks.

Student: So, they go, "What's the book about?" [He laughs sheepishly.] I told them I really didn't know, but I'd find out. So, like, that's what I'm doing . . . finding out.

Me: Well, I'm glad you asked. You see, it's an introductory sociology textbook that uses

everyday experiences and phenomena as a way of understanding important sociological theories and ideas. In it I've attempted to . . .

Student: [His eyes, glazed over with boredom, suddenly jump back to life.] Wait, did you say it was a textbook?

Me: Why, yes. You see, the purpose of the book is to provide the reader with a thorough and useful introduction to the sociological perspective. I want to convey . . .

Student: [Quite embarrassed now] Oh . . . Professor Newman, I'm really sorry. I misunderstood you. I thought you had written a real book.

Real book. Real book. Real book. Those words rang in my head like some relentless church bell. At first, I tried to dismiss the comment as the remark of a naïve kid who didn't know any better. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized what his comment reflected. The perception that textbooks aren't *real* books is widespread.

A few years ago, I heard a radio ad for a local Red Cross book drive. The narrator asked listeners to donate any unused or unwanted books *as long as they weren't textbooks*. Yep, that's what he said. Torn copies of *The Cat in the Hat*? Fine, they'll take 'em. Grease-stained owner's manuals for 1976 Ford Pintos? Sure, glad to have 'em. Textbooks? No way!

Sadly, these sorts of perceptions are not altogether unwarranted. Textbooks hover on the margins of the literary world, somewhere between respectable, intellectual monographs on trailblazing research and Harlequin romance novels. Traditionally, they've been less than titillating: thick, heavy, expensive, and easily discarded for a measly five bucks at the end-of-semester "book buy-back."

My goal—from that very first edition to this one—has always been to write a textbook that reads like a *real* book. In the first ten editions, I tried to capture simultaneously the essence and insight of my discipline and the reader's interest. From what reviewers, instructors, and students who've read and used the book over the years have said, I think I've been fairly successful. While no Hollywood movie studio has expressed interest in turning this book into a movie (yet!), people do seem to like the relaxed tone and appreciate the consistent theme that ties all the chapters together. Many instructors have commented on how the book enables students to truly understand the unique and useful elements of a sociological perspective. Take that, Red Cross!

Features of the 11th Edition

To my sons—who believe that I have nothing important to say about anything anyway—continually revising this book has always been clear evidence of my incompetence. Back when he was in middle school, my younger son once asked me, “Why do you keep writing the same book over and over? My English teacher made me rewrite a book report on *To Kill a Mockingbird* because I answered some questions wrong. Is that what’s going on here, Dad? Is your publisher making you write the book again because there’s too much wrong stuff in it?” I told him no and that I’d make him read the whole book—cover to cover—if he continued to ask such questions. He stopped . . . although to this day, he’s still not convinced I have anything useful to say.

Despite his concerns, sociology textbooks do need to be revised regularly and frequently. No book can be of lasting value if it remains static, locked into a particular style and content. I keep my ears and eyes open, always looking for some new example or current issue to include in the book. My office overflows with stacks of books, newspaper clippings, photocopied journal articles, Post-it notes, and shreds of paper napkins containing scribbled ideas that I write to myself at the breakfast table when I come across something interesting. I’ve been known to send myself e-mails at 3:00 in the morning so as not to forget the great idea that came to me in the haziness between sleep and wakefulness.

One thing I’ve learned over the years is that when revising a book, it’s a lot easier to add new material than it is to cut out the old stuff. But simply inserting bits and pieces here and there tends to make books fat and unwieldy. So I’ve tried to streamline the book wherever possible. I’ve replaced outdated material with new material where appropriate, revised all the statistical information, condensed or deleted some sections, and changed the order of others.

Here are some of the specific changes I’ve made in this 11th edition to enhance the features that worked so well in the previous editions.

Updated Examples and Statistical Information

As in the first ten editions, each chapter is peppered with anecdotes, personal observations, and accounts of contemporary events that serve as illustrations of the sociological points I'm making. Many of the examples you will read are taken from today's news headlines; others come from incidents in my own life.

It would be impossible to write an introduction to the discipline of sociology without accounting for the life-altering occurrences—wars, natural disasters, school shootings, political upheavals, court decisions, economic meltdowns, Donald Trump's latest escapades—that we hear about every day. So throughout this book, I've made a special effort to provide some sociological insight into well-known contemporary events and trends, both large and small. In doing so, I intend to show you the pervasiveness and applicability of sociology in our ordinary, everyday experiences in a way that, I hope, rings familiar with you.

As you will see throughout the book, it is impossible to understand what happens to us in our personal lives without taking into consideration broader social and historical phenomena. Several specific recent developments have had—and will continue to have—a dramatic impact on sociological thought and on people's everyday lives: the lingering effects of the recent global economic recession, a stream of fatal encounters between police and unarmed people of color, the legalization of same-sex marriage, and the dramatic growth of communication technology, particularly social networking sites. When the economy suffers (or improves), everyone—from tycoons to unemployed welfare recipients—experiences some kind of alteration in her or his day-to-day routine. As I was writing this edition, it was quite a challenge to keep up with the most current information on joblessness, hiring trends, home foreclosures, spending patterns, and so on. Likewise, each new incident of racially- or ethically connected violence—whether at the hands of law enforcement, hate groups, or lone assailants—alters the trajectory of race relations in this country. Major political events too (like a Supreme Court ruling) can change what we know and what we take for granted about the most fundamental components of our lives—like who can marry whom. And how can we analyze the sociology of everyday life without acknowledging the powerful role online social networking has had in shaping the way we learn, relate to others, and ultimately define ourselves? Thus, you will see references to these—and many other—developments throughout the book to illustrate the interconnections between private life and massive historical occurrences.

I also want to call to your attention the fact that many extended examples of

sociological theories and concepts throughout the book focus on some aspect of health, illness, and medicine. I have done this for two reasons. First of all, no matter who we are or where we come from, all of us must deal with health matters from time to time. Our own physical and mental well-being is perhaps the most personal and immediate thing in our lives. At the same time, whenever we seek medical attention—whether in a doctor’s office, a local pharmacy, or a hospital—or try to figure out how to pay for it, we enter a massive health care system that can sometimes feel immensely bureaucratic and *impersonal*. And as medical costs continue to rise, changes to our health care system—both proposed and enacted—will dominate economic forecasts, newspaper headlines, and legislative action for years to come. Second, students taking the Medical College Admissions Test now must take a course in sociology. And so these health care-related examples will provide such students with applications and illustrations that are directly relevant to their needs and, hopefully, make them better doctors in the future.

I’ve also tried to provide the most current statistical information possible. I’ve updated all the graphic exhibits and, in the process, changed some of them from statistical tables to more readable charts and graphs, making trends and relationships more obvious. Much of the new statistical information is drawn from the most recent data from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the Population Reference Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Center for Education Statistics, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, and the Pew Research Center.

Updated “Sociologists at Work” and “Micro-Macro Connections”

In the first ten editions, I provided many in-depth features that focused either on a specific piece of sociological research or on some issue that illustrates the connection between the everyday lives of individuals and the structure of their society. These extended discussions link social institutions to personal experiences and provide insight into the methods sociologists use to gather information and draw conclusions about how our world works.

Instructors and students alike have found these features very useful in generating classroom discussion. The features that I’ve thoroughly updated from the previous edition focus on topics such as suicide, the language of war, family privacy, smartphones, children’s toys, dual-earner households, clergy sexual abuse, the cultural impact of antidepressants, the global health divide, multiracial identity, residential segregation, dangerous media images, intergenerational conflict, and the shifting politics of immigration. In addition, I’ve also added a few new features on sleep, same-sex marriage, race and medical mistrust, gender and communication, and parental pressure in childhood sports.

New Articles in the Companion Reader

Jodi O'Brien, a sociologist at Seattle University, Michelle Robertson at St. Edwards University, and I have carefully edited a companion volume to this book consisting of short articles, chapters, and excerpts written by other authors. These readings are provocative and eye-opening examples of the joys and insights of sociological thinking. Many of them vividly show how sociologists gather evidence through carefully designed research. Others are personal narratives that provide firsthand accounts of how social forces influence people's lives. The readings examine common, everyday experiences; important social issues; global concerns; and distinct historical events that illustrate the relationship between the individual and society. We've taken great pains to include readings that show how race, social class, gender, and sexual orientation intersect to influence everyday experiences.

Of the 41 selections in this edition of the reader, 15 are new. The new selections touch on important and relevant sociological issues such as the rules of gift giving, the questionable use of statistics, consumerism, race and class in everyday public encounters, gay parenting, covenant marriage, the power of fads, the everyday experience of race on college campuses, gender and technology, cyberbrides, and community organizing. In addition, we've brought back a few popular readings from past editions and have moved several others to different chapters to improve their usefulness and applicability.

Teaching Resources and WebSite to Accompany the Book and Companion Reader

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- **Video and multimedia links** includes original SAGE videos that appeal to students with different learning styles
- Lively and stimulating **chapter activities** that can be used in class to reinforce active learning. The activities apply to individual or group projects.
- **A course cartridge** provides easy LMS integration

A Word About the “Architecture of Society”

I have chosen the image of architecture in the subtitle to convey one of the driving themes of this book: Society is a human construction. Society is not “out there” somewhere, waiting to be visited and examined. It exists in the minute details of our day-to-day lives. Whenever we follow its rules or break them, enter its roles or shed them, work to change things or keep them as they are, we are adding another nail, plank, or frame to the structure of our society. In short, society—like the buildings around us—couldn’t exist were it not for the actions of people.

At the same time, however, this structure that we have created appears to exist independently of us. We don’t usually spend much time thinking about the buildings we live, work, and play in as human constructions. We see them as finished products, not as the processes that created them. Only when something goes wrong—the pipes leak or the walls crack—do we realize that people made these structures and people are the ones who must fix them. When buildings outlive their usefulness or become dangerous to their inhabitants, people must renovate them or, if necessary, tear them down.

Likewise, society is so massive and has been around for so long that it *appears* to stand on its own, at a level above and beyond the toiling hands of individual people. But here, too, when things begin to go wrong—widespread discrimination, environmental degradation, massive poverty, lack of affordable health care, escalating crime rates—people must do something about it.

So the fascinating paradox of human life is that we build society, collectively “forget” that we’ve built it, and live under its massive and influential structure. But we are not stuck with society as it is. Human beings are the architects of their own social reality. Throughout this book, I examine the active roles individuals play in planning, maintaining, or fixing society.

A Final Thought

One of the greatest challenges I have faced in three decades teaching sociology is trying to get my students to see the personal relevance of the course material, to fully appreciate the connection between the individual and society. The true value of sociology lies in its unique ability to show the two-way connection between the most private elements of our lives—our characteristics, experiences, behaviors, and thoughts—and the cultures, groups, organizations, and social institutions to which we belong. The “everyday life” approach in this book uses real-world examples and personal observations as a vehicle for understanding the relationship between individuals and society.

My purpose is to make the familiar unfamiliar—to help you critically examine the commonplace and the ordinary in your own life. Only when you step back and examine the taken-for-granted aspects of your personal experiences can you see that there is an inherent, sometimes unrecognized organization and predictability to them. At the same time, you will see that the structure of society is greater than the sum of the experiences and psychologies of the individuals in it.

It is my conviction that this intellectual excursion should be a thought-provoking and enjoyable one. Reading a textbook doesn't have to be boring or, even worse, the academic equivalent of a painful trip to the dentist (although I personally have nothing against dentists). I believe that one of my responsibilities as a teacher is to provide my students with a challenging but comfortable classroom atmosphere in which to learn. I have tried to do the same in this book. Your instructor has chosen this book not because it makes his or her job teaching your course any easier but because he or she wants you, the student, to see how sociology helps us to understand how the small, private experiences of our everyday lives are connected to this thing we call society. I hope you learn to appreciate this important message, and I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Have fun,

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